

KINGDOM REVELATOR

CATHOLIC PUBLICATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ■ ISSUE 75

Love in
Action

RADIATING THE
FRAGRANCE OF
CHRIST

UNDER
HIS **WINGS**





Mother Mary,
Pray for our Readers

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Why is marriage indissoluble?



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263 : Marriage is triply indissoluble: first, because the essence of love is mutual self-giving without reservation; second, because it is an image of God's unconditional faithfulness to His creation; and third, because it represents Christ's devotion to His Church, even unto death on the Cross. [CCC 1605, 1612-1617, 1661]

At a time when fifty percent of marriages in many places end in divorce, every marriage that lasts is a great sign—ultimately a sign for God. On this earth, where so much is relative, people ought to believe in God, who alone is absolute. That is why everything that is not relative is so important: someone who speaks the truth absolutely or is absolutely loyal. Absolute fidelity in marriage is not so much a human achievement as it is a testimony to the faithfulness of God, Who is there even when we betray or forget Him in so many ways. To be married in the Church means to rely more on God's help than on one's own resources of love.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. . . . Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies". (Ephesians 5:25-26, 28)

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Editorial

God has a specific design for our lives, which is always a design of love. If we abide in His love, then we will bear much fruit. Each of us have a unique call to bear witness to His love. We should respond to this call with great love and without fear or rejection. Since all of us are children of Almighty God and are called to live in peace and harmony, it is our duty to accomplish Jesus' desire of oneness for us in the world.

Pope Francis says, "Sickness makes us realize our own vulnerability and our innate need of others. It raises the question of life's meaning, which we can only find in God through faith, and which will give us a new and deeper direction in our lives. The current pandemic we are facing has taught us many valuable lessons and has also highlighted the dedication and generosity of healthcare personnel, volunteers, support staff, priests, religious and our neighbors."

In the midst of a crisis, Jesus always spent time in prayer, blessing His Father in heaven and praising Him. During these hard times let us turn to the living God and seek a personal encounter with Him. When we encounter God in our lives, our actions spring forth from love and this world will be a better place to live in. We are the aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15), so let us spread the fragrance of His love among everyone we meet on our life's journey.

Love in Action



Geenu Kunnengode, from Chicago, USA, shares real life stories of proclaiming Christ's love through our actions.

The Story of Maria

I came to know about Maria through one of my friends. Maria is a Catholic woman who holds many titles such as mother, grandmother, great grandmother, aunt, catechist, and the list goes on. But the one title that makes her unique is that she is a foster mother of 3 young children - a set of twin boys who are 7 and a little girl who is 5. Her story really touched my heart because it is the story of a Christian who put her faith into practice.

Maria was in her 60's, a retired empty nester who was finally looking forward to having some quality "ME" time! Until one day she came to know that one of her family member was pregnant with twins and was planning to give them away as she was still young and didn't have the means to raise the children. The unselfish and God-fearing Maria told the girl that she would take care of the babies. Little did she realize how challenging this would be! In her own words, "God only knows how many times I have cried out of desperation. I didn't even know how to open and close the strollers."

Then one day, she got a call from the local Police station.

It was a girl on the other end of the phone who was an acquaintance, beckoning Maria to come to the station. To her surprise, at the station, she found the girl with a 4 month old baby in her hand. The girl had to be taken into custody. As her family was not there to claim the baby, Maria was asked to temporarily take care of the infant. Maria brought her home but the family never came around and so she is still watching the child until her mother gets released from the prison. That baby girl is 5 now! Maria acknowledges that it was purely God's grace and the good people around her who helped her to persevere, that enabled her to manage.

In the eyes of the world, Maria's decision to take care of young children might not be a wise one; rather an impractical one! But she didn't think of all the odds that worked against her. She believed as a follower of Christ, that was the right decision at that moment. When I think of Maria's self-sacrificial love, I remember the words of Saint Mother Teresa, "Love until it hurts."

Greatest Commandment

In the Gospel of St John, Jesus gives us the greatest commandment, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

It's not easy to love another person as oneself. If I truly love as Jesus instructs, then my neighbor's joys and sorrows will be mine. If they have successes in their life, I will be overjoyed because that success is mine; there is no room to feel envy. When they face obstacles in life, I would lend a helping hand as it's my duty to help them flourish in their life! St Paul has written a whole chapter about love (1 Corinthians 13). If we are to summarize everything in the Bible, it will come to one word - Love.

Jesus says one cannot love God without loving one's neighbor. They are like two sides of the same coin.

"Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or

sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

Help is Assured

Though it may be hard to love others just like ourselves, Jesus points us to a Helper - the Holy Spirit - who will assist us to live out true Christian love. "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever" (John 14:16). Furthermore, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will teach us everything (John 14:26). So whatever we need help with, we just need to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. If there are people in our lives, who make themselves impossible to be loved, let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us.



When we love the way Jesus has taught us, then others will automatically know that we are His disciples and will want to know more about this God. And that's a great way to proclaim the Good news of our Lord!

Vested in Your Success

I remember with fond love and respect, the words of

encouragement of Jen, one of my colleagues. I was new to the job at that time and Jen held that position prior to me. She was to help me transition to this role. She did her task in the most amazing way! What was special about her was that she was very generous in sharing her knowledge. She made me feel welcome, and boosted my confidence. She was like my personal cheerleader at work. In today's world, cut-throat competition and holding back information for the sake of 'job security,' are quite common. But I was actually witnessing a true disciple of Jesus. When I would tell her how much I appreciated her work ethics, she would tell me, "Geenu, I am vested in your success. When you are successful that means I am successful." Looking back I can tell she was living out her Christian love not by proclaiming through her words, but through her actions. And that, I believe, is what Jesus wants each one of us to do; being vested in our neighbor's success!

By Our Love

In this New Year, let us make a resolution to proclaim Christ not just through words, but more so by our actions! Let people around us know Christ's sacrificial love through our own love in action. And for this, let us constantly seek the help of the Holy Spirit. The lyrics of the famous song "By our love" are reverberating in my ears... And they'll know we are Christians, By our love, by our love, Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!



