

KINGDOM REVELATOR

CATHOLIC MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ■ ISSUE 92

**GOD'S
HUMBLE SERVANT**

**ARE YOU AFRAID
OF GOING TO
CONFESSION?**

**HE'S GOT
PLANS FOR YOU**

**TAMING THE
TONGUE**





Mother Mary,
Pray for our Readers

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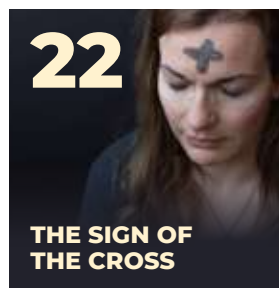
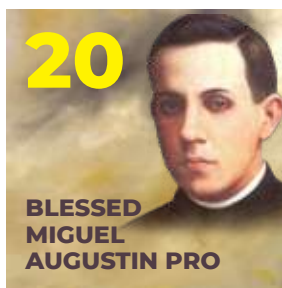
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YOUCAT SPEAKS



What prepares a person for repentance?

229: The insight into one's personal guilt produces a longing to better oneself; this is called contrition. We arrive at contrition when we see the contradiction between God's love and our sin. Then we are full of sorrow for our sins; we resolve to change our life and place all our hope in God's help. [CCC 1430-1433, 1490]

The reality of sin is often repressed. Some people even think that guilt feelings should be dealt with in a merely psychological way. But genuine guilt feelings are important. It is like driving an automobile: When the speedometer indicates that the speed limit has been exceeded, the speedometer is not responsible, but the driver is. The closer we come to God, who is all light, the clearer our dark sides come to light also. Yet God is not a light that burns but, rather, a light that heals. That is why repentance impels us to go into the Light in which we will be completely healed.



Editorial

We can all relate to the parable of the Prodigal son. The elder son is inside the house when the parable begins but the younger son is planning to leave the house. By the end of the parable the younger son comes back into the house, but the elder son is outside refusing to go in.

Often, we, like the prodigal son from the pit of sin, have said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). Seeing our repentance, the Father receives us back into the house. However, sometimes we are like the elder son, once inside the house, we gradually grow to be like him, looking at others enjoying their lives, we tend to get grumpy. Standing in the midst of our trials and temptations, we complain like the elder son, "For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends" (Luke 15:29).

Often, we forget that we are sons and daughters of the Father and instead consider ourselves slaves simply obeying His commands. As a result, we stop enjoying the free gifts that God the Father has given us through His son Jesus. Let us not be deceived in this way anymore and continually remind ourselves what the Father wants us to hear, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31).

God loves us unconditionally, as we are reminded by the prophet, Jeremiah in 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you."



RESOLUTION FOR A NEW YOU



Christine Sabu, from Warrington, UK, offers some practical tips for new year resolutions.

Making New Year's resolutions can be challenging - you don't want to be too ambitious and completely turn your life upside down in the space of a day, but at the same time you do want to make some changes. Personally, I like New Year's resolutions - it's an opportunity to help yourself grow in different aspects of your life. Today I want to give you a practical guide on how to make resolutions that help you to nurture your spiritual life.

Identifying Weaknesses

To help yourself to grow spiritually, you need to be honest with yourself. This means examining how your spiritual life is going right now and consider what changes you need to make. For example, you may find that you can't commit to reading the Bible regularly, or you can't find time for personal prayer. Maybe you're a person who doesn't have a personal relationship with the Lord and maybe that's what you want to change. Whatever it may be, it's important to remember that by identifying these weaknesses in your life and trying to make changes, you will grow closer to God. This doesn't mean that your spiritual life will be perfect from the time you make that resolution until the end of your life, but it does mean that you are making an effort to persevere in (or even start) your journey towards Christ.

God sees when we take that first step, and He will give us everything we need to grow in our spiritual life - we see this in James 4:8 - "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." So don't be discouraged if you experience times where you feel like you can't pray, or you can't "stick to your resolution". Keep pursuing the

Lord, even when life gets hard. This is what Christianity is about. It's not only about staying close to Jesus when times are easy, but also about trusting Him in times of suffering or spiritual dryness.

Intentional with Time

One of the best pieces of advice I have received, is to be intentional with your time. In terms of your spiritual life, this could mean chalking out time in your day - every day - that is dedicated to Jesus. I'm not saying that you have to pray at the same time every day (although this may help you), but I think it's important to make sure you have a window of open time every day to 'fulfill' your spiritual resolution. Doing this may mean you have less time to do other things, but at the end of the day that's a sacrifice you have to be willing to make! Your top priority should be loving God with all that you have - and this comes back to why I love New Year's resolutions. I think it's the perfect time to take a look at the priorities in your life and plan a time to put God back at the top of that list. It's a time to

remove things that aren't good for your spiritual life, things that are hindering you from leading a life centered around Jesus. Matthew 6:33 tells us: "But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

When you make your resolutions this year, remember not to overwhelm yourself. Set goals that are going to help you grow but be realistic. Sometimes if we take too much on, it's hard to stay consistent. Wishing you all a great year filled with blessings ahead!

