

KAIROS

GLOBAL



Inner Unity, Order, Integrity, and Freedom

JACOB JOSE

ALSO ↓

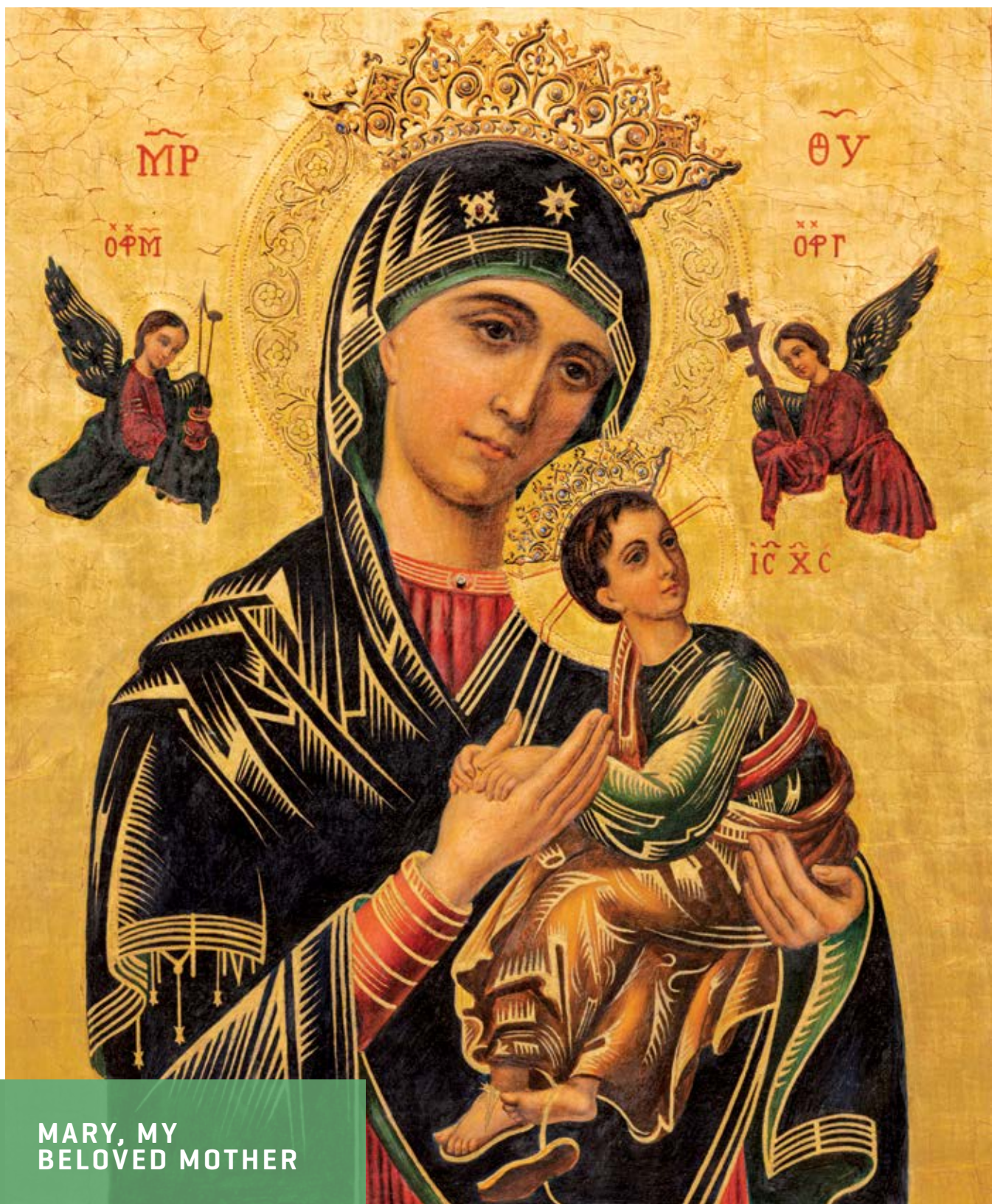
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■ RODNEY PEREIRA

IDENTITY AND
MISSION

■ NICHOLAS KOEPEL





MARY, MY BELOVED MOTHER



O Purest Mary, O Sweetest Mary, let thy name henceforth be ever on my lips. Delay not, O Blessed Lady, to help me whenever I call on you, for, in all my needs, in all my temptations I shall never cease to call on you, ever repeating thy sacred name, Mary, Mary.

EDITOR'S ROOM



DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

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LIVING A CHASTE LIFE MEANS LOVING IN PURE AND HOLY WAYS; RESPECTING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS BEING MADE IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD. JUST AS WE SEEK TRUE HAPPINESS FOR OURSELVES, WE SHOULD DESIRE THE SAME FOR OTHERS BECAUSE WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE SAME GOD.

'Only the chaste man and chaste woman are capable of real love' – St John Paul II

What is chastity? Why is it important to be chaste in all our interactions – even our thoughts? How do we as Catholics live chaste lives in a world that constantly bombards us to live otherwise? This issue of Kairos Global tries to answer these questions, delving deep into the wisdom of the Church, and the lives of those heroically virtuous.

Who can be called 'chaste'? A chaste person is someone who disciplines his or her emotions and keeps them directed toward the good for which God created them. Living a chaste life means loving in pure and holy ways; respecting ourselves and others as being made in the image and likeness of God. Just as we seek true happiness for ourselves, we should desire the same for others because we are children of the same God.

Being the patron saint of the virgins, St Joseph is venerated as 'most chaste'.

How can a teen/young person grow in chastity?

Pray. Thank God for the gift of sexuality, and ask for the strength to live a life of chastity. Seek out a parent or another adult that you can talk to when you have questions about sexuality. Focus on making friends—not romance—with people of the opposite sex.

When we strive to live out chastity in the modern secular world, it can be quite challenging. Here are five practical tips to help you live out chastity.

1. Pray – it may seem like the obvious one, but it is one that can be overlooked. God gives us the grace to live out chastity when we trust everything to him. It is very difficult to live a pure and chaste life without living a sacramental life.

2. Surround yourself with good friends – we all need support from our family and friends. If we are training on a football team, we need the support of our team to help us achieve our goals. The same is with living out chastity. We all need the support of friends who will bring out the best in us, and genuinely want us to be a better person.

3. Avoid temptation – do not put yourself into situations where you will be tempted. For instance, sexting, watching impure movies, pornography, going to certain parties, etc. It is best to avoid such situations. The journey to living chastity is about making choices that will allow you to live in freedom, not be enslaved to temptation. It's important to know our limits.

4. Know your values – know why you want to live out chastity, read about it and pray about it. Chastity is a choice at the end of the day and a virtue, and virtues need time to develop.

5. Don't settle – if you are called to the vocation of marriage, know the qualities and virtues you want in a future husband or wife. You deserve God's best. Set your standards high and know exactly what you are looking for



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And the truth will set you free.

John 8:32

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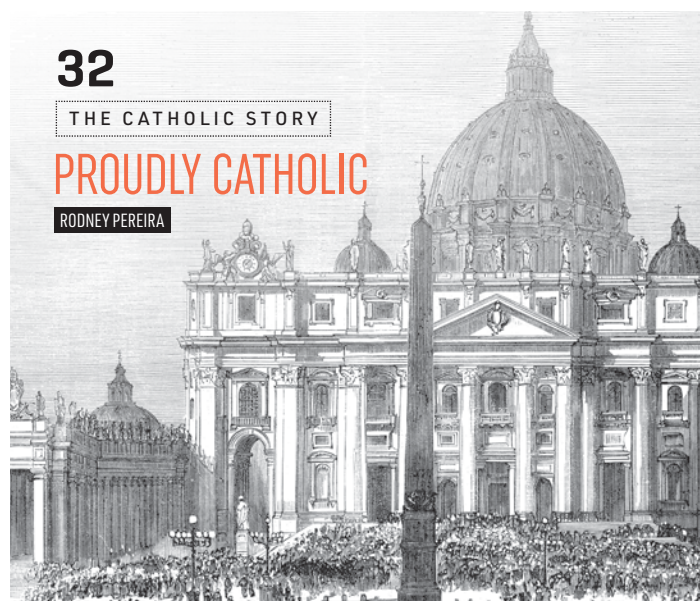
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ASK



FR. BITAJU

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➤ What is the significance of holy water?

Holy Water is a sacramental used for blessings for three reasons: as a reminder of our baptism, for protection from evil, and as a sign of repentance of sin. Holy Water calls to mind our baptism, when by the invocation of the Holy Trinity and the pouring of holy water, we were set free from original sin and all sins, infused with sanctifying grace, incorporated into the Church, and given the title of son or daughter of God. While making the sign of the cross with holy water, we are renewing our baptismal promises of rejecting Satan, all his works, and all his empty promises, and to profess our credal faith. Thus, cleansed of sin, with pure and contrite hearts, we can offer our prayers and worship to God. Further, water and blood flowed from the side of Jesus Christ on the cross signifies the great sacraments of baptism and Holy Eucharist; making the sign of the cross with holy water calls to mind our baptism in preparation for the reception of the Holy Eucharist.

Secondly, the prayer of blessing of water in the *Sacramentary*, clearly expresses that holy water protects us against evil: 'Lord, God Almighty, creator of life, of body and soul, we ask you to bless this water: as we use it in faith forgive our sins and save us from all illness and the power of evil ... free us, body and soul, from every danger, and admit us to your presence in purity of heart.'

Finally, Psalm 50 reminds us of the repentance of sin symbolised in the washing with water: *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin ... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me,*

and I shall be whiter than snow (2, 7). St John the Baptist used a ritual washing of water to signify the repentance of sin and purification as he called people to conversion.

An incident from the life of St Teresa of Avila, narrated in her autobiography, *The Book of Her Life*, speaks of the power of holy water: '[The devil] appeared to her in an abominable form at Teresa of Avila's left side. Because he spoke to her, she looked particularly at his mouth – which was most frightening. Teresa felt that a great flame, all bright without shadow, came forth from the body of the devil. He told Teresa in a terrifying way that she had really freed herself from his hands but that he would catch her with them again. As Teresa was struck with great fear, she blessed herself with as best she could; the devil disappeared but returned right away. This happened twice. She didn't know what to do. Then taking the holy water that was there she threw it in his direction, and he never again returned ... According to Teresa's own experience there is nothing the devil flees from more – without returning again – than holy water' (Chapter 31). In the testimony of such a great saint and doctor of the Church, we see the significance of having the holy water readily available in our homes and blessing ourselves with it in various circumstances of our lives.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that whatever spiritual benefits we obtain through holy water are brought about through the intercession of the Church. It is not as if the water itself has some sort of magical power to cause spiritual blessings (CCC 1667).



YOU CAT 484

WHAT IS A PRAYER OF BLESSING?

A prayer of blessing is a prayer that calls down God's blessing upon us. From God alone all blessings flow. His goodness, his closeness, his mercy—that is blessing. 'May the Lord bless you' is the shortest prayer of blessing. [2626-2627]

Every Christian should call down God's blessing upon himself and upon other people. Parents can trace the sign of the cross on their child's forehead. People who love each other can bless one another. Furthermore a priest, by virtue of his office, blesses explicitly in the name of Jesus and on behalf of the Church. His request for blessings is made especially effective through Holy Orders and the prayer power of the whole Church.



DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions June

For the abolition of torture

We pray that the international community may commit in a concrete way to ensuring the abolition of torture and guarantee support to victims and their families.



Pope talk



The Good Shepherd calls us to open our hearts to love. All of us are called not to retreat into our own community concerned to stake out our individual territory, but rather open our hearts to mutual love.

Jesus wants us to accomplish great things. He doesn't want us to be lazy 'couch potatoes'. He doesn't want us to be quiet and timid; instead, he wants us to be alive, active, ready to take charge.

**Life is real, not
virtual. It does
not take place
on a screen, but
in the world.**



*He never disparages our expectations but, on the contrary, raises the bar of our desires. Jesus would agree with a proverb of ours, which I hope I pronounce well: *Aki mer az nyer* which means: those who dare, win the prize.*

We don't make time for silence in the midst of this racket, because we are afraid of loneliness; as a result, every day we end up feeling tired. What I would say to you is this: don't be afraid to swim against the current, to make room for a moment of silence each day, a moment to stop and pray.

Speak the language of charity. This is a lesson for the whole Church. It is not enough to provide bread to fill stomachs; we need to fill people's hearts.

Solutions to loss of faith come from the tabernacle, not the computer.

JESUS YOUTH



Dr Edward Edezhath, one of the pioneers of Jesus Youth, gives us a glimpse of the growth of the movement.