ENCOUNTERS



*Christine Ramos,
Director of
Religious Education
at St. Patricia
Parish in Chicago,
USA, dwells on*

God incidences in our daily encounters.

Encounters, we have them every day! Sometimes we encounter people, sometimes we encounter God, and if we are blessed enough to be aware of it, sometimes we encounter them together.

Juanita

In January 2020, I received a call from my doctor asking me to go to the hospital immediately. The day before, I had gone to his office since I had not been feeling very well throughout the week. When I heard my doctor say I should go to emergency, all my brain could comprehend at that moment was, this is serious! It was out of my hands. I had to place everyone and everything into God's hands. "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" Philippians 4:6. I needed to be strong and have faith in Him amid any worries. Then I felt 'the nudge' from the Holy Spirit. He spoke to my heart, saying, "Bring

God to those you encounter along the way, that will help keep you busy."

My husband Paul, and I got everything ready and rushed over to the emergency center. While I was waiting for a hospital bed, I heard a few patients being taken in and out of the room next to me. At one point, a woman was brought into that room. I could hear that her name was Juanita and that she came in alone with no family by her side. I looked at Paul and knew how blessed I was to have him there beside me. I began praying for Juanita. If no loved one from her family could be physically with her, I decided I would be there for her spiritually. I prayed for her to feel God's presence. After a few minutes of doctors and nurses going in and out of her room, a nurse began calling out to Juanita, but this time there was no response. My heart sank. My eyes welled up with tears and I began to sob. The doctors came in and tried to save her, but they could not. I continued to pray, but now I was asking God to welcome her into His loving, waiting, open arms. When her family finally did arrive to say goodbye to her, I asked Paul to please tell them that she was prayed for while she had passed, that she had not been all alone. Paul hesitated, but I pleaded

with him to please go and tell them. It was so important to me that they knew this. He told them. Then they left, their hearts filled with sorrow.

Mary

Some encounters can be uplifting. Two years ago, in early December we were having some trouble with our internet service. I rang the customer service and found myself talking to a representative named Mary. I explained the problem we were having, and she immediately started to work on getting things fixed. We made small conversations while she looked into the problem. Then she said to me, "Ok, sing me a song". Obviously, her request took me by surprise! Mary said, "I see your email address is, musicforhisglory,



so, sing me a song.” I laughed and said, “Ok”, and started singing, “Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power, and love, our God is an awesome God.” She loved it! I asked her if she would like me to pray for her, and she said, “Yes.” We continued our conversation and spoke like old friends. Mary and I were miles apart, formerly strangers in this big wide world, but now were united as Children of God. Eventually, the cable/internet issue was fixed, and our call ended. But at the end of that call, my soul was happy! Because of that conversation, so full of God’s presence and blessings, I will always remember Mary, and she will remain in my heart and in my prayers. Who would have thought that a simple call to the cable company’s customer service department would have such an impact! I look forward to meeting Mary one day in God’s Kingdom. There, we can sing God’s praises together. Hopefully, Juanita will want to join in with us, too.

The Weary Traveler

Some encounters can be confusing. My close friend, Liz once told me a story about an encounter experienced by her friend, Pat during a work related travel. Pat was tired and hungry, so she decided to grab something to eat at the airport. She chose a table for two and left her travel bag on one of the chairs to save her place while she went to get her food. She ordered some soup and salad. She brought her food over to her table and then realized that she had forgotten to collect cutlery or napkins, so she left her food at her table and went back to the counter to get what she needed. When she returned to her table, there was a man sitting there, and he was eating her soup! She couldn’t believe it! She sat down, looked at the man and sarcastically said to him, “Bon appetit!” The man smiled and kept on eating the soup...her soup! Pat began to eat her salad. She just couldn’t believe what she was seeing! Once again, she said, “Bon appetit!”, expecting some kind of reaction from this man who was eating her food, but once again, he just smiled and quietly continued to eat. After he finished the soup, he got up out of the chair, smiled one

last time and then walked away silently. All she could think of was, “How could he?”

Once Pat finished her salad, she decided she would get some work done, so she reached down for her travel bag to get her tablet. Her bag wasn’t there! “He must have stolen my travel bag, too”, Pat thought. She looked around for him. While she was looking for him, she looked over to see another table for two. It had a bowl of soup and a bowl of salad on it... and on one of the chairs was a travel bag...her travel bag...oh no, she had been sitting at the wrong table! The man didn’t eat Pat’s soup; she had eaten his salad!

Liz and I laughed together as she got to the surprise ending of her story. But it also caused me to reflect on my reaction throughout the story. I was thinking the same thing Pat had been thinking. I probably would have reacted in the same way. How would you have reacted? Adding God into that encounter could have changed everything. What a humbling experience! Puts things in a different perspective, doesn’t it?

Encounters. They happen every day. They can be emotional, uplifting, or sometimes confusing. But they can also inspire us, encourage us, and even lovingly correct us. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit, so He may continue to guide us through our encounters with our brothers and sisters in the family of God. Bon appetit!

Who knew that a simple call to the cable company’s customer service department would have such an impact!



RADIATING THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST

Matilda Dominic, from Birmingham, UK, suggests a new year resolution.

Early one morning last week, I was wondering what New Year resolution I should take for the year 2021. I thought about my past experiences of how the resolutions I made would begin brilliantly for the first few days, but within a few weeks most of them began to fade, so that by the end of the year I was barely able to remember the resolutions I had made. As I pondered, all of a sudden, I heard the following words resounding in my ears again and again. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Initially I tried to change my attention to something else, as I had heard this Bible verse many times, but it would not go away. Instead, for more than an hour I felt it powerfully reverberating over and over in my ears and piercing my heart "Indeed, the word of God is living and active,

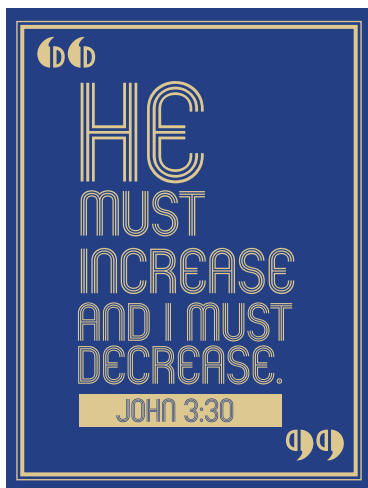
sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). I was sure the Holy Spirit wanted to say something to me. While reflecting upon this verse, a few thoughts came to my mind which I would like to share with you.