Do something beautiful for God. Do it with your life. Do it every day. Do it in your own way. But do it!

St Teresa of Kolkatta

GOD'S HUMBLE SERVANT



Msgr Seán Healy, Parish Priest of St Teresa's Catholic Church, Beaconsfield, UK, shares his memories of meeting the late Pope Benedict XVI.

As I write these words, we have just heard that Pope Benedict has died. He had been elected Pope in 2005 and quite unexpectedly resigned from his position in 2013, the first Pope to do so in 598 years. Often when such important people die, we have little or no knowledge of what they are really like, and we rely heavily on the obituaries that follow their deaths. We are told that Pope Benedict loved playing the piano (especially pieces by Mozart), that he liked cats, a daily can of Fanta and so many more.

But mostly we read about his achievements and failures as a churchman, a theologian, and a Head of State. I had an opportunity to meet Pope Benedict in 2010 when our local Catholic Bishop made an ad limina visit to the Pope in Rome. These visits happen every five years and the Bishop is asked to make a detailed report about his diocese which also provides an insight into the state of the Catholic Church in our country.

Amongst other things, the visit involves a personal meeting between the Bishop and the Pope allowing the Pope to

encourage his fellow Bishop and to ask follow-up questions about the diocesan report. When our Bishop, Peter Doyle, travelled to Rome in 2010, he asked me to accompany him.

IN REFLECTING ON POPE BENEDICT, I AM REMINDED OF THE WORDS OF ST PAUL 'PUT ON THEN AS GOD'S CHOSEN ONES, HOLY AND BELOVED, HEARTFELT COMPASSION, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, GENTLENESS AND PATIENCE, BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER.'

(COLOSSIANS 3:12-13)

On the morning of the Papal encounter, we waited patiently in a sumptuous antechamber in the Apostolic Palace. The Bishop was incredibly nervous but when the moment came to be ushered into Pope Benedict's presence, the Pope was instantly re-assuring, putting both of us at our ease as we posed for the obligatory photos; he spoke very personally to me in his high-pitched German accent about my role as an assistant to the

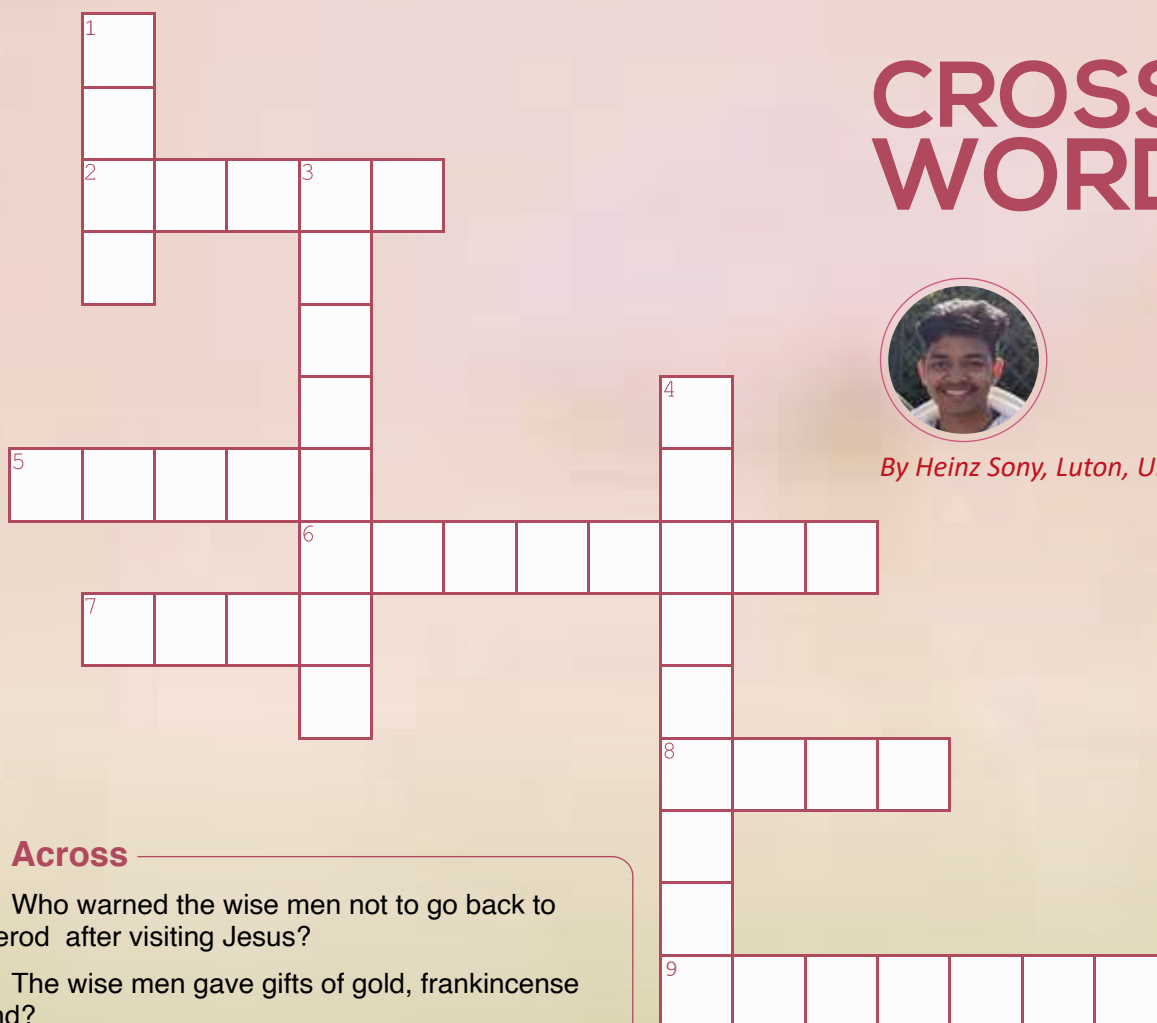
Bishop and then I was asked to leave as the Pope and Bishop had their private conversation. The Bishop emerged after about fifteen minutes, and he said how incredibly kind Pope Benedict had been and had asked an insightful question about the Catholic Church in Luton!