Love Changes Everything

→ **A touch of deep love can change everything. That needs to be the Jesus Youth path.**

Last week we had an unusual retreat here, a 'Weekend by "Rachel's Vineyard"'. They are a ministry to 'renew, rebuild and redeem hearts broken by abortion'. The team consists of a priest, a seminarian, and a few men and women who animate it. Some of them came early to set up the place. We were amazed at how they prepared the meeting hall, dining room, chapel, and surroundings. Excellent carpets, floral arrangements, lovely paintings, and much more, all tastefully arranged meticulously. No one could miss the devotion and care behind this overflowing love.

More was to come during the weekend itself. Most of the participants were those who had gone through traumatic experiences of several abortions. Seeing the caring and attentive way the facilitators connected the participants with the healing love of Christ was so touching. Their smiling faces, kind words, preparation of a creative ambience, and the amount of time they spent in intercession, all testified to their overflowing love.

'It's so great to see the effort you put in,' I told one of them. 'These people have experienced so much pain and rejection in life,' she replied. 'We

should do all we can to help them feel loved and accepted unconditionally.'

LABOUR OF LOVE

As I observed these people pouring their hearts' love into those troubled ones, I connected it with the style of Jesus. The disciples could see and experience in Jesus the deep love of the Father. No wonder John could write about a love 'that we have heard, seen with our eyes, looked upon and touched with our hands'.

As a result, the best takeaway for the disciples from the style of Jesus was this beautiful expression of caring love. The Acts of the Apostles give us many glimpses into this overflowing love in action. When the outsiders saw it, they were amazed. We hear about it from Tertullian, 'It is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. "See how they love one another," they say' (*The Apology*, Ch 39).

Numerous times I have heard young people say that what brought them to Jesus Youth was the loving invitation of a close friend. More than that, what they like about Jesus Youth groups is the presence of a caring and sharing love there.

WHAT CAN KILL THIS LOVE?

Religion can become an efficient way

to condemn wrong people and keep them away so that those inside can feel good. The religious leaders of his time, Jesus recognised, behaved similarly. Sometimes we also tend to fall into that category. Heartless words, routine prayers, cliché rituals, and rigid schedules can kill God's plan for deep love. Indeed, we need to reexamine our lifestyle and make changes. In our ministry to those in need, do we tend to forget the core theme of love?

Jesus took up the challenge to go out to 'the wrong ones'. His heart was moved by a deep love, especially toward those in need. *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* (Matthew 9:36) Our call is also to be the same.

RENEWAL OF A HEART-MELTING LOVE

In 1978, we organised a vast healing service in our city. That was a follow-up of a national retreat on healing ministry for bishops and priests by a team from the USA. Those were my college days, yet I was assigned to be the personal assistant to the team head, a famous healer, and was accompanying him throughout. A large crowd had gathered at the Marine Drive venue. When the healing service was



over, people started rushing him. He remained there, praying over people, but the organisers wanted to conclude the whole programme and take him back to where we all were staying. I still remember what he told me, 'I feel as if my heart is flowing to these people and want to be here the whole night to help them in whatever way I can. I am sure Jesus would have felt the same.'

Love as an idea is familiar, and we talk so much about it. But Saint John says, *Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.* (1 John 3:18). So the question is how to practise love in my daily life. The five beautiful channels of love are often spoken about: words, time, touch, service, and gifts.

A word of appreciation or encouragement is the first step of love. Indeed we speak much, but mostly news, ideas, plans, or corrections. Instead, how much of our words really connect?

Quality time is the next. This is all about giving my wholesome presence to the other. God wants to spend quality time with us, and he also wants us to spend time with others.

The physical expression of love is the third. Joyful greetings, welcoming smiles, and genuine loving touch are all beautiful ways to express profound

When the healing service was over, people started rushing him. He remained there, praying over people, but the organisers wanted to conclude the whole programme and take him back to where we all were staying. I still remember what he told me, 'I feel as if my heart is flowing to these people and want to be here the whole night to help them in whatever way I can. I am sure Jesus would have felt the same.'

love. Jesus gave us the best example of service, and he challenged us to imitate his example. Being servants to one another is the best way to express Christian love.

Finally, gift-giving. Often we do that during Christmas. But in every family, friendship, and community, there are numerous ways to express deep love using gestures and material gifts.

JY, A NURSERY OF DEEP LOVE

It is good to ask in Jesus Youth why we have groups, gatherings, and fellowship. The Lord is giving us yet another opportunity to allow our hearts to move out in love. In the context of the wide world that is often materialistic and selfish, we need protected places suitable for practising intentional deep love. I thank God that, in the Jesus Youth movement, I have had numerous occasions to experience genuine

care. Priests, sisters, families, men, women, and even children have reached out to me with deep love and encouragement. These moments have been profoundly transformative and have helped me grow.

What Mother Teresa said is quite true, 'We can do no great things, only small things with great love.' The world moves on not because of the big things that the great leaders have done but because of the simple acts of deep love by ordinary people. In the same way, the Jesus Youth movement continues to be vibrant and beautiful, only due to the outpouring of deep love from so many beautiful hearts. My sincere prayer is, 'Lord, let me also be one among them.'



.....

Dr. Edward Edezhath, is a retired professor from St. Albert's College, Ernakulam. He lives with his wife Audrey in Kochi, India.

ENGAGE

Roads to Heaven

As a person who once considered her vocation to be religious life, **Riya Jose** writes that marriage and celibacy neither compete nor conflict – they both entail the total gift of self.



In my late teens and early twenties, I struggled a lot to discern my vocation. Though I certainly knew that the universal vocation of every person is to love God and love others, I lacked clarity to choose that state of life by which I could live this calling in the most fruitful way.

What does God want me to do? Should I get married? Should I choose celibacy? How can I serve him better? What path should I choose to live holy? These questions loomed large in me.

After a long-pitched battle with my thoughts, I made up my mind to become a nun. What better way to holiness than religious life? The Church's teaching on celibacy being a superior vocation and the radical life of saints, most of whom were celibates had a great influence on my decision. Well, things never fell into place. There were many roadblocks, both internal and external. Years later, I had to give up on the higher calling and choose marriage instead.

To discern religious life was hard, but to discern out of it was even harder. There were times when my heart was burdened by the very thought of not becoming a nun. I felt like a coward who settled for a path less radical. Rather than seeing it as God's call to another vocation, I often saw it as a sign of failure.

One reason I felt inferior in choosing married life over celibacy was because I thought these were two different and

distinct vocations; one set apart for those very holy and the other for the ones who couldn't rise up to those high standards of holiness. Even the Church's teaching on the superiority of celibacy led me to belittle the essential value of marriage. Mine became the societal mentality where religious people are called to live a more holy and radical life while lay people could go on to lead a 'normal' life. I was falling into serious error back then and didn't have the scriptural knowledge to think otherwise.

The truth is that celibacy never contradicts or rejects the dignity of marriage. Superiority of celibacy doesn't mean disparagement of marriage. In fact, celibacy loses its value when marriage is not esteemed. A sacrifice becomes meaningful only when something you love and value considerably is given up. Suppose during Lent I abstain from having bitter gourd, the sacrifice I make will not be meaningful, because I don't like bitter gourd. There exists no value in such abstinence. Instead, if I love chocolates and abstain from it, this sacrifice will be more significant and of higher value. Now, if the Church values celibacy, it is precisely because she values so highly what the celibates sacrifice – spousal love and parenthood. Therefore, the more you value marriage, the more you sacrifice in celibacy. The more you sacrifice in celibacy, the more meaningful it becomes.

The vocation of marriage is not something to be looked down upon. Just as celibates look up to heaven, marriage too anticipates heaven. In the human dimension, marriage is the lifelong union of man and woman upon which the family is founded, while in the heavenly dimension, marriage becomes the visible sign of Christ's love for his Church. When seen through the pages of New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth was more than just a teacher, prophet, king or Messiah. He was also the divine Bridegroom who longed to unite eternally with the Church, His Bride, in a marital covenant. According to the book of Revelation, the world itself ends with a marriage – the wedding feast of the Lamb, where the resurrected and glorified body of Christ comes in union and communion with our resurrected and glorified bodies. God's eternal plan for humanity, since the very beginning,

is this heavenly marriage – the eternal consummation of divinity and humanity! In accordance with this divine plan, the sacrament of marriage is not merely a contract of coexistence, rather it is a covenant where, in the joys of their life, spouses foretaste the wedding feast of the Lamb and experience the mystery of divine love. Earthly marriage thus foreshadows heavenly marriage.

Traditionally, the Church has taught that celibacy is a superior vocation only because heaven is better than earth. Consecrated men and women by choosing the vocation of celibacy, renounce all the joys of the earthly marriage in anticipation of heavenly marriage. However, in the subjective sense, the better vocation is always the one God has destined for you. The superiority of vocation is not synonymous with the superiority of holiness. If God calls you to marriage, he will use your marriage to make you holier and if God calls you to celibacy, the consecrated life will become your path to heaven.

Marriage and celibacy are obviously different in its own ways. Yet these differences neither conflict nor compete. Both vocations entail the complete gift of self. They illumine one another mutually. For a married couple, celibacy is a reminder that the ultimate purpose of their marriage is to prepare for the heavenly marriage. For consecrated men and women, marriage is a reminder to live out their spousal calling as spiritual fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters to the community. This way both vocations complement each other.

As a married woman now, I truly love and appreciate the vocation God has called me into and I am absolutely grateful for the ways he led me to it. At the same time, I have a deep honour and respect for all consecrated men and women for their courage to accept the exceptional higher calling.

If lived well, both vocations are meaningful and beautiful. Be it in marriage or celibacy, let our vocation be always love. Let's sail through this life aiming at our true destiny – the eternal union with God!



Riya is married and lives with her husband James V Joji in Kochi, India.

EXPERIENCE



Kick of Gratitude

Esther Pottoore recounts a painful personal tragedy and how she was able to turn that around into a blessing to comfort and heal those struggling with loss. This article first appeared in allnurses.com.

When I finally called and told my in-laws that I was six-and-a-half months pregnant with a baby boy, they were over the moon! I had lost two babies to miscarriages before my son and daughter were born, so I was wary of breaking the news early. We decided to name him after my dad Joseph, as my oldest was named after my father-in-law.

A few days later, working as a nurse in a local hospital, I went in to help one of the nursing attendants put a patient on a stretcher. It was a busy shift: I was covering for two nurses, had my own patient load and was rounding on all their patients. The patient, Ms Smith, was being hospitalised for pneumonia and we needed a chest X-ray. In addition to the pneumonia, Ms Smith had schizophrenia, and had not been taking her medicine for the past two weeks. When I started to lift her to the stretcher, she lashed out at me.

'Hey! Ms Smith, I have a little one here,' I said patting my belly as I stepped away to avoid her hitting me. 'Let me help you to the stretcher from the bed.' She agreed and I got the feet while Liz (the NA) got her shoulders. As soon as we put her on the stretcher, she kicked my stomach saying, 'You *****! Take that!'

I fell back, shaken. Liz took her to X-ray.

It was a glancing blow, I told myself, and did not go for any tests. The day took a turn for the worse as one of the other nurses left on a family emergency and her patients got reassigned, four of them to me on top of my 9 patients! One of them was actively bleeding and I had to give him a blood transfusion. Another kept wandering out into the hallway and was a high fall-risk patient in her 80s. One of my patients had to be rushed to the OR for a surgical emergency, and yet another was dying with distraught family members milling around. In my taking care of others, I ignored myself and did not bother to go to the ED to get checked out. After all, I did not feel any pain and there was no bleeding. Moreover I had quick reflexes and jumped back, although her foot connected with my abdomen. I never filed an incident report or informed the nursing supervisor or the unit

The repeat ultrasound showed that the baby had grown one more week from the last one. However, there was no heartbeat. My baby had died from the kick. She finally whispered, 'I can't find a heartbeat, miss!'

manager. As a per-diem nurse working for my green card through an agency in this hospital, I aimed to do my work quietly and efficiently and did not want to rock the boat.

When I got home, I told my husband about what happened and he wanted me to get checked out but I told him that I felt fine and would get checked out in the ED at my regular job if anything changed. He was not reassured but went along with my plan as he knew I was careful and would not take chances.

A week later, when I went to get the official ultrasound result from my doctor, she could not find a heartbeat. She wanted me to go back to the same ultrasound technician who had taken my ultrasound two weeks ago. She called the technician, Gloria, and told her that I was coming. I went into my car and burst out crying. I was shaking, cold and afraid. My mind went blank and I could not remember my home number or my husband's number. I had never stored it as I knew it by-heart! After half-an-hour, I remembered and called him from my car and told him. He was shocked. He was waiting to pick up the kids from two different schools and tried to explain to me how to get to the ultrasound place which was 20 minutes away.

I finally made it there and Gloria the tech was waiting for me. As she took me into the room I told her, 'Ms Gloria, I am an RN and can understand what no heartbeat means. I know you are not allowed to give out results but can you tell me if you can find a heartbeat or not. I can guess the rest!'