St John the Baptist was the one who proclaimed these words: "He must increase, but I must decrease." He had a clear vision of

who he was and who Jesus was. When he was questioned by his own disciples and the people around him, he always pointed to Jesus, always drawing attention to Jesus, rather than to himself. St John the Baptist teaches us here that in life we must not be focused on worldly achievements or accolades, but rather our purpose must be directed towards Jesus.

Jesus Our Role Model

Jesus emptied himself. Philippians 2:5-7 says, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself taking the form of a slave and being born in human likeness and being found in human form." We are also called to clothe ourselves with humility and look to Jesus as our role model, adhering to His teachings, living a life of simplicity and following in His footsteps.





Shining as Lights in This World

On this journey, every moment of our life is an invitation to accomplish and fulfil the task

given to us by God. Let us do so by enriching the qualities and fruit of the Holy Spirit within us. Every opportunity given to us should be made use of to the fullest so that we illuminate and radiate Christ to all we meet. We must strive hard to shift our focus from ourselves to Jesus. "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:15). All this is possible only when we read and meditate on Scripture everyday which will enable us to grow in the true image and likeness of God. Let us strive unceasingly to live as children of light, trying to find out what is pleasing to God. May this year 2021 ultimately lead us to be less of ourselves and more of our Master, Jesus Christ.

Lets pray along with St John Henry Newman in his Prayer.

"Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus! Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine, so to shine as to be a light to others; the light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be mine: it will be You shining on others through me. Let me thus praise You in the way You love best: by shining on those around me. Let me preach You without preaching, not by words, but by my example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to You."



PLACES FROM THE BIBLE

CAPERNAUM

By Stacey Illikal from USA



The name 'Capernaum' comes from the Hebrew word 'Kefar Nahum', which means the village of Nahum. Capernaum is a city that was built along the edge of the Sea of Galilee and had about 1,500 people living in it. According to Matthew 4:13, "Leaving Nazareth He went and lived in Capernaum." Capernaum was the home of Jesus during His

ministerial life. Apart from Jesus, other disciples, namely Peter, Andrew, James, and John, all of whom were fisherman in that village, lived there. Matthew the tax collector also lived there.

Capernaum was a city where Jesus performed many miracles. According to Mathew 9:1, Capernaum is referred to as "Jesus' own town." One of the most famous incidents that occurred in Capernaum was

the healing of a centurion's servant by Jesus, told in Mathew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10. Some other prominent incidents that happened in Capernaum were, Jesus calling the tax collector Levi to follow Him (Mark 2:13-17), healing the man with an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21-28), the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39) and the healing of a paralyzed man (Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12).

The beautiful site is now a favourite destination for tourists and pilgrims due to its white churches with red domes in Northern Israel. The impressive, reconstructed limestone synagogue visible today dates to the late 4th - 5th Century.





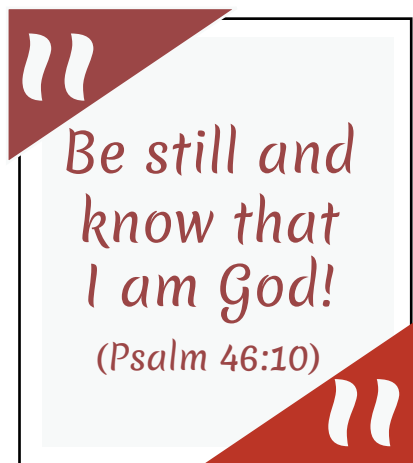
Deepa Tom, from Ireland, shares how she felt the protection of God during her recent battle with Covid-19.



UNDER HIS WINGS

I tested positive for Covid-19 on December 1st, 2020. In the beginning, I didn't have too many symptoms, so I decided that I would attend as many on-line spiritual services as possible. I participated in online retreats and live Adoration. I was constantly listening to the 24-hour Rosary relayed from Ruhamount, Attappady, India. While I was praying, I came upon this Word of God in the Bible: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him; no foreign god was with him." (Deuteronomy 32:11-12). As the days went by, I became so ill that I wasn't even able to hold my rosary beads. At that point, I was taken to the hospital. Still, I was constantly attending virtual Rosary and Adoration. During the time I

was very ill, I imagined myself being wrapped in the mantle of Mother Mary, with Jesus beside me. I heard a voice telling me, "Be still and know that I am God!" (Psalm 46:10). I kept repeating this Word of God constantly.



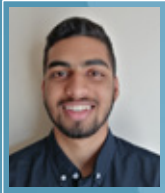
I struggled with isolation and sleeplessness. On one occasion during those days while attending a live service by

Sehion Ministries I had a divine experience. I felt a power from above, piercing my forehead. From that night onwards God blessed me with good sleep. However, I continued to feel very lonely and was longing to see my family. I knew they were outside my room, because I could hear them, and knew I would see them in few days, but I was counting every second.

This experience made me think about the souls in Purgatory. Through this yearning, God helped me realize how difficult it is for a soul to stay in Purgatory, waiting for Heaven. My thoughts were diverted in this way, encouraging me to think about my soul while I am alive on earth. Now I am recovering from my illness by the grace of God. In my illness I experienced the power of Deuteronomy 32:11 in my life.



THE POWER OF THE NAME OF JESUS



Johns Jais, a 17-year-old from Australia, shares a personal encounter and the miraculous healing he received in his life.

I would like to share with you a miracle that Jesus did in my life, and how I personally experienced God in my life. "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (1 John 1:1).

I used to suffer severe back pain whenever I bent over to

get something or lift something. When I first started experiencing it, I was working part-time at McDonalds, so I quit the job due to this back pain. However, even after quitting work, I was still experiencing pain in the lower back. The pain was quite serious, and since it is not normal for a teenager to experience such pain, I decided to see a doctor and get it checked out. The doctor advised a CT scan to identify the problem. I was then referred to a Spine Ortho clinic to see a specialist. The CT scan showed a large cystic mass in the lumbar spine and it was recommended that I get an MRI scan in order to get further details. The specialist said that it was

likely to be a large mass, and in that case, I may need surgery.