The point I am trying to make is that those who are asked

to hold positions of authority in whatever walk of life are more than their public persona. They are often presented in a particular way, but the reality is sometimes quite the opposite. Pope Benedict was often presented in a very stern manner – a conservative, a hardliner – but he was something different. He was shy, scholarly, timid and

seemed to want to bring out the best in others by words of encouragement and gestures of love and solidarity.

It seems to me that despite his high office and huge public profile, Pope Benedict lived those key Christian qualities. He was a man of God – close to the Lord and always His humble servant. May he have the reward of his labors.



CROSS WORD



By Heinz Sony, Luton, UK

Across

2. Who warned the wise men not to go back to Herod after visiting Jesus?
5. The wise men gave gifts of gold, frankincense and?
6. He was ruling Rome when Jesus was born.
7. Jesus was visited by the wise men when he was?
8. From which direction did the wise men come from?
9. The story of the visit of the Wise Men appears in the Gospel according to whom?

Down

1. What did the wise men follow to find baby Jesus?
3. What is the feast day of the visitation of the Three Wise Men?
4. In which city was Jesus born?

Blessings In Abundance



Euphrasia Ngum Ndi, from Welwyn Garden City, UK, reminisces with thanksgiving on the numerous blessings she received at the Second Saturday Convention.

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High" (Psalm 9:1-2).

I was diagnosed with premature ovarian failure in my twenties and was told I would never ever have biological children of my own, but the Lord came through when we started attending the Second Saturday Convention led by Anointing Fire Catholic Ministries in Birmingham, UK.

Attending these conventions, we had the privilege of encountering our Master Jesus in His true divinity during the Eucharistic processions. Jesus is carried around for all to see, for all to admire, for all to adore, to pay Him homage and above all to reverence Him.

As Jesus makes His rounds through the auditorium, He is healing, restoring, bringing hope, rebuilding trust, and showering His people with blessings. Jesus, on His walk around, is reassuring us that He is a compassionate Lord, that He is the one true God who reigns over any medical, problem however devastating its diagnosis or prognosis maybe.

We had a prophecy about God blessing couples with children during one Second Saturday Convention in October 2016, and we claimed it. Being in agreement with God and with your spouse is a powerful place to be. Matthew 18:19 confirms this: "Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

We had attended the Second Saturday conventions for a few

Jesus is a compassionate Lord, the one and true God who reigns over any medical report, however devastating its diagnosis or prognosis.

years before this prophecy, and I always had stomach aches during the Eucharistic procession that is a part of every convention. During these conventions, I admired the children's ministry and the manner in which it was done. Children were called according

to their age groups, and then there is a general prayer, requesting parents to pray for their children. I would sit there telling God, "If you bless me with a baby, I will bring him back here to the Second Saturday Convention to attend the children's ministry and give glory to You for Your wonderful deeds."

Our conception was prophesied during a Second Saturday convention, and our due date for our miracle to be born was a Second Saturday. Isn't God wonderful? Majestic, in all His ways, from the beginning, He has no rival. He is subject to no other power, and He reigns supreme. We are in awe of God's faithfulness. What he says He will do.

We continue to attend these conventions with our son, and our prayer for him to join the children's ministry became a reality in the November 2022 Second Saturday Convention. Our miracle baby is now five years old. During his first attendance at the children's ministry, he came back telling us how much fun he had, learning about Jesus, and told us, "Mum and dad, I really love Second Saturday Conventions and would love to attend every time!"