She silently nodded and for the next

half-hour tried to find a heartbeat. The repeat ultrasound showed that the baby had grown one more week from the last one. However, there was no heartbeat. My baby had died from the kick. She finally whispered, 'I can't find a heartbeat, miss!' My heart crumbled inside as the pain intensified. I had carried my dead son for a week unaware that he had died. I had to go back the next day to the doctor and called out sick. When I went back, I got the official news that my son was dead. She suggested I get a dilatation and evacuation under general anaesthesia. I had to wait another four days for an appointment. I ended up getting the baby out under general anaesthesia and was filled with rage and anger towards Ms Smith.

That night, as I lay crying and weak in my bed, my uncle came visiting and invited me for a night vigil of Eucharistic adoration, not knowing that I had just come from the hospital. My husband told me to go; he would take care of our two children. I went and wept all night asking for strength to forgive and the grace of healing. After morning Mass I was at peace and was able to forgive her. I still burst out crying months later when I saw a picture of many babies on the side of a bus at it pulled next to me at a traffic stop. The pain took years to heal. The next year I was blessed with a daughter who helped with the healing process. I never sued the hospital or the patient as no amount of money could give me back my son.

I have used this experience to help women who have gone through trauma, abortions and miscarriages to give them strength. Who thought that a kick of hatred would turn into an experience where others found comfort and healing by discussing their loss with me? So, I kick back in gratitude, for every pain one goes through can be turned around to help another person who may be silently suffering.

I am sure, somewhere in heaven, my son Joseph approves and waits patiently for our reunion. ■

Esther Pottoore is a registered nurse for over 33 years. She is a wife, mother of three, and a teacher. She loves music and to write, God above all.



Treasures in the Eucharist

The pandemic helped **Sheena Andrews** realise the beauty and life-giving power of the Holy Eucharist.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51).

How the Lord transforms our lives over the years always amazes me. Sometimes it's like a dewdrop that disappears into the ground making the seed sprout, grow and bear fruit many times over. Sometimes it's like thunder and lightning, where everything is made new in a fraction of a second. In my personal spiritual journey I have experienced both in varied measures.

Attending Mass daily was always an unattainable goal for me partly because

of my work schedule and partly because I wasn't convinced about prioritising it. My relationship with the Eucharistic Lord took a different turn when the pandemic hit. First we were constrained to virtual Mass. But our local parish slowly allowed a limited number of people, and I, being on maternity leave, was able to go for daily Holy Mass at that point.

It was usual for me to start out with so much enthusiasm at the beginning of Mass and later drift off into my own distracting thoughts, occasionally coming back to the prayers. I resorted to tactics like turning all distractions into prayers, sometimes it worked but sometimes I came out of Mass just the way I went in. If

me, restores me and renews me every time I attend this heavenly feast. From the moment Mass starts, it invokes in me true worship of the majestic Lord as we start with the heavenly hymn of the angels. When we sing the Psalms proclaiming how he gathers the dispersed of Israel and rebuilds Jerusalem, I picture my own brokenness all being rebuilt and made anew in his mercy. As the priest recites each prayer where I need to only respond with Amen, I take in as much as I can what those words mean in my life.

So many of the liturgical prayers, I found, illumines my heart and mind as I stand in union with the Church who is crowned with every goodness and grace. Every now and then I whisper my response and try to take in the beauty of an entire congregation's response, just to remind myself in this awesome life-giving sacrament I am not alone but am surrounded by a community that shares in the same divine life.

My experience is that, most of the time, the Lord speaks to me through the breaking of Word, sometimes a direct answer to whatever is weighing heavy on my heart or a gentle rebuke or a correction or an inspiration to take the next step. I was amazed how often all the prayers end in glorifying the Holy Trinity. That led me to the conscious awareness of the profound presence of the Triune God in the Holy Eucharist. It's not just Jesus, it's also the Father and the Holy Spirit who are actively present in the Holy Sacrifice of Mass.

Professing faith with the entire congregation is a powerful experience for me. I bring all the random moments when my faith was challenged by my intellect, surrender it before the Lord, and profess the creed to repeat everything that I believe to myself and to the visible and invisible world.

The peak of my heavenly experience is when I sing 'Hosanna' along with the choir, congregation and the angels. In my mind, I picture standing shoulder-to-shoulder with my guardian angel and the guardian angels of my family members who stand beside me, and the thousands and thousands of heavenly hosts singing praises to the Most High. This makes me long for the day when I can see this not through the veil of faith but in reality.

All of my intercession is spread out through the different prayers in Mass. There is a place to pray for your parents, brothers and sisters, and children. There is a place to pray for our beloved dead. There is a place to pray for all the priests and the whole Church. There is a place to pray for all who have asked for my prayers, there is a place to pray for all those who suffer, where I pray for the patients I take care of at work. There is a place to pray for all political leaders, there is a place to pray even for my boss. None of these prayers go unheard because it is offered up through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Although my active participation does not add to the power and sacramentality of the Holy Mass, it transforms me because I am letting myself be transformed by my Lord who takes the form of a piece of bread to come into me. As I bring all my weariness and frailties in front of my Lord and ask his pardon for the sins I have committed knowingly and unknowingly, I experience his forgiving love and receive his invitation to sit with him at his table, dine with him and feast in him. When he finally comes into my body, I try to focus all my attention on him that he not be ignored, in the most intimate time I have with him, and just whisper I love him. At that moment, I leave aside my never-ending list of wants and needs because I know he already knows. I just enjoy the closeness of his presence and rest in him.

As I walk away from the church thanking my Lord for this ineffable gift, I feel refreshed, renewed and restored, ready to take up any cross that comes my way because now I live in him and he lives in me. I am a new person, renewed in spirit and made wholesome again by the life-giving bread who is my Lord and Saviour. If I experience this renewal and restoration every single day of my life or as frequently as my situations allow, I am experiencing the foretaste of what awaits me in the future. ■

Author refers to the Holy Mass in the Syro-Malabar rite.

I were tackling a few of my children, then the distractions turned into frustrations.

But during the pandemic, as believers all over the world were drawing closer to the Lord in their own ways, my heart also drew close to my Lord in the Eucharist. I started paying close attention to the liturgy, and felt like a box of treasure had been opened to me. So much that I wondered where I had been all this time. The prayers that I heard over and over for so many years all seemed so meaningful and beautiful all of a sudden.

Holy Mass is, as the Vatican Council teaches, the source and summit of Catholic life. As I try to grasp what that entails, the Eucharistic Lord nourishes

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UNDENIABLE SCIENTIFIC CLAIMS IN THE BIBLE

GOD AND SCIENCE PART 5

The Bible has made distinct claims about the universe's origin, history and properties. And unless these were revealed specially by God, these details could not be written otherwise, writes Aby Jacob.

In a previous article, I presented that God has written two books: *the Book of Nature* and *the Book of Scripture*. The book of nature is the natural world we experience, which scientists attempt to read and interpret. The natural world declares the handiwork and glory of God, even at a molecular level. On the other hand, God also revealed himself in the book of Scripture (the Bible) to make him known to us personally. The book of Scripture reveals why the natural world

exists in the first place, who God is, and his grand plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Both books are written by the same author, God, which reveals his truth. A systematic thinker should organise all truth about God and his plan for humanity revealed through both books.

While the Bible is scientifically accurate upon proper interpretation, it is not a science textbook. The central message in the Bible is God's plan of salvation. However, the Bible made many

clear claims about the universe's origin, history, and properties 2000-3500 years ago, which modern science tested. It turns out that the Bible got them right and said them first before modern science. Modern science only discovered these recently and found the Biblical claims to be true. Someone couldn't write those details such a long time ago unless God specially revealed them to the authors. In this article, I aim to present a few of those undeniable claims.

For many centuries, philosophers wondered whether the universe had a beginning. Without any modern scientific evidence, the Bible claimed that the universe had a finite beginning and God brought it into existence. Theologians always held a view that the universe had a finite beginning because that is what the Bible teaches (Genesis 1:1; 2:3; 2:4; Psalm 148:5; Isaiah 40:46; 42:5; 45:18; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3; 2 Timothy 1:9). The Bible not only claims that matter and energy had a beginning but also space and time. If the universe had a beginning, then it required a beginner who could operate beyond the space-time dimension. Therefore, a creator-explanation was necessary to bring the universe into existence. On the contrary, for so many reasons, naturalists (who believe that the universe is all that exists) denied a beginning and held that the material universe is eternal and self-existent. Therefore, a creator-explanation was unnecessary because there is no need for a beginner when there is no beginning to the universe.

While both these views are in place, modern science made an unexpected discovery that the universe had an absolute beginning of time, space, matter, and energy. Physicist Alexander Vilenkin wrote, 'With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past eternal universe. There is no escape, they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning.'ⁱ Astronomer Robert Jastrow wrote,

'This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: In the beginning God created heaven and earth... For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a

For many centuries, philosophers wondered whether the universe had a beginning. Without any modern scientific evidence, the Bible claimed that the universe had a finite beginning and God brought it into existence.

bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.'ⁱⁱ

The Biblical description was accurate thousands of years before modern science discovered them. In his book, *Why the Universe is the Way it is*, Astronomer and Theologian Hugh Ross presents several scientific claims in the Bible which were proven true by modern science.ⁱⁱⁱ I will address a few claims here. The Bible not only makes the scientific claim about the finite beginning of the universe but also explains many important features of the universe that scientists discovered. The Bible claims that the universe has been continuously expanding since the moment it began (Job 9:8; Isaiah 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:15; Zechariah 12:1; Psalm 104:2; Jeremiah 51:15; 10:12). The Scripture (Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22) describes the continuous expansion of the universe as the 'stretching out' of the heavens. Until the twentieth century, no one had a clue that the universe continued to expand from the moment of beginning. Today we have abundant scientific reasons that confirm this claim of the Bible.

In addition, the Bible also claims many important details about the laws of physics. It claims the physical laws are fixed (Genesis 1-2; 3:17; Ecclesiastes 1:4-10; 3:11-15; Jeremiah 33:25; Romans 8:18-23; Revelations 20:7-22:5). This explains that the universe is fine-tuned. Moreover, the Bible (Rom.8:20-22) claims that the entire creation is subject to the law of decay, which is the second law of thermodynamics. In his book, *The Nature of the Universe*, scientific materialist Astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle writes, 'There is a good deal of cosmology in the Bible... It is a remarkable conception.'^{iv} I recommend the work of Ross, who further demonstrates several Biblical claims regarding the Earth's features, history

of life, the role of advanced animals, the uniqueness of human beings, and many more. Then you can evaluate the case for yourself based on evidence and reason.

I conclude this short article by pointing out that we have good reasons to trust the Bible as the cosmic Creator's manual. If the biblical authors can write such accurate scientific details 2000-3500 years before modern science discovered them, the writers must be inspired by the author of *the book of nature*. At least the Bible got them right and said them first, which is undeniable. The author of *the book of nature* and *the book of Scripture* must be the God of the Bible. I do not have space to deal with objections here. I highly urge you to consider reading the Bible seriously, which not only contains these accurate scientific claims but, most importantly, God reveals himself and describes his plan for humanity and an unimaginable realm beyond the cosmos. The Bible gives you the highest knowledge and wisdom possible as it is revealed by the Creator of the universe, who is the source of all truth. ■

Recommended Resources:

Hugh Ross, *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 2008.

Resources from *Reasons to Believe* - www.reasons.org.

References:

ⁱ Alexander Vilenkin, *Many Worlds in One* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2006), 176.

ⁱⁱ Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1978), 116.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hugh Ross, *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 125-145.

^{iv} Hoyle, Fred. *The Nature of the Universe*, second edition. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), 109.

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IN FOCUS

INNER UNITY, ORDER, INTEGRITY, AND FREEDOM

Jacob Jose reflects upon the various facets of chastity, and what it is not.



Chastity, or cleanness of heart, holds a glorious and distinguished place among the virtues, because she, alone, enables man to see God; hence Truth itself said, 'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God' – Saint Augustine.

What chastity is and not

Chastity is not, as we might think, a gift granted exclusively to men and women whom God handpicks to be saints. Nor is it some fancy Catholic utopia, which is nice as a concept but practically impossible. Also, chastity is not a virtue reserved for the strong-willed and pious. Chastity is neither about a rock-solid resolve to resist sensual subjects nor is it about becoming disinterested in matters of sex. Instead, chastity is the inner unity, order, integrity, and freedom within a person. It is aligning or ordering our sexuality with the will of God.

Inner Unity

Inner unity, according to Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, refers to the integration and harmony between a person's physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. In other words, it is the unification of the various aspects of a person's being into a cohesive whole.

Pope John Paul II emphasised the importance of inner unity in his teachings on human sexuality and the body. He argued that a person's body is not just a physical shell, but is intimately connected to their spiritual and emotional life. Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate inner unity in order to achieve a healthy and balanced approach to sexuality.