At this point, my family and I were quite nervous and worried. Before the MRI scan, my parents prayed over my back holding the "The Power of the Name of Jesus" book and claiming Wisdom 16:12 which says, "For neither herb nor poultice cured them, but it was your word, O Lord, that heals all people." When they finished praying, the book felt really warm, however, my back felt cold. At that very moment, my dad told me that Jesus had touched me and that I was going to be alright. I didn't really take it seriously and I went in for my MRI scan. Sur-

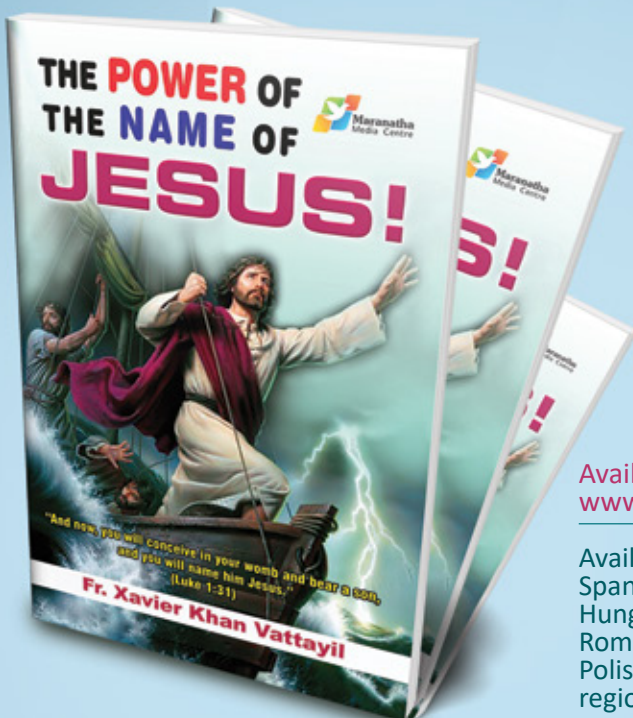
prisingly, when we went for the check-up to look at the results of the MRI scan, the large mass was not there. Instead, there appeared to be a small fluid-filled cyst that was not harmful to me at all! I feel hardly any pain now! Thank you, Jesus.

All of us encounter God in different ways and I thank the Lord for this personal encounter. All glory and praise be to You Lord Jesus!

“

FOR NEITHER
HERB NOR
POULTICE CURED
THEM, BUT IT WAS
YOUR WORD,
O LORD, THAT
HEALS ALL PEOPLE.
WISDOM 16:12

”



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Let's talk about identity



Nimmy Elizabeth Biju, from Worcester, UK, calls on all women to discover their identity and purpose in life.

We have heard about amazing men of God in Scripture - Moses, Abraham, David, Daniel and so on. But guess what, Scripture also reveals women of God who are clothed with strength and courage - Judith, Ruth, Esther and Mother Mary, to name but a few. Remind yourself that just like these women, you too have a purpose and a great calling. But above all, you have an identity - you are His beloved daughter.

I remember a season in my life where I forgot this truth, when I struggled to accept and forgive myself, when I gave ear to the lies that the evil one whispered to me: "You're not good enough, you're not worthy enough to be loved by Jesus, you're a disappointment", and these were just some of the lies the evil one whispered to me. But I still remember this phrase my best friend told me: "Nimmy, no matter what, you are the daughter of God and when His daughter grieves, He also grieves." I had heard thousands of times that I am a child of God, and I believed it too. However, when a struggle came, I forgot. I had the privilege of spending my gap year in front of the Blessed Sacrament. During this time, the Lord lovingly inscribed in my heart and made me know in a thousand ways that above being a sister, student, friend and minister, my truest and deepest identity comes from God my Father, who is my Maker. He is the only person who has the final say of who you and I truly are.

You Are Beautiful

Let's go to the Book of Genesis 35:17-18. Here we see Rachel giving birth to her son. She was

going through a difficult labour and "as her soul was departing, she named her son Benoni." However, his father inspired by the Spirit of God named him "Benjamin." Benoni means 'son of my sorrow' but Benjamin means 'son of my right hand!' He was called Benjamin for the rest of his life. What does this show us? You are who your heavenly Father declares you are - not friends, not family members, or that teacher who spoke down to you! Ephesians 2:10 says, "you are God's handiwork." Psalms 139:14 summarizes that you are beautiful.

**As a daughter
of God, we are
significant,
our story is
significant, and
our life/purpose
is significant.**

Embrace His Vision

Girls, we must have confidence in this identity He has for us. Do not let a guy, a mistake or even sin define you as anything else, because it doesn't. You must separate your sins, weaknesses, or your mistakes from your true identity. When God looks at you and me, He sees His daughter, covered in the Blood of Jesus.

The Lord desires that we must have a holy confidence about who we are - not in selfishness or pride, but in truth and holiness. As a daughter of God, we are significant, our story is significant, and our life/purpose is significant. We are called to bring joy and healing into other people's lives, even just through our smiles! Yes, that's right! The Holy Spirit wants us to use our gifts and passion to minister to others and spread light! Our purpose is not just to be born, learn, get a degree, find a good husband, and die. No, it is much more than that. When God designed us, He designed us with a vision. When we embrace His vision, then we will have life in abundance (John 10:10). Why? Because His plan is the best plan for us!

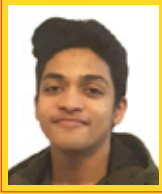
As humans, we are bound to have hard days and forget who we really are but click into that reality fast that you are a precious child of God; the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10). He loves each one of us as though we are the only individuals living on earth. Your name and life were on His mind when He shed His blood. Your worth is not defined by compliments or criticism from people, it is defined by Him! And there is nothing we can do to take this identity away from us.

So hey, let's not exhaust ourselves wondering if we are worth something. Look to the Cross, as it is there that you will find your worth.