During the January 2019 Second Saturday Convention,

the priest blessed our miracle baby who was just 17 months old at the time, and he responded Amen at the end of Father's prayer for him. Father was speechless and said he was indeed a gift and a blessing!

Just like Hannah in Samuel 1:27-28, I say with all confidence that I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life, he will be given over to the Lord.

Second Saturday convention is a welcoming home for us.

A home where our hope was rebuilt.

A home where we found reassurance.

A home where we found trust again.

A home where we had a deep encounter with our Master.

A home that taught us that God is truly a God of the impossible.

A home that brought us tremendous healing.

A home where our testimony was born.

A home where our testimony continues to live and grow.

A home that we will cherish forever.



Wisdom In Vain



Lydia Bosco, from USA, cites the example of King Solomon to ponder over the importance of obedience.



Wisdom is one of the greatest gifts from God. We may be one who is praying and longing for wisdom. Job 28:17 says about wisdom, “Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold.” Also Proverbs 4:7 says, “Get wisdom though it cost all you have.” Even though wisdom is valuable, without the virtue of obedience, it is in vain, because

we may only be able to achieve some temporary goals and accumulate goods that will perish in this world.

Why Do We Need Wisdom?

It is to know the will of God. This is what Wisdom 9:17 tells us – “No one has ever learned your will, unless you first gave him wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit down to him.” Thus, by

having wisdom, and through obedience, we will be able to apply God’s will in our daily life. However, if we have wisdom and know the will of God, but do not obey His will, then of what advantage is wisdom?

Unsatisfied in Plenitude

Let’s look at the life of Solomon and learn more about it. 1 Kings 3:12b says, “Behold, I

give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.” As we know, Solomon was the one to whom God granted more wisdom than to any other human. But what happened to him? Was his life successful? Was he happy about his life? He disobeyed God continuously. He married women from other nations, which God prohibited, and these women later led Solomon to worship idols (1 Kings 11:4). Also, God warned against accumulating material wealth (Deuteronomy 17:16), but he did. Solomon married as many women as he wished and acquired so much wealth, but was he happy? Even though Solomon earned everything, he could not find happiness in anything. Saint Augustine says, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

In the midst of amenities, plenitude, power and possessions, Solomon was unsatisfied. Solomon lost his relationship with God through disobedience. He used to seek God’s will and prayed to God in the beginning, but later on we see that his conversation with God ceased. Sin caused his relationship with God to break. So finally, his life ended up in deep desolation. This is what happens to anyone no matter how wealthy or poor, healthy or sick, young or old they may be.

Consequences of Disobedience

The spirit of disobedience knocked down King Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived. The fall of Adam and Eve also brought about by their act of disobedience to God, which led

to their exile from the Garden of Eden. Similarly, as a result of Solomon’s disobedience, the kingdom of Israel was divided in two (1 Kings 11:9-11). Later they lost their kingdom and Temple and were forced into exile. May we not, through disobedience, lose our relationship with God and the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of Heaven!

**IF YOU WILL, YOU
CAN KEEP THE
COMMANDMENTS,
AND TO ACT
FAITHFULLY IS A
MATTER OF YOUR
OWN CHOICE.
SIRACH 15:15**

God wants to show us the importance of obedience and how through disobedience we get detached from God and finally lose the kingdom of God. God values obedience more than any sacrifice. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). In fact, Christ Himself showed it throughout His life by being obedient not only to His Heavenly Father, but also to His earthly parents. “Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:51-52). Jesus lived a life of obedience and grew in wisdom.

God’s Will Vs Self-Will

Obedience is not an easy task. The main cause of

disobedience is pride. Hosea 13:6 says, “When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they become proud; then they forgot me.” This is what happened to Solomon. Sirach 15:15 teaches us, “If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.” From this, we have to acknowledge that obedience requires our will. God has given us a free will. So, it’s our choice whether to follow our own will or God’s will. To follow our own will is easy. But to do the will of God, we have to first know the will of God. For that we need wisdom. To receive wisdom, James 1:5 tells us – “If anyone of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to you.”

After knowing the will of God, we must obey it. In order to replace self-will with God’s will, our pride must be crushed. One easy way for it is to know ourselves. Knowing our nothingness (everything we have other than sin is from God) in the presence of God, helps us to be humbler and more obedient to God. St Augustine prayed, “May I know Thee, May I know myself.” To the extent that we know ourselves, we will know as much about our weaknesses, shortcomings, sins, wretchedness...which in turn will help us grow in humility and be more obedient to God.

At the Annunciation, Mother Mary came to know God’s will and she obeyed wholeheartedly through her simple ‘Fiat’. May we, her children, also give our ‘Yes’ to God, following her example. We too can pray, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to Your word. Amen.”

Taming the Tongue



Sogi Bijo, from Rugby, UK, dwells on how to become a blessing through our words.