Inner unity is achieved through self-mastery and self-gift. Self-mastery involves the ability to control one's impulses and desires, while self-gift involves the ability to give oneself fully to another person in love. When these two aspects are properly integrated, a person can experience inner unity and become a gift to others.

Divine Order

The concept of 'divine order' refers

to the idea that there is a natural and harmonious order to the universe, established by God that governs all aspects of life, including human sexuality. Within a person, this divine order is expressed through the integration and harmony of their physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, which allows them to live in accordance with their true nature as a gift to others.

Inordinate and disordered passions and desires, on the other hand, drive a person in opposition to this divine order, leading to inner discord and conflict. When a person's desires are disordered or out of harmony with their true nature, they are unable to fully give themselves to others and may become self-centred or manipulative in their relationships. In this way, inordinate and disordered desires can undermine a person's ability to be a self-gift, causing them to act in ways that are contrary to their true nature and the divine order.

Integrity

Integrity of the human person is closely related to the virtue of chastity. Integrity involves the proper ordering of one's sexual desires and actions in accordance with their true nature as a gift to others. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2337, 2338 and 2344) makes it clear that chastity is closely linked to the integrity of the person, and that it involves the proper integration of sexuality within the person. The chaste person maintains the integrity of their powers of life and love, which ensures the unity of the person and opposes any behaviour that would impair it. Additionally, the pursuit of chastity is not just a personal task, but also involves a cultural effort that respects the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life and the rights of others.

Inner Freedom

Paragraph 2339 of CCC states 'Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.' Paragraph 2343

states that 'Chastity has laws of growth which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth."'

General perception and reality

The general perception of chastity as abstinence from sexual activity is far from God's original plan for his children. As St John Paul II says, 'Chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realisation.'

The word chastity, from the Latin *castus*, means pure. Chastity in this sense points towards an inner integrity that is born from the unity of the inner self or soul with the body attainable only by divine order. It is a journey back to the original order, the truth of love – the image God so lavishly gifted us with at creation.

Chastity thus is an effort towards perfection in all areas of life, and not just their sexual behaviour, providing it the broad purview of a call towards divine purity, that is not limited to celibacy or continence.

From the discord of sin to divine order

The wound of original sin that has been following man since the Garden of Eden has placed in all of us a discord that can only be healed through a conscious return journey towards the original unity of God's creation. This end goal is what we refer to as chastity – an internal order or discipline that takes us closer to the Father. It in turn shapes us in his image, to regain the original unity, to oneself, to each other, to nature, and to God.

The journey is indeed, in a very simple sense, from 'lust' to 'love'. Lust is disordered passion or desire which is essentially opposed to the selfless and self-giving love that Christ and His Church embody and preach. True love on the other hand, stems from self-



knowledge (realising and accepting oneself as a child of God) and self-possession (the surety that having a God, I don't need anything else). Deep knowledge about oneself as a child of God and a deeper trust that he wills only our good, leads us to the divine nature of love. True love is to will only the good of the other, and thus gift oneself for the other in the example of Christ.

This gifting is impossible for an unchaste person, who is disturbed and disordered at heart. Always needy and unsatisfied, they will want more and more of the temporary pleasures that they frequently go in search of. When this search doesn't satisfy them and leaves a void that is ever increasing, it enslaves them with false promise and pleasure, subsequently trapping them in a cycle of addiction that imprisons them.

In contrast, chastity brings about a sense of fulfilment, balance and order within a person, allowing them to align their thoughts, words, and actions to the truth. A chaste person lives with internal integrity and avoids the disharmony and disorder that can result from a life lived in opposition to one's true calling. By embracing chastity, individuals can live their lives in a way that is fully formed in Christ, leading to a more fulfilling and

meaningful existence.

This order that leads to and from the virtue of chastity is in fact divine in origin. Look, for instance, at the hierarchy within the Trinity, or the heavenly hierarchy of angels. The order brings a unity that is quite necessary in the essentiality of existence, but doesn't necessarily signify anyone's power over anyone else. Just as the Trinity, within its hierarchy, is unified in Divine love, discipline and order in one's personal and especially sexual life, leads to a unity and integrity within oneself, without losing the importance of any one element. As St Paul points out that every organ in the body has a unique role that is completed only in the unified efforts of all organs, chastity becomes an important factor that is essential for our journey towards the truth. In pursuit of truth, one finds integrity.

This journey towards the truth is in fact the ultimate call of every person. The call is to be who God called you to be. Self-knowledge, as we previously saw, empowers one to see himself/herself through the eyes of the Father, thereby realising one's true worth, meaning and purpose.

Unlike an unchaste person who doesn't realise that he is in search of

God, this self-knowledge enables a chaste person to see in every beautiful being, a reflection of the transcendent beauty of God. The chaste thus exhibits an integrity of the truth or purpose to which he is called, and strives to continue his/her journey towards the truth.

In fact, realising the gift that sexuality is, accepting it in its fullness, and respecting its boundaries leads one towards an ordered sexual life within the family. A chaste person thus looks beyond temporary experiences to see the eternal. Where an unchaste mind sees an 'object' of gratification, a chaste heart looks at sexual union as a sacrament, an icon that points to an ultimate union with God – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The sexual faculty, though most important in the world's eyes, becomes one chord in the divine symphony of a chaste life, essential but part of the journey of life. The word chastity thus becomes as important to a married person as to a consecrated person. Chastity in the consecrated life also becomes more dignified in this sense, becoming more than a mere abstinence from sexual engagement; their search for truth leads them to discover a deeper purpose in the divine design for themselves, into which they channel their energies for the greater glory of God.

Conclusion

Chastity involves the pursuit of inner harmony, order, integrity and freedom according to one's divine plan and vocation. It is a life-long process, as St John Paul II says: 'Chastity is a difficult long term matter, one must wait patiently for it to bear fruit for the happiness of loving kindness which it must bring. But at the same time chastity is the sure way to happiness'. It is indeed the surest way to finding fulfilment in life, with the fruits of the inner discipline extending to an external beauty that radiates joy. And as St Augustine says 'virtue of chastity enables us to see God'.



A designer, **Jacob Jose** is an elder to Project Lily, a chastity initiative. He runs catholic.cafe, a website answering questions on faith and morals. He also blogs at myarticulateheart.com.

POETRY

The Night Lamp

GRACE ELSA JOHNSON, INDIA

You stand beautiful in shades of yellow
An alluring brightness,
Always giving an impression,
Seemingly vintage.

Standing in the green
Its creepers enhancing your curves,
You make me feel, though never been,
In wonderland.

Hope, you provide with love,
Amidst pressures surrounding,
Under the turquoise sky,
You shine for others.

You've become a cherished memory
In my solitude,
Something I wish would
Stay forever.

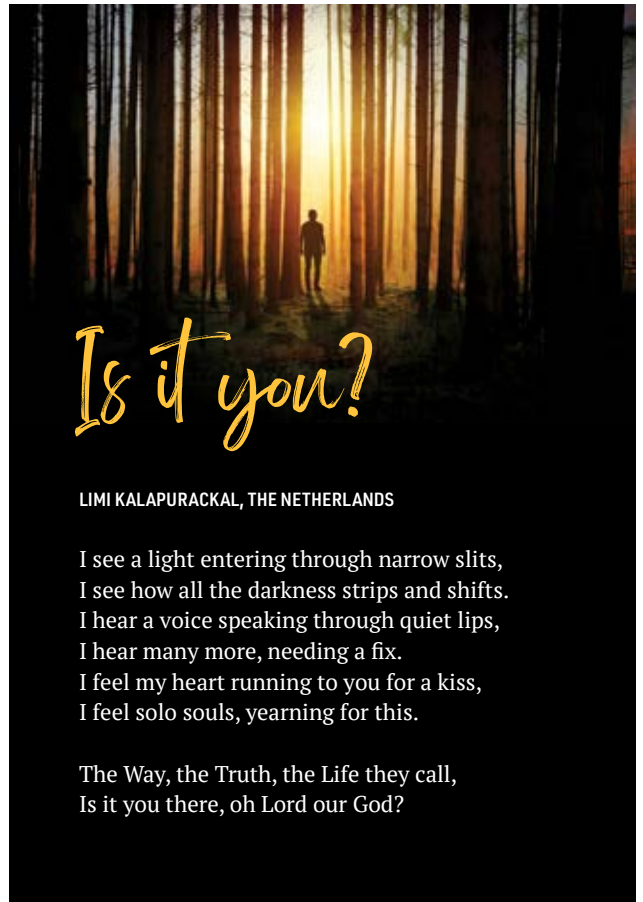


Is it you?

LIMI KALAPURACKAL, THE NETHERLANDS

I see a light entering through narrow slits,
I see how all the darkness strips and shifts.
I hear a voice speaking through quiet lips,
I hear many more, needing a fix.
I feel my heart running to you for a kiss,
I feel solo souls, yearning for this.

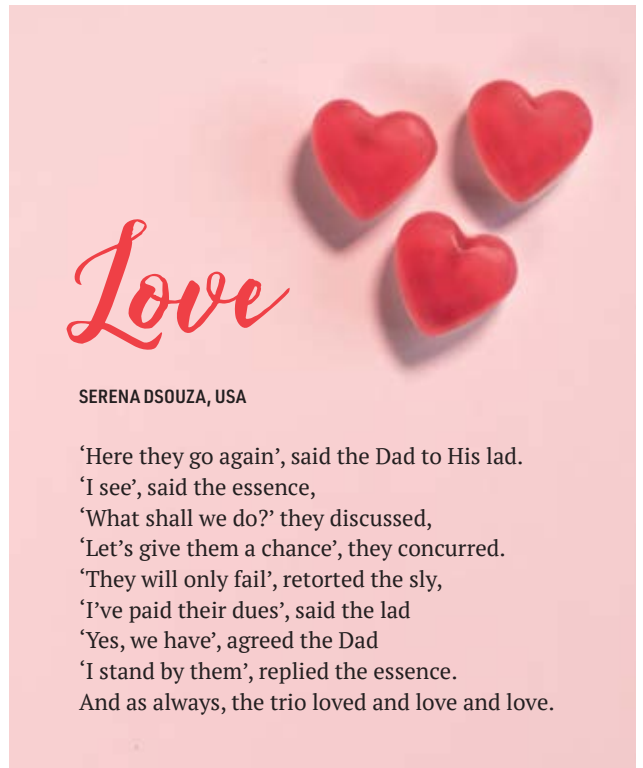
The Way, the Truth, the Life they call,
Is it you there, oh Lord our God?



Love

SERENA DSOUZA, USA

'Here they go again', said the Dad to His lad.
'I see', said the essence,
'What shall we do?' they discussed,
'Let's give them a chance', they concurred.
'They will only fail', retorted the sly,
'I've paid their dues', said the lad
'Yes, we have', agreed the Dad
'I stand by them', replied the essence.
And as always, the trio loved and love and love.





CHASTITY AND WHITE MARTYRDOM

Gem Jacob writes about practising chastity in the various states of life, underscoring the common factor among them that it emanates from authentic charity: love of God and love of neighbour.

A person's rightful due is to be treated as an object of love, not as an object for use – St John Paul II.

The post-sexual revolution epoch has undoubtedly engendered an aversion towards the virtue of chastity. Today, chastity has become a forgotten virtue and is in dire need of rehabilitation. An exhaustive and in-depth understanding of the true meaning of this angelic virtue is essential in today's world inundated by the vices like masturbation, pornography, homosexuality, premarital sex, contraception, etc. Hoping in God's promise: *Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more* (Romans 5:20), let us earnestly strive to assimilate this virtue and grow in it cooperating with the gratuitous grace abundantly offered to us.

True Meaning of Chastity

Chastity is a moral virtue that falls under the category of the cardinal virtue of temperance. The virtue of temperance enables a person to bridle his passions, emotions and natural appetites, and keep them under the control of reason. It moderates a person's attraction to mental and bodily pleasures and gives balance in the use of created goods. The virtue of temperance helps a person to approach pleasures of the world in the light of faith and reason suitable to one's vocation and circumstances of life. Chastity as a virtue falling under the cardinal virtue of temperance aims at the right and rational ordering of the pleasure of sex according to God's will.

Pope John Paul the Great, in his magnum opus, *Love and Responsibility*, clearly explains that the opposite of 'to love' is not 'to hate' but 'to use'. This is key in understanding the virtue of chastity. If our sexual desires are not properly ordered by the virtue of chastity, be assured that we will end up using the other as an object for our own sexual gratification. This is applicable even within wedlock.

Our sexuality is in fact our capacity for love, that is, our capacity to make ourselves a gift to the other. The proper and right ordering of this capacity is inevitable in our growth towards holiness, as holiness is all about authentic loving. Chastity is that virtue which equips us for pure and authentic love. This moral virtue

preserves the purity in love by preventing it to degenerate into lust. It has immense reverence and sensitivity towards the dignity of the human person and never allows our concupiscent desires to degrade the dignity of the human person.