And finally, let me just tell you that you're not just that cute girl with a good fashion sense; you're not just that girl with profound intelligence, or a girl who just has that amazing job. You are way more than that.



MEET THE PROPHET JEREMIAH



Henoah Sony from Luton, UK



WHO WAS JEREMIAH?

Jeremiah is one of the major prophets in the Bible. Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a Levitical priest, and who was likely born between 650 and 645 B.C. The name Jeremiah means 'Yahweh will exalt'. According to the Jewish tradition, Jeremiah was said to have written the Book of Jeremiah, the Books of Kings and the Book of Lamentations, and is also known as the 'Weeping Prophet', because of the difficulties he encountered in his mission and his concern for the people's sin. Jeremiah proclaimed that the Israelites would suffer famine, foreign conquest and captivity in a land of strangers.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Jeremiah, a Judean prophet, whose activity spanned four of the most tumultuous decades in his country's history, appears to have received his call to be prophet in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah and continued his ministry until after the siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Jeremiah was a man who had a deep relationship with God and knew he could trust God with his inner thoughts and feelings. God called Jeremiah to the prophetic ministry to turn the nation to repentance from idolatry practices. Jeremiah revealed the sins of the people to them and warned them of the punishments to come.

GOD'S MESSAGE THROUGH THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

As a prophet, Jeremiah pronounced God's judgment upon the people of his time for their wickedness. Jeremiah was especially concerned with false and insincere worship and failure to trust God in their national affairs. He denounced social injustices, but not as much as some previous prophets, such as Amos and Micah. Jeremiah told the people they would live in Babylon for 70 years, and then the Lord will bring them back to their land and there they shall settle down, build houses, marry and even pray for peace, which God had promised.

IS JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE APPLICABLE TO THE 21ST CENTURY?

Even though the world is going through a difficult time, yet God reminds us through Jeremiah that He has a plan for us. "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Our God is a God of mercy and compassion. There is always the promise of a better future and a brighter way of life. God may be thwarted in His plans but is never vanquished. He will always be with us. The present times may seem bleak to us now, but God assures through Jeremiah that there is always a ray of hope, and that nothing is impossible with God. "See, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27)

FIVE PICKS

Christie Mathew from New York



MOVIE

Overcomer

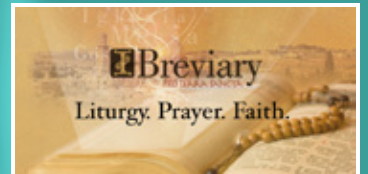
High school basketball coach John Harrison and his team face an uncertain future when their town's largest manufacturing plant shuts down unexpectedly. Filled with a powerful mix of faith, a twist of humour, Overcomer is an inspiring film to watch.



APP

iBreviary TS Plus

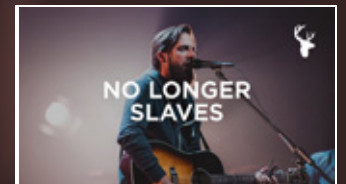
The iBreviary app is your portable breviary. It can be used to pray with the full texts of the Liturgy of the Hours in five languages. Simply launch the application and you will have all the texts of the day. The texts of the Liturgy of the Hours, are formatted just as they appear in the printed version.



SONG

No longer a slave

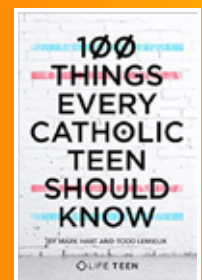
Jonathan David and Melissa Helser



BOOK

100 Things Every Catholic Teen should know - By Mark Hart and Todd A Limieux

Do you ever find yourself wishing for short, simple answers as to what the Church teaches and why we claim it as truth? Let the authors show you not only how great it is to be Catholic, but how fun it is to be a Catholic as well.

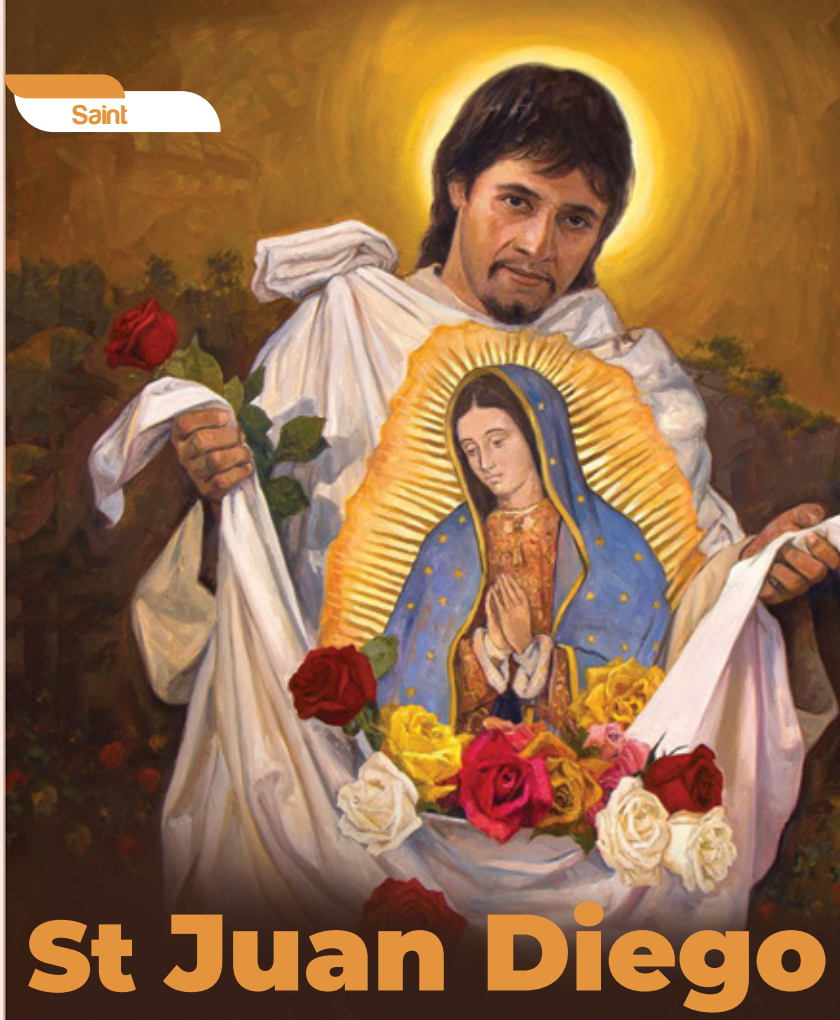


BLOG

Catholic World Report

Catholic World Report is an online news magazine that tells the story from an orthodox Catholic perspective.