On many occasions, I have heard both young and old say, "I think my tongue is the reason for many problems. When I get angry, I don't know what I say!" In my life, I have also noticed that my words, the tone of my voice and my sound can bring a big change in many situations. The tongue is a dangerous weapon that can wound the other person's soul. It could even cause lasting damage to the soul. Our words have the potential to either cause hatred or end hatred. Our words can destroy someone or inspire someone. The Bible says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21).

There are no lessons in school about "How to control your tongue." I believe we need to give intense training to our tongue mainly through prayer, reading the Word of God, and by practicing what we learn through prayer and the reading of Scripture.

James 3:2 says, "Everyone makes mistakes but If a person makes no mistakes in speaking, he is perfect, and he will be able to control the whole body." In other words, this person can control his earthly body by the grace of God, so that sin shall not reign in it.

Ephesians 4:29 explains, "A good word can build up others, encourage others, helps to increase their faith."

Colossians 4:6 tells us, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." When others listen to us, they should be able to perceive

that Jesus Christ dwells in us. St John Chrysostom warns us how a simple word, unchecked, can progress to an evil end - a word of insult can lead to anger, from anger to blows and from blows to murder.

Negative expressions

You are lazy. I hate you. You are good for nothing. She is better than you. You can't do this. You will not change. You are evil or stupid.

“**“On the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter.”**
Matthew 12:36”

Positive expressions

Well done. Try your best. You can do this. Don't worry, there will be other options or other chances. Let's do it together. Well done. Congratulations!

Discourage swearing and encourage respectful language - rules about swearing apply to adults as well as children.

Give up gossiping, lying, flattery, shouting and blasphemy.

Tips to control the tongue:

1. Rely completely on God's strength and power (Philippians 4:13).
2. During personal prayer, surrender your heart and tongue to the Lord each day and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you (Psalm 19:14).
3. Read and repeat Bible verses aloud a few times.
4. Be a good listener. Be quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19).
5. Ask others to observe your tone and correct you if your words are offensive.
6. Practice a calm and merciful tone, with encouraging and inspiring words.



Pope St Victor 1

(Fourteenth pope)



By Henoch Sony,
Luton

Early Life

Victor was born in Africa, the son of a man named Felix and an unknown woman. After becoming Pope, he continued to use his given name. Victor was a bishop before becoming Pope. He most likely worked in Leptis Magna, an old Carthaginian city. He may have also spent time in Tripolitania. The Church does not know a lot about his early life.

Papacy

Because the Church does not have many official records from this era, the dates of tenure are uncertain, but one source states his papacy began in 186 AD. Most people today think he became Pope around 189 AD and ruled for more than ten years. If the other documents are correct, his papacy might have lasted up to 12 years. He was elected Pope following the martyrdom of Pope Saint Eleutherius.



Later Years And Contribution To The Church

Pope Victor is famous for his work to release the oppressed. The emperor at the time was anti-Christian and forced Christians to work in mines in Sardinia. Pope Victor thought that those individuals deserved to be free and urged that they be released. He then welcomed them as they returned to the Church.

Many people in the Western world celebrated Easter on Sunday during the second century. They picked various days to observe this festival throughout the East. Pope Victor brought all the churches together when he announced that Easter should be celebrated on a Sunday, a tradition that the Church still follows today. Initially, the pope sought to excommunicate anyone who observed Easter on other days or prevented them from attending Church.

Legacy

According to early Church records, Pope Victor I was a martyr, which is one of the reasons he is considered a saint. Pope Victor's martyrdom makes sense since he was the leader of the Christians who faced opposition from many. There are no records indicating where he was buried or what happened to his relics. His feast day was celebrated on 28th July as "St Victor I, Pope and Martyr".

He's got plans for you



Rajni Manoj, from Derby, UK, shares how she overcame a difficult period in her life.

How many times have we waited for things we asked for? How many times have we given up on hope and just despaired? I guess nobody likes the waiting game. We want what we asked for straight away. Have you ever wondered why God wants us to wait before He grants us a request?

I had a miscarriage during my first pregnancy. Unfortunately, it happened at a time when I thought I was so ready to be a mother. We were ecstatic when we found out we were going to become parents. We were all excited and full of dreams for the next stage in our lives, but twelve weeks into the pregnancy, I miscarried. It was devastating. I couldn't comprehend why this happened to us. I always considered myself a good Christian, one who tried to live a holy life. So why did God let this happen to me? Looking back, I see the hand of God in everything that happened in my life. Psalm 147:3 says, "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds."

In the Bible, we read in

1 Samuel 1:1-20 about Hannah and Elkanah, who were blessed with a son, Samuel, after a long wait. Soon I became like Hannah. The miscarriage didn't stop me from going into the house of the Lord. Rather I went more frequently and with faith to receive more grace and blessings. I understood that beyond all my painful trials there was a purpose of God. God used the trials to accomplish something great in my life and to further the whole plan of salvation mapped out for me. Even though things were hard at the time, God was still in charge - "Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security" (Jeremiah 33:6).