It is the virtue of chastity that directs our sexual faculty, which is a great gift from God, towards its true purpose and end. The greatest fallacy the modern world has been stumbling upon when it comes to chastity is the belief that the purpose of sex is solely pleasure. God has not created any pleasure for its own sake; pleasure is always characterised by a function. For instance, take the case of the pleasure of taste in the process of ingestion. God in his infinite wisdom has attached pleasure with eating so that man is attracted to good food, eats healthy, and remains in good health, thereby sustains his life. How difficult it is to imagine a world where eating and drinking is a horrible and unpleasant experience? In the same way, God has attached pleasure with sex for the sustenance of the race. Sexual pleasure should be oriented such that its end is the propagation of the race. It is apt to quote the Lebanese-American writer and poet Kahlil Gibran here: 'All pleasures of the world are the baits set by God to lead man into his plan'. Is it not bluffing God when pleasure alone is stolen discarding the purpose he attached to it? Whenever the purpose and ends of sex is evaded, the act degenerates into the use of another person, reducing him as a mere object of pleasure. It also mocks God deviating from the divine plan on human sexuality.

Self-mastery and self-possession are prerequisites for authentic love. Love is all about making oneself as a free and total gift for the good of the other. This is impossible if we are enslaved by our own passions. We must subjugate our concupiscent tendencies and bring them under the control of reason in order to love truly and authentically. Chastity is all about self-mastery and self-possession in the area of sexuality.

It is also important to understand what chastity is not. Chastity obviously is not about having a puritan and repressive outlook on sex. In fact, being prudish and naive in matters related to sexuality is to be seen as a lack of the virtue of chastity.

A clear distinction is also to be made between chastity and virginity. Virginity is a form of expression of the virtue of chastity where one totally abstains from sexual pleasure for the sake of the kingdom of God. So, chastity is not to be misconceived as an absolute abstinence from sexual pleasure. What the Church advocates is not the repression of our sexual desires, but the redemption of it through the grace of God.

The expression of the practise of the virtue of chastity differs depending on one's state of life and one's sexual orientations. Despite the varying expressions of the virtue, what runs through all in common is that it emanates from authentic charity: love of God and love of neighbour, and that it pays due reverence to the dignity of the human person. The virtue never tolerates reducing human persons of invaluable dignity to mere objects of sexual indulgence.

Chastity for the Single

The season of singleness is a wonderful phase in our lives when we are so robust, vibrant, and full of energy. During this period, God is busy forming us into the persons we are called to be, to make our future and life work for his kingdom. May be, during our wait, God is preparing us for the vocation that we will embrace. It is a period to dedicate quality time for our vocation discernment. This phase teaches us beauty, patience, culture, etc. Build wonderful friendships during this phase of life, and cherish them like family. Chastity in fact blooms in real friendships.

Being chaste in the season of singleness is a real challenge. There are constant temptations to fall into the sins of masturbation and pornography. There is no doubt that the struggle is real and hard. Strong men never elude their struggles, but face it. The Church has endowed us with the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. Many men who have grown in the virtue of chastity are the ones who embraced the practise of frequent and honest confessions with great humility, even twice or thrice a week, to combat the sin of masturbation and pornography.

Chastity during the season of singleness is also to be seen as an apprenticeship to live the virtue within wedlock. If you do not confront and conquer your passions in the season of singleness, be assured that you will end up using your spouse sexually, failing to love him/her authentically.

Chastity for the Married Couple

To most people, chastity in marriage makes no sense. A chaste marriage would sound like a good oxymoron for them – because many people regard marriage as a license for promiscuity. But this is far from the truth. The right ordering of sexual desires is important even within wedlock. Otherwise one could end up using their spouse as a mere object of sexual indulgence rather than loving him/her.

Totally opposed to the secular perspectives on marriage, the Christian marriage is a sacrament which reflects the epitomal love between Jesus and his bride, the Church. No saint or Doctor of the Church has articulated the beauty of this mystical spousal love with more splendour than St Augustine: 'Like a bridegroom, Christ went forth from his nuptial chamber. He came even to the marriage bed of the cross, and there, ascending it, he consummated a marriage'. Saint Mechtilde, a German mystic and Benedictine nun of the 13th century, echoed the same idea when she wrote: 'Christ's noble nuptial bed was the very hard wood of the cross on which he leaped with more joy and ardour than a delighted bridegroom'. So, it was on the cross, the marital bed of Christ, that the greatest expression of immaculate spousal love was manifested. Therefore, the sanctity demanded in the marital bed is the sanctity of the act that took place on the cross.

Even if there is mutual consent for the marital act, if the ends of the sexual act are not fulfilled, it degenerates to 'using one's spouse'. How could a person whose rightful due is love alone be treated as an object of use, that too in marriage, where the purest form of love is to be found? The Church can never be tolerant to any act which does not give due reverence to the dignity of the human person. The Church is crystal clear in articulating that the primary end of



marriage is the begetting of offspring and their education. This is why the Church condemns contraception which evades the ends of the sexual act. Contraception is an act which is inherently against the very fruitful nature of marital love. Every sexual act should be open to the natural possibility of a new life. St John Paul II in his great work on chastity, *Love and Responsibility* lucidly expounds this forgotten moral truth: 'Openness to life in the sexual act is an indispensable condition for authentic marital love, and hence for its moral uprightness. When the idea that "I may become a father/I may become a mother" is totally rejected in the mind and will of husband and wife, nothing is left of the marital relationship except mere sexual enjoyment. One person is reduced to a sheer object of use

for the other.'

At this juncture, having realised the difficulty of practising chastity within wedlock, a common misconception that the Church has a discriminatory attitude towards homosexuals when it comes to being chaste requires addressing. Even in marriage, there will be occasions when one must practise continence for the sake of love. Living out chastity for a married couple is equally difficult or sometimes more difficult than for a person having same-sex attraction. So, those who think that the Church is being unfair and tough to homosexuals, it is high time that their perspective is revised.

Chastity for Celibates

The celibates are the glorious and living witnesses of the beauty of the virtue of

Celibacy is the celebration of self-less and self-giving love towards God and one's neighbour.



chastity. Their example encourages us to pursue a life deeply rooted in this virtue. We clearly learn from them that the carnal expression of sexuality is not an indispensable requirement for authentic love. Their life is an apology to the much-promoted popular cultural lie that sex is an imperative without which one cannot survive.

Never assume that celibates are free from the concupiscent tendencies of the flesh. Do not come to a cursory conclusion that the journey for them is easy. Celibacy is not repression of sexual desires or hatred towards matters related to sexuality, but it is the sublimation of those desires for a greater good. It is their intimacy with God that keeps them going in their tough journey. They forego the earthly marriage out of their overflowing

love for God, the Bridegroom of the soul; they live spinning their wedding garment (Revelation 19:8) and fixing their interior gaze on the heavenly marriage with the Lamb in eternity. (Revelation 19:7)

Celibacy is not limiting one's capacity for love. Instead, it is the celebration of self-less and self-giving love towards God and one's neighbour. A celibate's story is the story of a man who falls in love several times; every time he meets another greater love, he answers that love, ultimately clinging on to God, the supreme love.

Chastity for Homosexuals

Having understood that all men whether single, married or a celibate, go through a difficult path to progress in the virtue of chastity, let us acknowledge the reality that a homosexual person also must tread through the same burdensome track of self-denial.

There is no greater misconception than the idea that the Church condemns homosexuals, who are created in the image and likeness of God. She teaches that acting on homosexual tendencies is gravely sinful in the same way as it is sinful for a married man to act on a sexual attraction to someone other than his wife, or in the same way as it is vicious for a man to act on his temptation to watch pornography or to masturbate.

A reminder as there is a ubiquitous outcry to persuade the Church to approve homosexual acts: the Church's teaching on chastity is built on strong philosophical and theological foundation. The Church is as firm as a rock and is intransigent when it comes to preserving the moral and dogmatic truths handed over to her by her Bridegroom, Lord and Master. She has unswervingly been faithful to the ministry of truth entrusted to her for the last two millennia. Looking at the problem of approving homosexual acts in a different angle, if at all the Church relaxes her stand on homosexuality, she will have to relax her stand on other sins against chastity as well, even the heinous act of paedophilia, bestiality etc. This will ultimately lead to a cascaded moral collapse. The Church truly knows what she is doing even when accused of obstinacy and pig-headedness in such sensitive moral issues. Though

she listens to the difficulties and struggles of the faithful and accompanies them in their arduous journey, she pays heed solely to the voice of God when it comes to deciding what is morally right or wrong.

The Church is always willing to offer pastoral care to homosexuals and accompany them in their journey to holiness. Being fully aware of their difficulties and struggles, she is at their service to administer the sacraments which are the fount of grace for them to grow in self-mastery and holiness. But let us also keep in mind that the Church cannot or will not have any association with people who deliberately want to continue in their sinful life and celebrate their culture of sin.

Chastity and the White Martyrdom

No virtue is easy to acquire, let alone chastity. Growing in virtues requires consistent and relentless effort. The path to holiness is never a bed of roses and it demands great struggle. Jesus makes this very clear: *For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few* (Matthew 7:14). Being chaste is a long and exacting work and it presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.

Chastity is difficult. But it is attainable, attainable through the grace of God. In today's sexualised culture pervaded with pornographic content all around, there is the least exaggeration in the words of an anonymous Greek monk from Mount Athos: 'Young people today who remain pure and chaste will be counted among the martyrs of our Church on the Day of Judgement'. Now it is all up to us: Are we willing to lead a life embracing this white martyrdom and be counted among the saints like St Maria Goretti, St Agnes of Rome, Bl Veronica Antal, etc. who preferred death to defilement? ■

Gem Jacob George is a founding member of Project Lily, a chastity initiative. He is an engineer currently working with Cochin International Airport Limited. St Teresa of Lisieux, St John of the Cross, St Catherine of Sienna and St Thomas Aquinas are a few of his favourite saints.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white robe, is holding a bouquet of white calla lilies. She is looking down at the flowers with a gentle expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

THE LAW OF THE GIFT

In a world where we must choose to live a life of gift or a life of use, chastity is the virtue that unites my body, mind, and heart in a single purpose, writes Chris Cammarata.

St John Paul II was fond of referring to a passage from the Church's document *Gaudium et Spes*: 'Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.' This passage has been called 'the law of the gift', and ultimately draws from Jesus' own words: *Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it* (Luke 17:33). There is a longing in the heart of every man and woman to make a free, all-encompassing, sincerely committed, and fruitful gift of one's own life. Our world today presses us to

take, to grasp, to tenaciously seize upon every opportunity. We are encouraged to advance our position, our power, and our possessions at any cost... even if it means using other people. We can call this way of the world 'the law of use'.

Understanding these two contrasting 'laws' will better help us understand what chastity is really about. To be chaste is to live under the 'law of the gift'. It means making a sincere gift of my life in freedom, truth, and genuine love. By contrast, *all unchaste behaviour*, in some way or another, falls under this 'law of use'. The world is crammed with issues surrounding sexuality—but these issues do not come out of nowhere. They begin deep down in the roots of our human nature. Fundamentally, to be unchaste is to use others for one's own benefit.

Many of us have the desire to live chaste lives, but for some reason or another we really struggle in certain places: habitual sins, addictions, unchaste relationships, unhealthy attachments, etc. This causes in us an uncomfortable tension where we both *want* and *don't want*, and our thoughts and desires are torn—and with them, our peace. We feel very sharply the words of St Paul, who says *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate* (Romans 7:15). What a miserable feeling, to feel at war with my own self!

Chastity, at its deepest level, is the virtue where my body, mind, and heart all are united in purpose. Maybe on the initial steps of the journey, I have to be especially commanding and disciplined with myself and my sexuality so as to avoid sin. But over time, with the help of God's grace, the virtue of chastity will transform this inner relationship within my own self, so that in the end I am not at war with my sexuality. There is a peaceful harmony between all the things I desire, because they are all ordered toward a common end: the goodness of God. This is what is truly meant by the Beatitude, *blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God* (Matthew 5:8). The *pure* heart is the *undivided* heart.

'Emotional chastity' is another popular expression today. Although the concept can appear confusing at first, it's helpful to situate it in the context of chastity that we've been talking about:

'Emotional chastity' is another popular expression today. To be emotionally chaste means that my emotions are not divided from the rest of my person. When I feel desire for someone, it is not in a way that goes against what is true and good.

to be *emotionally chaste* means that my emotions are not divided from the rest of my person. When I feel desire for someone, it is not in a way that goes against what is true and good. And even if I should experience feelings that are out of line, I can properly respond to those feelings in a way that leads me closer to God and better helps me love my neighbour. In short, what we're speaking about with emotional chastity is a kind of *affective maturity*.