St Juan Diego

A Marian Visionary

Patron of Indigenous people



Shino Sajis, from Finland, shares the life of Saint Juan Diego.

Early Life

Juan Diego was born in Mexico in A.D 1474 with the name Cuauhtlatoatzin (meaning singing eagle) and his father died early, leaving Juan Diego under the care of his uncle. Although raised in Aztec pagan religion and culture, he showed an unusual and mystical sense of life even before hearing the Gospel from Franciscan missionaries.

Conversion

Cuauhtlatoatzin and his wife were among the first converts to Catholic faith when a group of Franciscan missionaries came to Mexico in A.D 1524 and they were baptized as Juan Diego and Maria Lucia. They were committed to faith and walked long distance of about 14 miles to religious instructions and Holy Mass every Saturday and Sunday at the Franciscan mission station at Tlatelolco. After his wife's death in 1529, Juan Diego withdrew to his uncle's home, Juan Bernardino, who had also become a Christian.

Marian Apparition- Our Lady of Guadalupe

Juan Diego had a profound vision of the Virgin Mary known as

Our Lady of Guadalupe on 9th December A.D 1531, when he was on his way to Mass for the Feast of Immaculate Conception. The Blessed Mother appeared to him on Tepeyac Hill amidst beautiful strains of music and looked radiant and beautiful and called him by his name and spoke to him in Nahuatl, his native language.

She asked him to go to the Bishop and to request in her name that a shrine be built at Tepeyac, on the site of a former pagan temple, where she promised to pour out her grace, love and compassion upon those who invoked her.

Roses in The Middle of Winter

Bishop Zumarraga was sceptical and asked for a sign to prove that the apparition was true. Juan Diego promised to produce proof of the apparition after he finished tending to his uncle, who was near death.

On his way to church on December 12, to summon a priest for his uncle, Juan Diego again encountered the Blessed Virgin. She promised to cure his uncle, and as a sign to convince the Bishop, she asked Juan to go to the top of the hill where they first met.

It was winter and too cold for flowers, but Juan Diego found fresh and gorgeous roses and flowers. He brought the flowers back to her, and Mary placed them in his tilma, that Maria Lucia had made from cactus fibres. Blessed Mother told him to take them to the Bishop as proof and not to unwrap them until he reached there.

World Changing Miracle

Juan Diego visited Bishop Zumarraga again. Juan opened his tilma, letting the roses fall and to their amazement, the bishop saw the

beautiful life-size image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, miraculously imprinted on the flower-filled cloth. The bishop saw and believed Juan Diego. On that same day, Blessed Mary appeared to Juan's uncle and cured him.

Soon after, the bishop had a church built on the site where the Virgin Mary had first appeared to Juan. The Mexico City basilica that now houses the tilma has become one of the world's most-visited Catholic shrines.

Venerated in this cathedral is the original tilma of St. Juan Diego, which still displays the miraculous Our Lady of Guadalupe image. The fact that the tilma has remained perfectly preserved from 1531 to this day is inexplicable. The image has been subjected to scientific testing to prove its authenticity and miraculous properties.

Veneration

The miracle of Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe converted millions of Mexicans, and deepened Juan Diego's own faith. With the Bishop's permission, Juan Diego lived the rest of his life as a hermit in a small hut near the chapel where the miraculous image was placed for veneration. Here he cared for the church and bore witness to the early pilgrims by relating his experiences. His feast day is celebrated on December 9th.

A mass conversion of millions upon millions of Aztecs to the Catholic faith soon followed—ending human sacrifices, especially child sacrifices that they practiced. Nine years after the apparitions, nine million Indians had converted to the Christian faith, almost nearly 3,000 a day.

Mother Mary's words to St Juan Diego

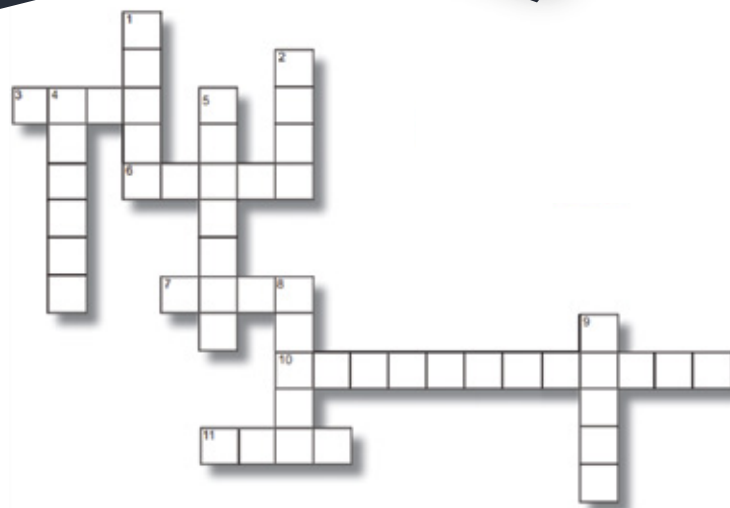
Listen and let it penetrate your heart... do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? What else do you need?
(Fourth apparition)



CROSSWORD



Heinz Sony, Luton, Uk



Across

3. It guided the wise Men.
6. The ruler of Judea when Jesus was born.
7. A monarch or ruler.
10. One of the wise men's gifts.
11. The ____ men came to see Baby Jesus.

Down

1. Another of the gifts wise men gave Jesus.
2. Third gift to Jesus by wise men.
4. Journey to a different place.
5. Praise or adore.
8. The wise men gave three _____ to Jesus.
9. The wise men went to Bethlehem to see the Baby _____.