Hannah wept and did not eat because of the conflict between the two wives. Hannah could not enjoy the display of love and favor from Elkanah who gave her double portion of what he had. Often it is the case that problems we face make our lives miserable. We read in the book of Samuel, Hannah is at the house of the Lord with a blessed double portion in front of her and she can't enjoy it.

Whilst it may seem strange to us that Peninnah was blessed with children and Hannah was cursed with barrenness, often we don't understand God's ways until He completes His plan.



"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

(Romans 8:28)



Hannah was in bitterness of soul and great anguish, yet she chose the right thing to do. Hannah took her bitter and anguished feelings to God honestly in prayer. She poured out her soul before the Lord. This is exactly what we all need to do. Instead of keeping the bitterness of the soul and the anguish in our heart, we should pour it out before the Lord because we walk by faith and not by sight!

My Mother at the Cross



Dr Joyal Joseph, from Birmingham, UK, sheds some light on the role of Mother of Christ in our salvation.

“**M**eanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.” (John 19:25-27).

Imagine the amount of pain Mary would have gone through in following Jesus to Calvary. Perhaps the memory of Simeon the prophet prophesying that a sword would go through her heart, or I wonder if the prophecy in Genesis that the offspring of the woman will strike Satan's head, consoled her! She stood at the foot of the cross as the epitome of unwavering faith, sacrifice and love. Jesus did not withhold even His own beloved Mother from mankind. He emptied Himself completely for our sake.

In paragraph 2676 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church it says, "Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells." Mary is described as the ark of the covenant, the one who carried God, the Word in her. For it to take place Mary had to humble herself, allowing God to do His will in her and thus God elevated her to a higher place in heaven.

I believe Mary believed in the supernatural ways of God. God placing His son inside her womb was her own supernatural testimony and what else could build her faith enough other than this testimony. The word of God in the Old Testament tells of how

the shekinah glory overshadowed the tabernacle in the Holy of Holies. We see the same in the scriptures, in the gospel of Luke, the same shekinah glory, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary.

The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. Bible tells us that Jesus is the only way to the Father, no one can come to the Father except through Him. The central point of our Christian faith begins at Calvary, the moment of our salvation, the moment Jesus showed to the entire world that He was laying down His life for us. And Mary stood by Him till the end.

I have noticed that the elders in my family always remain calm during a crisis, no matter what they go through they are just calm because they understand the ways of God. In their history with God, He has never let them down. They draw great inspiration from Our Lady. I remind myself of this loving mother and stand with her at calvary, the access point to all of heaven's treasures and every blessing in my life.

And today if you come before the cross, Jesus says to you, "Here my beloved, this is your mother" and looking at His mother he says, "Here is my beloved". If you are listening to Jesus' voice, are you willing to take her into your home?

**And Mary
stood by
Him till
the end.**

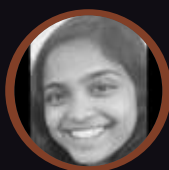
Crossword Answers

Across - 2. Angel 5. Myrrh 6. Augustus 7. Born 8. East 9. Matthew

Down- 1. Star 3. Epiphany 4. Bethlehem



ARE YOU AFRAID OF GOING TO Confession?



*Rosemary Joy,
from Birmingham,
UK, encourages the
reader to make use
of the sacraments
regularly.*

No Condemnation

What will the priest think of me? This is one of the most common fears that people face about a confession. You might feel uncomfortable telling your sins out loud because you think the priest is going to judge you. Going to a priest who knows

you, such as your parish priest, can seem even more daunting. But the priest is not there to judge you. He is there to reveal the mercy of Jesus. Every priest in the confessional acts 'in persona Christi', or 'in the person of Christ'. This means that the priest is representing Jesus Himself. So whatever you confess, you're actually



"At the time of your examination (of sins) beware of the devil that ties your tongue."

St Josemaria Escriva



confessing to Jesus. Remember what Jesus Himself tells us, "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). Jesus doesn't want to shame you; He wants to forgive you. Jesus doesn't want to scold you; He wants to give you hope. The confessional is a place of hope, the place where even the worst sinner can hope that he can one day become a saint.

Healing

In the sacrament of confession, Jesus not only offers us forgiveness but also healing. Sin wounds us. Sin creates a war within us. Sin takes away our peace and plagues us with

sorrow and regret. Jesus wants to heal us of all these effects of sin in our life. He wants to restore to us the joy that the devil has robbed from us. The graces poured out in confession also give us the strength we need to fight our temptations and not fall back into old patterns of sin.

Forming a Habit

The longer we put off confession, the more difficult it will be to go to confession. Our list of sins gets longer, and we may begin to feel overwhelmed about the many things we have to confess. Of course, the more frequently we receive the sacrament of confession, the more graces we will receive. But another reason why we should consider making confession at least every 2 weeks is that it can help us feel less burdened and calmer about going to confession. It might be useful to pick a certain day of the week and try to go to confession on that day every week. It's a habit that I'm sure will bring immense blessings and peace in our lives.