So, we have two laws set before us, two contrary paths by which we can live our lives in the world: we can live under the law of the gift, or the law of use. We can give our lives away to others in love, or we can take from others and use them up for our own personal gain. The world we live in today makes this especially challenging, because society has built entire industries around using others like consumable products or mere objects. Some of the most immediate and destructive examples are the pornography industry, human trafficking, and other forms of sexual exploitation. However, other industries (even ones that are not inherently bad!) can encourage in us an attitude of using others if we let them. For instance, social media can be a great good for building relationships and sharing ideas. At the same time, how easy is it for me to obsess over my likes, followers, and visibility? How easy is it for me to crave the attention and approval of others? Is this attitude really the law of the gift? Am I not turning others and even myself into objects for consumption and use?

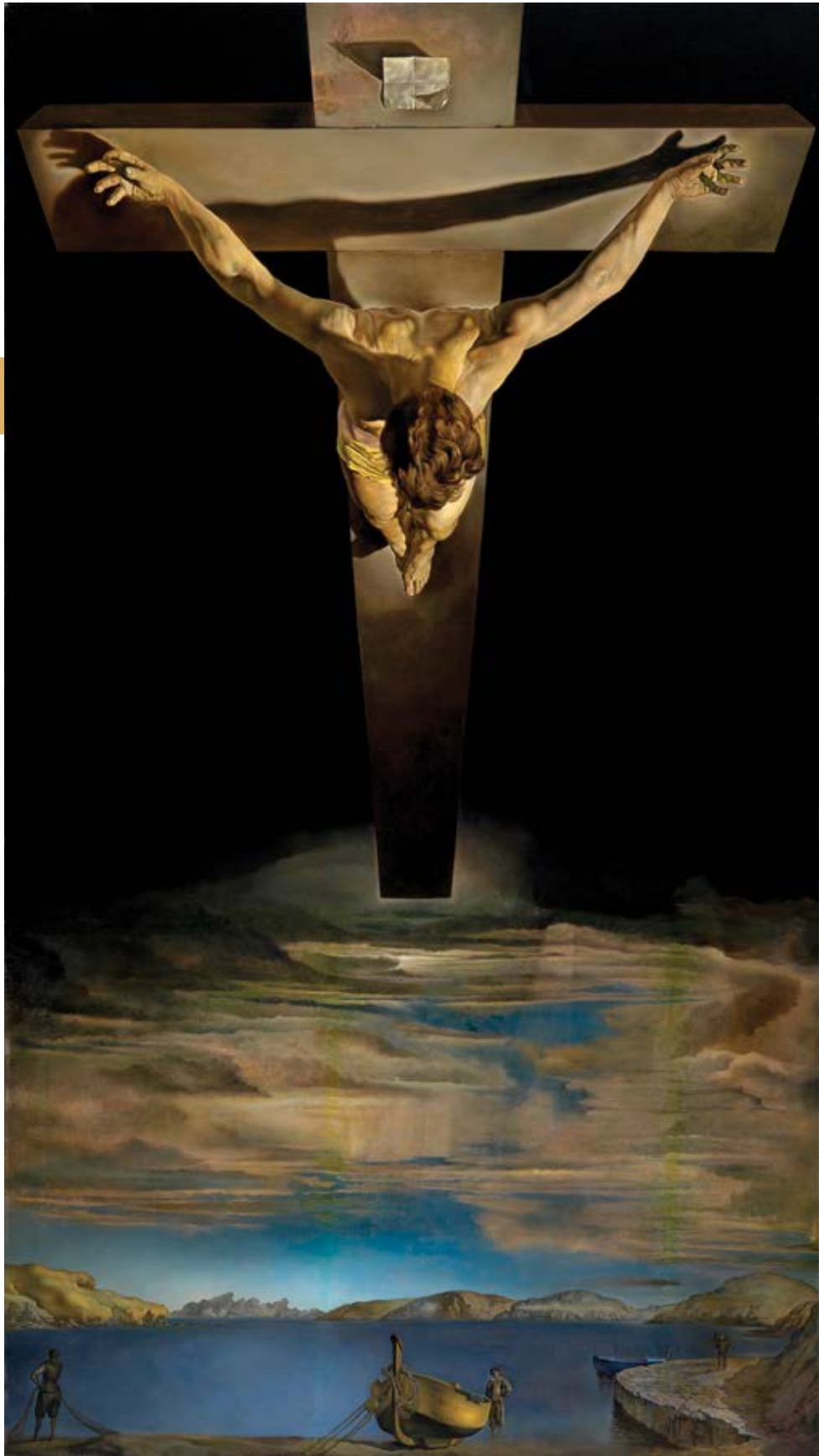
Maybe you are in a place in life where you've never thought about these deeper

attitudes before, and you just feel yourself frequently assaulted with temptations to sexual sin. I certainly feel your pain! Our society does us little favours in that department, especially with the constant exposure to different forms of media. If you are stuck in a vicious cycle of sin, it can be tempting to just despair, throw up your arms, and cry out, 'will I ever be chaste?' At this stage, it's helpful to turn to trusted and well-established means of combating sexual sin: bodily discipline, a rhythm of prayer, seeking help from a trusted mentor, and (if necessary) methods like joining an accountability group or limiting media consumption. Many Catholic resources are now available in the fight for chastity against pornography and sexual addiction like Exodus 90, Integrity Restored, Strive 21, and Chastity Project. A well-formed and faithful mentor, spiritual director, or even counsellor can be a tremendous help as well. When it comes to overcoming sin and growing in virtue, consistency (in prayer and other good habits) goes a long way.

Eventually, with the help of God's grace and good habits, the battle against sin will become easier and easier, and the path to growing in chastity will begin to take a turn. To be chaste today means more than just avoiding near occasions of sin and learning methods to discipline our bodies and minds. That is a great (and necessary) start, but to really be inwardly transformed, we have to undergo a deeper conversion—from a life of use, to one of gift. In this journey toward a pure (undivided) heart, the Eucharist is an especially powerful source of healing, conversion, and transformation. Jesus is the Father's total gift to the world, and the Eucharist is Jesus' own total gift of himself to each of us: 'This is My Body, which is given for you' he declares. His whole existence is a *pro-existence*, a 'being-for'. He is 'for us', always 'for us'. He is never against us. To live the law of the gift is to be inwardly transformed by, and ultimately share in, Jesus' own pro-existence... to live a life given completely for love of others. ■

Chris Cammarata works as a clinical systems analyst in Delray Beach, Florida and has degrees in Catholic theology and philosophy. He also writes for Catholic Cafe.

ART



Dreams of St John of the Cross and Salvador Dali

Shaji Joseph Arakkal introduces a painting of breathtaking beauty, Salvador Dali's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*.

Salvador Dali's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* is a world-famous painting that we would have definitely come across. This unique and exquisite image of the crucifixion of Christ is the subject matter of this issue's 'Masters and Inspiration'.

St John of the Cross was a Carmelite friar and mystic from Spain who was considered one of the leading poets of the Spanish language. Numerous are his works; among them *The Spiritual Cantic*, *The Dark Night of the Soul* are masterpieces of Spanish poetry. St John of the Cross and his works have profoundly influenced philosophers, theologians, spiritual writers, artists, and pacifists, prolific and famous in Spain and around the globe.

This great genius lived only forty-nine years, from 1542-1591, and within this short period, he was also the confessor of the nuns of the Carmelite monastery, a request made to him by Teresa of Avila. One day, while praying in Avila, St John had a vision of the crucified Christ. He reproduced this vision into a sketch, *Crucifixion* around the year 1550. Drawn on a small piece of paper, he later gave this to a nun in that convent. It was only 2.25 x 1.9 inches long. This precious sketch was preserved at the convent of Avila in a gilded wooden casket, and can still be seen by visitors to the convent museum.

This image of Christ, the weight of his inert body pulling him to hang forwards, influenced and inspired the surrealist painter, Salvador Dali. And his renowned



painting, *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* was born. Painted in 1951, it was considered by the art world as 'a unique and exceptional work of the crucifixion painted so far'.

Dali has portrayed the crucified Christ against a darkened sky floating over a body of water, on the shores of which a boat and fishermen can be seen. Strikingly, this portrayal is devoid of blood and the crown of thorns, because, according to Dali, it was revealed in his dream that these would mar his depiction of Christ. He explains his dream as follows, 'In 1950, I had a dream. The cosmic dream was colourful indeed! At its centre, represented the crucifixion that later took on a metaphysical sense. I considered it the "oneness of the universe", the Christ!'

John of the Cross' sketch depicts, from God the Father's perspective, the sacrifice of his only Son's life for the salvation of



mankind. With views from above and the right side of the cross, Dali's painting is imagined as God the Father would have seen it.

Dali painted this unique rendition of Christ while residing on the island of Port Lligat in Spain. It is this bay, the water body that is represented in the painting. Dali's rise to global attention began after moving to this island. At present, his residence has been converted to Port Lligat museum. This bay and island are also portrayed in many of his paintings, such as *The Madonna of Port Lligat*, 1949; *Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus)*, 1954; and *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*, 1955. These three paintings shall be introduced in the next issue.

Shaji Joseph Arakkal has been a graphic designer for 39 years. He lives in Ernakulam, India with his wife Shoba. They have three children, Niranjana, Nirmal and late Niveditha.

CULTURE OF LIFE

IDENTITY AND MISSION

In this final article in the series on Theology of the Body, **Nicholas Koepfel** explains what John Paul II meant by the 'conjugal spirituality of married life'.

In the final chapter of Theology of the Body, St John Paul II speaks about the 'conjugal spirituality of married life'. He gives us practical application of all he has talked about in the Theology of the Body. In the previous 5 articles, I gave you a summary of the main points from the first five chapters of Theology of the Body, namely when Christ Appeals to the Beginning, when Christ Appeals to the Human Heart, when Christ appeals to the Resurrection, celibacy for the kingdom of heaven, and about the Sacrament of Marriage. In this study of the thought of John Paul II

we find a 'theological anthropology', this is, a biblical study of what it means to be human, male and female, made in the image and likeness of God. After understanding our identity, then we can know our mission, or how we are to live. The Christian life has two main paths for living the call to love: marriage and celibacy. Now, in this final chapter, John Paul II focuses again on marriage and sums up all that came before.

The final chapter of TOB is really John Paul II's reflections about a central theme of *Humanae Vitae* (a document from St Paul VI published in July 1968). John Paul II says that the whole Theology of the Body is really the foundation for understanding *Humanae Vitae*. The reason for writing TOB was the questions that sprang out of this document from St Paul VI. In *Humanae Vitae*, we hear a reaffirmation of the Church's constant



teaching about love and married life, that contraception is immoral, evil and harmful, and that the way to true love is free, total, faithful, and fruitful.

So why is contraception wrong? First, John Paul II focuses on the two meanings of the conjugal act – every act of sex must be both ‘unifying’ and ‘open to life’. These two meanings, the unitive and procreative meanings, are inseparable and must always remain together for the conjugal act to be an act of love. If one of these meanings is taken away (for example, by using artificial contraception) then love is also taken away. Using contraception causes the conjugal act to cease being an act of love.

The Church proposes an alternative way of regulating birth which is called Natural Family Planning. The difference between contraception and NFP is huge, it is a difference of an ethical nature – one act is morally wrong and the other is morally right. Both contraception and NFP can have the same ‘end’ or goal of avoiding pregnancy, but they do this in completely different ways. Natural Family Planning uses the natural rhythm of the woman’s body to avoid pregnancy by the couple choosing to abstain from having sex in the moments during the woman’s cycle when she is most fertile and able to conceive new life in her. They choose to communicate and have self control to not have sex in this time period, in order to avoid a pregnancy.

The couple themselves have the responsibility to discern how many children they will have, and the Church teaches that they can choose for serious reasons to try not to have a child. Nevertheless, one of the purposes of marriage is to procreate and children are the greatest blessing of a marriage. As people in the Old Testament understood it, a large family is a sign of a blessing from God. By always remaining open to life, open to receive the blessing of a child from God if he wills it, a couple must avoid using contraception. This trust in God will increase their love and communication and make their conjugal life richer and more full of human and spiritual values.

St Paul VI warned of the dangers that would come through the use of contraception, and we see these dangers present in our cultures today. One danger

John Paul II says that the whole Theology of the Body is really the foundation for understanding *Humanae Vitae*. The reason for writing TOB was the questions that sprang out of this document from St Paul VI. In *Humanae Vitae*, we hear a reaffirmation of the Church’s constant teaching about love and married life, that contraception is immoral, evil and harmful, and that the way to true love is free, total, faithful, and fruitful.

he foresaw is that women would be treated as objects for pleasure, rather than as a human being, a loving partner in life.

The use of contraception puts the man and woman at the level of an object of use for one another. Using contraception makes sex cease to be an act of love and the use of contraception harms the relationship of the couple.