B DRILLING A BOREWELL



Jomon Joseph, from Ireland, narrates an interesting incident he witnessed as a child and

compares it to the importance of personal prayer in our life.

When I was a child, I happened to witness the process of borewell drilling in my friend's yard in India. There was severe drinking water shortage and many people dug borewells to resolve this issue. When the work started, a great crowd gathered around to watch the drilling process, but soon, most of them left because of the loud noise and dust that was generated. My curiosity got the better of me, and I decided to stay there and watch the whole process. Dust particles, stones, soil, mud, fine sand, muddy water and finally crystal clear water. Though I had no reflection about this interesting event while I was young, this image has come to my mind recently in relation to my own personal prayer and search for interiority.

Personal Prayer

Perhaps, personal prayer is exactly like a borewell drilling

deep into your deep heart. Most people would like to do that in a church or in their own home. Silent personal prayer seems to be very hard at first due to various distractions. "Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts" (Proverbs 4:23). Personal prayer is an encounter with God, our Creator; it can be either silent or conversational. Scripture instructs, "Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:6)

Invite the Holy Spirit

Some people think of prayer as the time to praise God and tell Him our needs. Our lips are opened but our ears are closed; we always forget to listen what God wants to communicate to us. In reality, personal prayer is also an invitation for listening. For the psalmist cry out, "O that today you would listen to his voice harden not your heart" (Psalm 95:8). In our daily prayer, we must also pray for wisdom, which is given by the Holy Spirit. "Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your Holy spirit from on high?" (Wisdom 9:17). Prayer

is the time we strengthen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Dynamic personal prayer can help us to know the will of God. If we do not know how to pray, in our weakness, the Holy Spirit will help us: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (Romans 8:26)

Be Persistent

Never give up if you haven't received an answer in few hours, days or month. Personal prayer can be too heavy and boring. We need to stay and watch. As I explained in the beginning, when dirt was dug up during the initial part of the drilling process, people left one after the other. If we run away at this juncture, it will be the same as stopping halfway while drilling a borewell. Try to be persistent. Always remember that God hears the prayer of the humble. Surrender yourself before God; take out the unwanted elements one by one and place them in the hands of God, as if digging a borewell into your heart. Ask for God's mercy, keep on digging until we see the clear water that can quench your thirst for ever. "But those who drink of the



water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (John 4:14)

Gateway of Christian Life

Personal prayer is a gateway that leads us to the gifts of Holy Spirit. Just as the prophets did, we need to listen to God and to be open to guide others towards God. Personal prayer is a self-charging process for our spiritual life and it helps us to live the real Christian life. Only if we ask and listen,

**Personal
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His plan will be revealed to us. Personal prayer brings clarity to God’s plan for our life and prevents us from taking wrong decisions. It also gives us the strong confidence that God is there beside us in every moment of our life. “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). No matter where we are and how difficult our circumstances might be, persevere in prayer and receive the power. God offers grace upon grace to those who seek Him.



CROSSWORD ANSWERS ▶

Across : 3. Star, 6. Herod, 7. King, 10. Frankincense, 11. Wise

Down : 1. Myrrh, 2. Gold, 4. Travel, 5. Worship, 8. Gifts, 9. Jesus

WOUNDS ARE TO BE CURED AND SCARS ARE TO FADE AWAY



Sunil John from Seattle, USA, ponders over a childhood incident that taught him a valuable lesson in life.

A Childhood Memory

When I was a child, it was fascinating to play indoor games on rainy days. I lived in a boarding school where there were a lot of desks and benches, resembling a

Victorian-style classroom. One evening while it was raining heavily, I along with a few friends decided to play a jumping game: jumping from one bench to the other. In the excitement, I slipped and fell. My forehead struck the corner of a desk and started bleeding. I could feel a small hole in my forehead. The school nurses rushed to the scene; they consoled me

and took me to the hospital where the doctors stitched the wound. There was a big bandage across my head. The pain remained for few days.

After several weeks of medication, the doctors removed the bandage and carefully checked the wounds. The medication had really worked. They removed the bandage and then the stitches, one by one. I could still see a



area clean and free of dirt. I received help from the school nurses and my friends since I couldn't do all these myself. The result was that my wound was healed, and I returned to my usual healthy active self.



Jesus offers
all the
medicines
for free, no
payment
needed!



Attention to Injury

Years later, I started to relate this experience with the events in my life. Every moment of our life, we can be exposed to accidents, accidents that can wound us physically, emotionally, or spiritually. These are often uninvited intrusions. Once it happens, our aim should be to get the injury attended to and treated so that it will get cured and eliminated. Bodily injuries can be treated by medical professionals who can inspect the injured part, perform tests to confirm any infection, do surgical procedures if needed and prescribe medication. Those who follow the treatment plan will eventually get cured from their wounds.

large scar on my forehead. It remained as a botheration for several days but as days passed the wound healed and the scar faded away almost fully. Today, 30 years later, I can still faintly see the scar when I look in the mirror, but it does not bother me anymore. I followed the doctor's instructions – apply medicines, bandages, don't poke around that area, don't hit my head again and take good care to keep the wounded

A Treatment Plan

Some emotional wounds can eventually lead into inner spiritual wounds which also needs treatment. The wounds can be due to a variety of reasons such as betrayal from someone you love and care, serious sins that we commit against the will of God, mistakes we do to others etc. Just like we approach a medical professional to treat our physical wounds, we ought to do the same for our spiritual health. We turn to God in whom we have the best doctor ever available for us - Jesus. We need to seek His help. As we know, no disease can be cured without a treatment plan and our adherence to that plan. Jesus offers all the medicines we need for free. No payment needed. All we need is to follow the treatment plan. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17). The Sacraments of the Holy Catholic Church, faith, forgiveness, repentance, prayers, hope, love and care are commonly prescribed medicines for our spiritual healing. It may be bitter sometimes, but the outcome is very beautiful. While we undergo the treatment, it is also important not to poke around the wounds. Such actions will delay the healing process and may also cause permanent damage.

Always turn to God when something hurts us. These are all just little accidents that our loving God can cure. All it takes is for us to turn to Him and allow Him to attend to us. We need to follow His plan. There is nothing that our loving and almighty God can't cure.