Don't Put It Off

"I'll confess another day." It's easy to keep putting off confession, whether it be because we are feeling scared or feeling lazy. Or we may feel that we are not ready to give up certain sins. To make a good confession, we need to have the desire to want to leave our sins behind. After healing the blind man at Bethsaida, Jesus sent him away to his home saying, "Do not even go into the village" (Mark 8:26). In the

same way, Jesus also tells us after He has forgiven and healed us in confession not go back to certain areas or people in our life. Whatever or whoever is keeping us away from Jesus and closer to sin, we should stay far away from them. "Flee from sin as from a snake, for if you approach sin it will bite you. Its teeth are lion's teeth and can destroy human lives" (Sirach 22:2). This cannot be done with our own will or strength, but with the grace of God, everything is possible.



In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason he needs medicine so that he may be restored to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance.

St Thomas Aquinas



Saint

Blessed Miguel Augustin Pro

(Patron saint of social justice and those in illness, depression or despair.)

By Shino Merin, Finland



Early Life

Miguel Augustin was born into a prosperous and devout mining family in 1881 in the Guadalupe region of Mexico as the third of eleven children, four of whom had died as infants. From birth, he was known for being a cheerful, spirited youth who embraced his family's faith and demonstrated considerable concern for the poor and working classes.

Miguel was, from an early age, intensely spiritual and equally intense in his mischievousness, frequently exasperating his family with his humor and practical jokes. Frequently sick throughout his childhood and well into adulthood, Miguel learned to accept suffering and offer it as penance to the Lord.

Two of his sisters joined a convent. Miguel was especially close to his older sister, who had entered a cloistered convent. Upon seeing her faith journey, Miguel gave up his many business and romantic prospects, and dedicated himself to Christ. He entered the Jesuit novitiate at El Llano, Michoacan in 1911.

Later Life

He was sent from Mexico (at the onset of the Mexican Revolution, and the persecution of Catholicism), to continue his studies in Granada, Spain. At the age of 36, Miguel was ordained in Belgium. Wanting nothing more than to bring the light of Christ back to his people, Miguel immediately returned to Mexico despite the danger of doing so.

While the Church was 'underground,' with Church

buildings seized and closed, priests in hiding, and active persecution of the faithful, Miguel celebrated Mass and the Eucharist secretly, in family homes and gathering places. He ministered to the people and offered the sacraments to small groups, hearing confessions, anointing the sick, and delivering the Holy Eucharist.

Oftentimes Father Miguel resorted to disguises to avoid



detection and arrest. He would come in the middle of the night dressed as a beggar to baptize infants, bless marriages, and celebrate Mass. He would appear in jail dressed as a police officer to bring Holy Viaticum to condemned Catholics. When going to fashionable neighborhoods to procure for the poor, he would show up at the doorstep dressed as a fashionable businessman with a fresh flower on his lapel. It was exhausting and dangerous work, and Miguel's stomach ailments returned. However, he persevered in his ministry without ceasing.

Death

Eventually the authorities learned of his activities, and actively set

out to capture him. Along with his two brothers, he was then falsely accused of attempting to assassinate the president of Mexico, Elias Plutarco Calles via a failed bombing attempt. A wanted man, Miguel was turned over to the police, and sentenced to death without trial. His younger brother was spared at his pleading, but his second brother received the same sentence.

On 23rd November 1927, as Fr Pro walked from his cell to the courtyard to the firing squad, he blessed the soldiers, knelt, and briefly prayed quietly. Declining a blindfold, he faced his executioners with a crucifix in one hand and a rosary in the other and held his arms out in imitation of the crucified Christ, shouting "Long live Christ the King!" Following his death, there was great public outcry, and his funeral became a rallying public demonstration of the Catholic faith, despite government prohibition.

Veneration

Fr Miguel was known for his great charity, and he used his natural gifts of intense determination and courage, seen throughout his life, to further the Kingdom of God.

Blessed Miguel Augustin Pro was beatified in 1988 by Pope John Paul II, who said of him that "neither suffering nor serious illness, neither the exhausting ministerial activity, frequently carried out in difficult and dangerous circumstances, could stifle the radiating and contagious joy which he brought to his life for Christ and which nothing could take away." His feast day is celebrated on 23rd November.

The Sign of the Cross



Smitha Shinto, from Ireland, draws our attention to a powerful weapon that can be used in our daily life.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

This was probably the first religious act and prayer we learned in our life. This powerful prayer is the most commonly used sacramental in our life. The Sign of the Cross is used at the beginning and the end of prayer, or it can be used as a prayer on its own.

Can you remember how many times you have used this prayer, probably hundreds or thousands of times or maybe more? Why is this prayer so important and popular? Why should we use this pious gesture every day?