The Theology of the Body from John Paul II gives us an anthropology that helps us to understand and live the Church’s teaching in this area. From TOB we learn that the spousal meaning of our bodies calls us to love and to make a gift of ourselves for others. John Paul II explains that the spirituality of married life is really love. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, that the couple receives in baptism and confirmation, and through prayer and the sacrament of marriage, the couple is strengthened and enabled to love the responsibilities and duties of being a spouse and a parent. The Holy Spirit which is poured into their hearts, is the power to love (Romans 5:5). Through the Holy Spirit, the couple is given the gift of ‘piety’ which is expressed also by the word ‘reverence’. Piety means having reverence for the things of God. We normally think of piety in terms of our behaviour and way of dressing in Church, but piety also extends to many more spheres of life, including the bodies of husbands and wives.

To have ‘reverence for the things of God’ also means to have reverence for all that God created, including the masculine and feminine body and the

conjugal act. When a couple has this gift of piety from the Holy Spirit, they seek to have reverence for one another in the conjugal act, and also reverence for the potential third person there, the new life that could be conceived through the act. Having reverence for one another, ensures that the couple will treat each other as persons, in the fullness of their human dignity, and not as objects used for selfish pleasure through lust.

In the very final Wednesday Audience of the Theology of the Body, John Paul II sums up all that he said before. He explains that TOB is necessary in order to understand *Humanae Vitae* and in order to answer the questions people of our day have about human life and marriage. This Theology of the Body is a biblical anthropology that shows us that true human progress comes through ethics and not technology. By listening to the words of Christ, we are reminded of our identity as men and women and shown our mission, how to give ourselves for others in love. For as Vatican II taught, ‘Jesus reveals man to man himself, and makes his supreme calling clear’ (GS 22). ■



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Nicholas Koeppel, serving on the leadership team for 'Theology of the Body Educators' seeks to spread the teachings of St John Paul II around the world through talks, retreats, and online courses in Theology of the Body. Originally from Missouri, USA, he currently works for the Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine and the John Paul II University in Krakow, Poland as an English instructor and a TOB teacher.



THE CATHOLIC STORY

Proudly Catholic

Kairos Global is proud to present this new series on Church history. In this article, Rodney Pereira sets the stage for a 'retelling' of Catholic proportions.



The Catholic Church is very special. She is not just another church. She began with a commission entrusted to eleven ordinary men. Today, she is the largest Christian Church, comprising 1.3 billion baptised Catholics worldwide. She is the largest organised religious body and the oldest institution in the western world. I am reminded of the deeply moving words of Thomas Babington Macaulay (he was an Evangelical) in his essay on Ranke's *History of the Popes*, written in 1840. 'There is not, and there never was on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The proudest royal houses

are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series, from the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the nineteenth century to the Pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends, till it is lost in the twilight of fable. The republic of Venice came next in antiquity. But the republic of Venice was modern when compared with the Papacy; and the republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains.' An average Catholic is hardly aware of the glorious heritage and splendour of his Church. Many Catholics harbour wrong ideas about the Church. Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, 'There are not a hundred people in America who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions of people who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church — which is, of course, quite a different thing.' Most Catholics don't realise that we should be immensely thankful to the Church for the many privileges, benefits, and blessings we enjoy today. The world would definitely have been a darker place had the Catholic Church not been there.

How did it all begin?

The Catechism gives us profound insights into the Church's origin and destiny. 'The Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the assembly of all the redeemed of the earth' (CCC, 778).

Catholic Contributions

Alvin J Schmidt writes, 'On the basis of the historical evidence, I am fully persuaded that had Jesus Christ never walked the dusty paths of ancient Palestine, suffered, died, and risen from the dead, and never assembled around him a small group of disciples who spread out into the pagan world, the West would not have attained its high level of civilization, giving it the many human benefits it enjoys today. One only needs to look to sectors of the world where

Christianity has had little or no presence to see the remarkable differences.' (*Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*.) He opines that 'many today who disparage Christianity may not know or believe that, were it not for Christianity, they would not have the freedom that they presently enjoy. The very freedom of speech and expression that ironically permits them to castigate Christian values is largely a by-product of Christianity's influences that have been incorporated into the social fabric of the Western world.' There isn't any realm of human life that hasn't been influenced in some way by the Catholic Church. Let me point out a few areas where the Catholic Church exerted a profound influence.

Building Civilisation

Once the Western Roman Empire collapsed in 476, the Catholic Church was the sole institution that kept Europe together. It decisively influenced and humanised social and political structures. It would be difficult to find contributions by any group so significant and diverse as those of the Western monks of this period. The monasteries of Western Europe became repositories for manuscripts. They preserved the heritage of past civilizations through patient labour and copying the writings of the past. They copied and saved Greek mythology, the classics *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*, and also copied down the writings of Livy, Tacitus, and many others. Those were times when libraries were raided and pillaged. The precious literature we have today would have been lost if the monks hadn't saved it by hiding in the forest or in remote places. Almost all scholarly learning happened solely inside monasteries until the 12th century, when the Viking raids were over, and after that, it started becoming accessible outside. The Benedictines developed an extensive library system in their monasteries, and St Benedict has been called 'the godfather of libraries'.

The monks contributed immensely to the practical arts. For example, an expert wrote that 'they (the monks) saved agriculture when nobody else could save it. They practised it under a new life and new conditions when no one else dared undertake it.' The Benedictine monks became the agriculturalists of Europe. The



monks also excelled in various areas like metallurgy, irrigation, cattle breeding, pottery, clock-making, etc. The role of the Catholic Church in protecting Europe (known as the Reconquista) first from the Muslim Moors and later again from the Ottoman Empire is well known.

Science

In the realm of science, the contributions of the Catholic Church remain unparalleled. From the late Middle Ages up through the Renaissance, the Catholic Church was the sole preserver and promoter of science, especially in the West. And almost all the names of the scientists and mathematicians we know of, like Galileo, Copernicus, da Vinci, and Descartes, are Catholic. In the opinion of the historian John Heilbron, 'The Roman Catholic Church gave more financial and social support to the study of astronomy for over six centuries, from the recovery of ancient learning during the late Middle Ages into the Enlightenment, than any other, and probably all, other institutions.' The Jesuits have greatly contributed to astronomy, including the modern lunar nomenclature and stellar classification. 35 craters on the moon are named after Jesuit priests. The Vatican Observatory is one of the oldest astronomical observatories and astronomical research institutions in the world. Very few people know that a Belgian priest, Georges Lemaitre, was the key figure behind the Big Bang theory. A number of Catholic scientists have been credited as fathers of a diverse range of scientific fields since the Renaissance.

Medicine

Christianity took its roots first in the Greco-Roman world, where the poor, weak, and sick were despised. Abortion, infanticide, poisoning, slavery, and torture were commonplace. Women, children, and the handicapped had very few rights. Many girls were killed at birth. During the first three centuries of the Church's existence, it couldn't do much in an organised way since Christians were heavily persecuted. Even under these precarious conditions, Christians still cared for abandoned children, the sick, and the poor, often sheltering them in their own homes. When there was more political freedom in the later centuries,

Catholic charities abounded. The sick, poor, slaves, orphans, widows, prisoners, elderly, outcasts, victims of epidemics, and lepers were all cared for. The first large-scale hospital was founded in AD 369 by St Basil of Caesarea with 300 beds to care for the seriously ill, disabled, and victims of the plague. Soon, there was a proliferation of hospices and hospitals, encouraged by the rulers in many parts. Catholic hospitals pioneered and revolutionised the world of medical treatment. Today, the Catholic Church is the largest non-government provider of health care and research facilities in the world.

Education

Around AD 150, Justin Martyr established two catechetical schools, one in Ephesus and one in Rome. Soon, such schools appeared in other regions and exerted a great influence on society. These schools admitted both boys and girls. Catholics were the first to encourage formal education for both sexes. The University is cited as one of the most notable contributions of the Church of the Middle Ages. The university commonly cited as the first is the University of Bologna in Italy, founded in 1158. This was followed by the University of Paris. Most European universities of the mediaeval period had Catholic beginnings. Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille script for the blind, was a devout Catholic. Kennedy and Newcombe, in their book *Lord of All*, write: 'Every school you see—public or private, religious or secular—is a visible reminder of the religion of Jesus Christ. So is every college and university.' The Catholic Church remains the largest non-governmental provider of higher education in the world.

Literature, art, architecture, and music

Missionaries played a significant role in language development. They meticulously studied and mastered local languages, provided them with script, wrote grammars, compiled dictionaries, and translated religious texts into native languages. The Catholic Church patronised literature, art, architecture, and music. Johannes Gutenberg, a Catholic, invented the movable type printing press, and the first book he



printed was the Catholic Bible. Almost every European city has a cathedral. The stained glass windows of cathedrals and churches, which told the stories of the Bible, were referred to as 'the poor man's Bible'. Almost all the famous European art works from the Dark Ages until the twelfth century had Catholic origins. The period of the Renaissance was a time of artistic and architectural magnificence. One of the oldest styles of music is the ecclesiastical chant of St Ambrose and St Gregory. The Gregorian chant was a great contribution to the world of music. The discovery of musical scale, the modern rhythm, and the fixing of the rules of harmony were all contributions of Catholic monks. The language of music popular today was devised by the Church as a means of writing music primarily for liturgical and devotional purposes. Renowned masters like Mozart, Rossini, Beethoven, Clementi and Hadyn used their talents to create sacred music. A 1969 article titled 'The Influence of the Catholic Church upon Modern Art' concluded, 'If we generalise, we discover that all the great artists, in architecture, painting, and music have found their highest employment in the Church, and that its history includes their biographies... Majestic and venerable stands that Church of Rome; upon her walls the arts have registered their victories; for her the muses have forsaken the summits of Parnassus; to her the poet, painter, and musician have dedicated their genius; and giving all they brought to her humblest and poorest worshippers,



she has repaid the masters with perpetual recognition and universal fame. Far as her realm extends are known the glories of Raphael, and Angelo, and Mozart.'

Other areas

The Greco-Roman world believed that manual work was meant only for the poor and slaves. The Christians always upheld the dignity of labour, and the monastic orders attached great importance to work, with monks spending four hours every day in labour. The Catholic Church has always been at the forefront of fighting for human rights. For the first time in history, it was Saint Gregory of Nyssa in the late fourth century who spoke out against slavery as incompatible with Christianity. As early as 873 AD, Pope John VIII called slavery 'a great sin'. The Church has been working tirelessly to alleviate poverty, reduce social inequalities, mitigate social evils, and rehabilitate the destitute. The dignity of women has always been upheld by the Church. It condemns abortion, divorce, incest, polygamy, infanticide, trafficking, and exploitation. We can go on to enumerate the copious contributions of the Catholic Church in various fields like politics, international peace, democracy, justice, socio-economic development, etc. It is the biggest charitable organisation. 'Every single day the Catholic Church feeds, houses, and clothes more people, takes care of more sick people, visits more prisoners, and educates more people than any other institution on the face of the earth could ever hope to', writes Matthew Kelly (*Rediscovering Catholicism*).

What about the mistakes?

But how do we explain the abuses, excesses, and failures of the Catholic Church in the past? The *Catechism* reminds us: 'The Church is essentially both human and divine' (CCC, 771). She can make mistakes in her human dimension since it comprises weak human beings like you and me. If one out of the twelve apostles and one of the seven deacons were disappointments, then we don't need to be surprised by scandals. We just need to increase our resolve to pray and work for the sanctification and building up of the Catholic Church. In her divine dimension, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church can never err, especially in matters of faith and morals. The teachings of the Church have remained consistent over the centuries. Since the 1930s, the Catholic Church has been almost alone in its opposition to contraceptives. Previously, Catholics and Protestants rejected contraception. But the Anglican Church passed a resolution favouring birth control at its 1930 Lambeth Conference. And since then, most Protestant churches have followed suit, and today almost everything is seen as acceptable. But the Catholic Church's stand on issues like abortion, contraception, homosexuality, adultery, and premarital sex remains unchanged.

The Catholic Church is also special in that it can smoothly reconcile paradoxes, painting more hues of beauty into our lives. So while many protestant churches uphold 'only' positions like 'faith only' and 'Bible only', we approach reality

with a broader 'both/and' outlook. So for a Catholic, 'Bible and Tradition', 'faith and reason', 'will and grace', 'faith and good works', 'work and rest', 'love and responsibility', and 'feasting and fasting' go together.

We also firmly believe that the Catholic Church will never be destroyed. She has survived storms from within and without—opposition, scandals, and violent persecutions—like no other institution could have withstood. St Ambrose wrote, 'The Church is like the moon; it may wane but never be destroyed; it may be darkened, but it can never disappear.' Napoleon Bonaparte is supposed to have asked a Catholic cardinal in the middle of an argument, 'Your Eminence, are you not aware that I have the power to destroy the Catholic Church?' The cardinal is said to have replied, 'Your majesty, we, the Catholic clergy, have done our best to destroy the Church for the last 1,800 years. We have not succeeded, and neither will you.' Macaulay continues to describe how the Catholic Church will endure: 'nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished at Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.'