MUSINGS OF A Grateful Heart



Rekha Joseph from London, Ontario - Canada shares how God has changed her life with His unconditional love.

We live in this beautiful world sanctified with abundance of blessings. However, being humans, we forget about all the positives around us and tend to dwell instead on our insecurities such as our health, finance, professional growth etc. We set a high bar of expectation from worldly sources of happiness. Do we ever think of our spiritual well-being or how close we are with God? Are we following His will?

I too focused on materialistic pleasures in past years and had encountered hurdles in life. I stumbled on certain obstacles, which would never have existed if I had followed Jesus without reserve. Though they were challenging years, slowly but steadily, I have succeeded in making a personal connection with our loving God. We all say and write 'God is Love' but do we truly know the full extent of it?

Personal Conversations with God

During my personal conversations with God, I started to write down my feelings in a small notebook, including my worries, insecurities and thanksgivings. I felt peace in my mind, once I was done with writing. Recently I turned back the pages and read all the notes I had written in the past. I realised that all those anxieties and insecurities were silently taken care of by God.

Through all those years, I was pretending to be happy, and others felt that I didn't have any problems. It was invisible to the world, but I was feeling void and not content with what I had. I should say that I was not a keen believer or follower. As a typical Catholic I attended Mass on Sundays and believed that I was fulfilling my Christian duties.

We all say and write 'God is Love' but do we understand the full extent of it?

Isaiah 25:1 says, "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you. I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure." Yes, our Lord did bestow all His blessings on me, but I was still weary and complained about all my failures and their outcomes. However, now I have realized that through my failures God was leading me to success, not for the earthly life, but for eternal life. When I surrendered myself to God; everything changed around me. Actually, it was I who

changed; my perseverance altered, I learnt to forgive and started to be more considerate to others.

Who Can Love Without Any Limits?

Our Lord is a wonderful and merciful God who can forgive our sins and bring us close to Him by His unconditional love. Who can love without any limits or receiving no favours in return? No one, other than our God. This is the fact which I have experienced - "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh - my adversaries and foes- they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident" (Psalm 27:1-3).

Are we grateful enough to thank our Lord for all His blessings and mercy? I wasn't. However, nowadays I always take time to glorify our Lord every moment of my life, whether it's good or bad, whether I'm sick or healthy, sad or joyful, because He is a loving and caring God.

Let us all offer our gratitude to our loving God, be with Him always and acknowledge His love by obeying His commandments.



POPE'S *Voice*

"Each of us has a vision of good and of evil. We have to encourage people to move towards what they think is good... Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place."

Pope Francis



GLOBAL CATHOLIC NEWS

Compiled by Smitha George

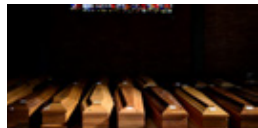


POPE OPENS MINISTRIES OF LECTOR AND ACOLYTE TO WOMEN

Vatican: Pope Francis has opened the ministries of Lector and Acolyte to women, in a stable and institutionalized form through a specific mandate. There is nothing new about women proclaiming the Word of God during liturgical celebrations or carrying out a service at the altar as altar servers or as Eucharistic ministers. In many communities throughout the world these practices are already authorized by local Bishops. However, up to this point, this has occurred without a true and proper institutional mandate. Now, in the wake of the discernment which has emerged from the last Synods of Bishops, Pope Francis wanted to formalize and institutionalize the presence of women at the altar.

COVID-19 CLAIMS 200 PLUS PRIESTS IN ITALY

Rome: Of the more than 76,000 people known to have died of COVID-19 in Italy the past 11 months, more than 200 were priests, according to the Catholic newspaper, Avvenire. Already four priests have died since the start of 2021. Some 204 priests, many of whom were still actively serving their communities, have died in Italy as of early January. While the majority of men were in their late 70s and 80s, one of the youngest to have lost his life was 58-year-old Father Alfredo Nicolardi of the Diocese of Como who died on December. 31.



DE-MINED ISRAELI CHURCH REOPENS AFTER 54 YEARS

Egypt: On January 10th, a Franciscan church reopened its doors for its first Mass in 54 years. A small group of 50 guests attended the service at St John the Baptist Chapel. The church is located on the banks of the Jordan River, near Qasr Al-Yahud, the baptismal site of Jesus. The 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War left the chapel unusable with nearly 6,500 landmines in the surrounding area. For decades the chapel went unused and abandoned. In 2018, a UK-based non-profit organisation along with the Israeli authorities worked to clear the land for the church reopening.

VATICAN DISCOURAGES ALLEGED 'LADY OF ALL NATIONS' APPARITIONS

Netherlands: The Vatican's doctrinal office has urged Catholics not to promote "the alleged apparitions and revelations" associated with the Marian title of "Lady of All Nations," according to a Dutch Bishop. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's appeal was announced in a clarification issued on December 30th by Bishop Johannes Hendriks of Haarlem-Amsterdam. The clarification relates to the alleged visions which Ida Peerdeman, a secretary living in the Dutch capital Amsterdam, claimed to have received between 1945 and 1959.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY BEGINS RESTORATION OF ST. XAVIER CASKET

India: The Archaeological Survey of India has begun the restoration of the four-century old silver casket that houses the relics of Saint Francis Xavier at the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Old Goa. The casket, which was last tended to in 1698, has been braving the elements within the basilica, which is part of the UNESCO declared heritage complex. Old Goa was once the capital of the Portuguese maritime empire and an important trade center. It was in 1624 that for the first time the mortal remains of the saint were taken away from public view and ensconced in a silver casket and kept atop a specially constructed mausoleum within the Old Goa Basilica.



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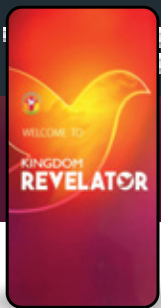
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"Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering."

(1 Peter 5:8-9)

"God overcomes the world's evil by taking it upon himself. This is also how we can lift others up: not by judging, not by suggesting what to do, but by becoming neighbors, empathizing, sharing God's love."

(Pope Francis)



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