The power of the Cross lies in the truth that our Saviour Jesus Christ died on the Cross to save us from our sins. The Cross is the reason for our salvation. The power of the Cross is explained in the words of St John Maria Vianney: "When we make the Sign of the Cross with genuine religious sentiment, that is, when we are fully aware of the actions we are performing, we make all hell tremble." But too often we rush through these gestures without

understanding its meaning and power.

Even though making the Sign of the Cross is a simple action, it can empower us by strengthening our faith. St Cyril of Jerusalem reminded us to seal ourselves confidently with the Sign of the Cross and "not be ashamed to profess the crucified one," as it will cause the demons to tremble and flee.



Saint Teresa of Ávila believed that the Sign of the Cross has the power to deepen one's confidence in the time of trial.



By making the Sign of the Cross we are consecrating ourselves to the Holy Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are professing our belief in the Mystery of the Holy Trinity and praising the Blessed Trinity. Making the Sign of the Cross also helps us to diffuse the powerful force of temptations, such as anger and lust.

We also use the Sign of the Cross in the solemn form when we make the sign of the Cross on our forehead, lips, and chest. In making the sign of the Cross on our forehead, we bless our thoughts and pray that the Word of God may be in our thoughts. When we make the sign of the Cross on our lips, we pray that our speech may become holy and help us to share the Word of God with others. When we make the sign of the Cross on our chest, we are inviting God to strengthen our love for Him and others.

The saints used the Sign of the Cross as a shield and a protection against all evil. Saint Teresa of Ávila believed that the Sign of the Cross has the power to deepen one's confidence in times of trial.

Let us remember to make the Sign of the Cross with devotion and while fully understanding the meaning and power of those beautiful gestures. Whenever we say this prayer, let us embrace the love of the Holy Trinity, make us His own instrument and symbol, profess our faith in Him and activate our freedom in Christ.

POPE'S *Voice*

"A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just."

Pope Francis



GLOBAL CATHOLIC NEWS

Compiled by Smitha George

CATHOLIC CONVERTS ACKNOWLEDGES POPE BENEDICT XVI'S ROLE



America: In the days after news spread that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was nearing the end of his life, a number of Catholic converts shared that they came to faith through the writing and teachings of the late Pope. Among them,

Sohrab Ahmari, a founder and editor of Compact, wrote in a New York Times op-ed that his conversion from Islam to Catholicism was "in large part inspired by Benedict's writings." Tod Worner, managing editor of the Word on Fire

Institute's "Evangelization & Culture," wrote in his blog that he read his way into the Catholic Church, thanks to Pope Benedict XVI. Like Ahmari many have given Pope Benedict's role in their faith journey on Twitter after his death on 31st December 2022.

SANTA RIDES A CAMEL AROUND JERUSALEM EVERY YEAR



Jerusalem: Every year on the feast of St Nicholas, Issa Anis Kasssieh dons a red suit, black boots, and a thick white beard. He mounts a camel in the outskirts of Jerusalem and rides into the streets of the

Old City. Santa Claus is an invented figure, his motive as a Christian for dressing up as the character is to remind people that the feast of Christmas celebrates an event that took place in the Middle East — the birth of Christ. For Kasssieh, being Jerusalem Santa is a way to also remind people of the more than 2,000-year history of the Christian presence in the Middle East.

WOMAN ARRESTED WHILE PRAYING SILENTLY OUTSIDE ABORTION CLINIC



England: A woman arrested by British police faces charges of "protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users" for standing still and praying silently

outside an abortion facility. Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was arrested in Birmingham, UK. She was charged on 15th December with four counts of breaking a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) around the abortion facility. Following a further exchange with police, the 45-year-old was arrested and interrogated. Vaughan-Spruce is the director of March for Life UK.

FIRST KNOWN NATIVITY SCENE FIGURINES ARE ON DISPLAY IN ROME



Rome: The first known Nativity scene figurines are currently on display in one of Rome's oldest basilicas. The underground Chapel of the Nativity in

the Basilica of St Mary Major once contained at least six marble Nativity statues sculpted by Arnolfo di Cambio in the late 13th century. The figurines were commissioned in 1292 by Pope Nicholas IV, the first Franciscan pope, who was inspired by St Francis of Assisi, the creator of the first living Nativity in Greccio, Italy, in 1223.

HISTORIC 12.5 MILLION PILGRIMS VISIT OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE SHRINE IN MEXICO



Mexico: A historic number of 12.5 million pilgrims

visited Our Lady of Guadalupe at her shrine in Mexico City in recent days, authorities have confirmed. In a statement on December 13th, the Mexico City Government Secretariat said the Mexican capital "received 12,500,000 pilgrims at the Basilica of Guadalupe."

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"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17

Article Contest

COMPETITION TIME

Inviting original articles
in your own words in
English (no copy and
paste). Selected articles
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Topic _____
'Jesus Christ - My saviour'

(Maximum Words - 1000)

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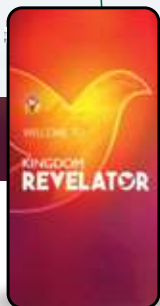
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