The Catholic Church is meant to be a home for every human being. It welcomes everyone, even hardened sinners. It accompanies us from the womb to the tomb. In it, we find heavenly help for our earthly pilgrimage. In this transitory world, the enduring Church reminds us of our eternal home. Let us be proudly Catholic!



An agricultural officer in the Kerala Government Department of Agriculture, Rodney Pereira lives in Trivandrum with his wife Leema Pereira and their son Joshua.

PARENTING

STRENGTH-BASED PARENTING

A Christian and Psychological Perspective

Fr Paul Choorathottiyil VC encourages parents to strength-based parenting, giving biblical examples of how Jesus used this approach in his interactions.

Parenting is a challenging task that can be overwhelming for many parents, especially in a world where children are exposed to cyberbullying, sexting, and other negative influences. In such a context, it is important for parents to adopt a strength-based parenting approach that emphasises their children's strengths and abilities rather than their weaknesses and limitations. Strength-based parenting is a relatively new concept that emerged from positive psychology and has gained much attention in recent years. This article will explore the biblical and psychological foundations of strength-based parenting and provide some practical tips for parents.

Biblical Perspective: The Bible provides us with valuable insights into parenting that are relevant even in modern times. In Luke 11:11, Jesus asks, *What father among you, if his son asks for bread, would give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish, would give him a snake instead of the fish?* This



verse highlights the importance of good intentions in parenting. Parents want the best for their children and should strive to provide them with the necessary support and guidance to succeed.

Ephesians 6:4 advises fathers not to exasperate their children but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Exasperation refers to a feeling of intense irritation or annoyance, which can be caused by parents' overbearing or critical attitude towards their children. Instead, parents should provide discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord, emphasising the importance of positive and loving parenting.

In Luke 19:1-10, Jesus noted and reported strength in an individual (being a son of Abraham means right of heritage for Yahweh's blessings), who was looked down upon by the pharisees, scribes and people as an outcaste, short, a sinner and a betrayer who exploited his own kin for the foreigner (the Romans). At that moment Zacchaeus got in touch with his truest self and became entirely a new person (who gave away his property in many folds as reparation for his past mistakes).

Similarly, John 4:5-30 describes the story of Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman by pointing out her strengths (a genuine worshiper of the Lord, who although was not following the law of Moses). Jesus was more concerned about her possibility of becoming a worshipper more than her flaws. In Mark 12:42 Jesus applauded the widow for her strength of self-giving. She was able to donate two mites which was a Jewish coin and the smallest used in New Testament time. For Jesus, she was the generous giver without holding back anything for herself.

Psychological Perspective: Strength-based parenting is rooted in positive psychology, which focuses on building positive emotions, character strengths, and optimism. The traditional deficit-based approach to parenting tends to focus on children's weaknesses and limitations, which can lead to negative emotions and feelings of inadequacy. In contrast, strength-based parenting focuses on building children's character strengths, positive emotions, and resilience to help them succeed in life.

One of the key psychological tools that strength-based parenting provides children with is optimism. Optimism is the force that motivates children to create a positive future for themselves, even in the face of adversity. Resilience is another psychological tool that helps children bounce back when life throws a curveball. By focusing on children's strengths and abilities, parents can help their children build resilience and optimism, which are critical for success in life.

Practical Tips for Strength-Based Parenting:

Rather than focusing on children's weaknesses, parents should focus on building their strengths and abilities. This will help children develop a positive self-image and a sense of confidence that will help them succeed in life. Identifying and acknowledging your child's strengths can boost their self-esteem and motivation. Some examples of strengths might include being creative, empathetic, determined, or curious. Take time to reflect on your child's unique qualities and communicate your observations to them in a positive way.

Help your child identify their strengths and build on them. Encourage them to use their strengths in positive ways to contribute to their goals and the lives of others.

When your child is going through a tough time, help them connect to their strengths. For example, if your child loves gardening, encourage them to weed (weakness) and fertilise (strength-based, miracle grow) their plants.

Exercise for Parents/Teachers/Mentors:

- When you receive the progress report of your teenager, with 7 As and 1 B, where does your focus go first? What would your initial response to your child be?
 - As a parent, are you more focused on your child's strengths or weaknesses? Reflect on Luke 19:1-10, John 4:5-30, and Luke 11:11-12.
 - Identify 10 strengths of each child and communicate these to them. Take note and acknowledge when your child does something positive.
 - For the next two weeks, report on your child's strengths and avoid discussing their weaknesses. Focusing

on their strengths and accomplishments can help build their confidence and self-worth.

- Encourage your child to embrace their unique qualities and talents and provide support and guidance where necessary. By emphasising their strengths, you can help them become more confident and resilient individuals.

Conclusion: Strength-based parenting is a powerful approach that can help parents build positive emotions, character strengths, and resilience in their children. By focusing on children's strengths and abilities, parents can help them develop.

Prayer: Loving Father, we come before you with hearts full of gratitude for the gift of our children. We acknowledge that as parents, we have been entrusted with the great responsibility of raising and guiding them in their journey through life. Help us to be strong and loving parents who lead by example, showing our children the way to live with faith, hope, and love. Guide us to see the unique strengths and gifts that you have given each of our children and help us to nurture those gifts so that they may use them to serve you and others. We pray for the courage to support our children through their challenges and to celebrate their successes, knowing that they are ultimately yours, dear God. May we always be grateful for the privilege of being their parents and may we never forget the power of your love and grace in our lives.

We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.



Rev Paul Choorathottiyil VC works with children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, individuals with alcohol/substance addiction, couples experiencing marital stress, patients with acute behavioural issues. In addition, Fr Paul gives parenting seminars, facilitates recovery, and self-enhancing groups. He serves in the Syro-Malabar diocese of Chicago, USA.

SOUNDREPLY



This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:12-13). And to the question of *who my neighbour is*, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, exhorting the lawyer who asked the question to test him, as well as all Christians throughout the ages, to be merciful like the Good Samaritan – towards the weak, the injured, the poor, the dejected, the needy and the dispossessed, without counting the cost – a hard ask indeed. And across the last two millennia, whenever Christianity has become self-preserving, inward-looking and focussed on itself, it has often failed in its call to be the *light of the world* and the *salt of the earth*. Only the *wheat that falls to the ground and dies produces much fruit* – yet, it is easier said than done. Living in our cosy little Catholic hamlets,

REVIEW BY
Joseph Anthraper

Joseph lives in Southampton, UK with Mahima, his wife and their 4 kids.

MOVIE

THE SUPER MARIO BROS. MOVIE

nurturing the faith within and without is sometimes far more easier than facing the tempests of the real, raw world, where treachery and evil is the order of the day. Yet, face we must – for the sheep has to follow where the Shepherd has already trodden.

The Super Mario Bros. Movie is an animated movie based on Nintendo's famous video game franchise Super Mario, staying very true to the original video game it is based on. The Italian-American brothers, Mario and Luigi live in Brooklyn, and have recently started their own plumbing business, much to the dislike of their family as well as their ex-employer Spike. All who know Mario well enough (including his dad) have no high regard for him or his abilities – all apart from Luigi, who loves, adores and believes in Mario wholeheartedly. Mario has always been there to protect and take care of his brother every single time Luigi has been in need.

After failing at their first plumbing job, Mario senses an opportunity to make things right when there is a massive leak in downtown Brooklyn, but while working underground to fix the leak, Mario and Luigi get sucked into a Warp pipe and are taken into a different galaxy – but Mario gets transported into the Mushroom Kingdom, whereas Luigi is taken to the Dark Lands, where he is made prisoner by Bowser, the evil king of the Koopas, who has now acquired the power of the magical star.

Desperate to save his brother, Mario seeks help from the princess of the Mushroom Kingdom, Princess Peach, who intends to seek an alliance with

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the Jungle Kingdom against the impending attack from Bowser. Mario joins Princess Peach and Toad in their journey to the Jungle Kingdom, where they meet with King Cranky Kong of the Kongs, who flatly refuses to help. But after much persuasion, he reluctantly agrees on condition that Mario defeats his son, the massively strong Donkey Kong in a duel, knowing fully well that Mario would never be a match for Donkey Kong. Despite being a mismatch, and despite being broken, bruised and out-punched, Mario wins the fight, thanks to the help from the cat-suit.

Bowser, however is madly in love with Princess Peach and intends to marry her, by hook or by crook. He feels threatened when he realises that a human named Mario has joined Princess Peach as a companion. And so, with the intention of killing Mario and capturing Princess Peach, he prepares an ambush on the army of the Kongs, who have joined Mario and Princess Peach to attack Bowser's army. Can Mario escape from Bowser? And will he see Luigi ever again, who is being slowly lowered into a river of fire by Bowser as a ritual sacrifice?

The Super Mario Bros. Movie is a fun ride, like a roller coaster, fast and at breakneck speed, but at times pausing, allowing one to catch his/her breath before the next plunge – but always exhilarating. Essentially, it's a children's movie (and I don't mean it as a bad thing at all), which one can enjoy without thinking about it too much. It recreates the world of Super Mario video games through



its generations – and pulls it off with aplomb. Admittedly it doesn't delve into the various characters much, apart from the title character of Mario, and Luigi to an extent. Yet, even when it is full on action, the love of Mario for his brother Luigi is the silver thread that binds it all together, that gives sense to whole drama. Contrasted to the self-giving love of Mario for Luigi, there is the love of Bowser for Princess Peach – a selfish and narcissistic love that destroys and chars everything in its path. A wonderful movie, which the whole family can surely enjoy. ■■



New Martyrdom

This journey of self-disciple is a spiritual journey, writes **Anil Israel**, in this reflection on 'chastity'.

Living in a world surrounded by filth makes it all the more challenging to live a dirt-free life. Anything left unused soon becomes a place for dust to settle. Even iron – despite its strength, accumulates rust when left unpainted and unmaintained. Stagnation rots. The key to staying alive is to stay active.

With no counter action on my side, I am most likely to get influenced by all those actively attempting to expose me to an unhealthy worldly lifestyle. Be it media, music or literature. Be it trends, tastes or tunes. Be it social-network platforms or just stale fake news. Every click opens the door to a whole new world waiting to invade the calmness of my soul. Every door left open continues to mould and shape my being. Everything I'm exposed to leaves a lasting impression and alters my life, without me desiring even a bit of it. Changes pile up and I end up either being better or bitter than before.

Statistics reveal that the average daily screen time of young people is a significant portion of their awake time. We all need to ask ourselves – how much of my screen time is productive and how much of it is destructive. Does it really help me grow into a better version of myself or does it contribute in any way towards infiltration and contamination of my sacred soul? Where does a significant portion of my waking hours go? How often do I submit myself to time consuming streaming shows? Time once gone, is gone forever. Was it an investment or a waste?

I have a conscious choice to make. Every day, every moment, we are confronted with choices which shape our lives. I am the only person to enjoy the consequences of the choices I make. Do my choices make me or break me? Does it take me closer to God or away from God? Does it help me grow into the image and likeness of my Divine Creator or am I decaying in the opposite direction?

'Chastity includes an apprenticeship in

self-mastery which is a training in human freedom' (CCC 2339). 'Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought' (Pope John Paul II). We must therefore let the truth abide in us, for only *the truth will set us free* (John 8:32).

How can a young person keep his heart pure in a world polluted by instant gratification? *By guarding it according to your word* (Psalm 119:9-10). Jesus came into the world – the Word became flesh – to bridge aching humanity to eternal divinity. All that is required of us is to let the Word take flesh in our lives.

We can become spiritually alive by remaining connected – deep rooted in the Word. The more we fill our hearts and minds with the holy living Word of God, the more it helps us to be transformed,



KEEP HIS WAY WITHOUT FAULT? ONLY BY OBSERVING YOUR WORDS › PSALM 119:9-10

When we attempt to pursue every unholy path suggested by the world, we allow ourselves to be profaned and result in a heap of impure mess. To reverse the process is an inhuman task, for without Christ we are nothing. The Bible softly reminds: *apart from me you can do nothing* (John 15:5). To enable the divine physician to restore our hearts to its pure state, we need to be with Him (Mark 3:14).

into the fullness of life Christ came to offer. The more we let sacred Scripture become *alive and active* (Hebrews 4:12) in our lives, the more we become spiritually alive and active warriors in the ongoing spiritual warfare. By being renewed into the new way of life, we learn to let go the old self – disfigured by the dark strokes of a tainted world and strive to embrace the divinely designed, illuminated, self – shining bright – dazzling white.

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pure state, we need to *be with Him* (Mark 3:14). We need to dispose ourselves for Him to work on us. ‘Purity of heart is to will one thing’ (Soren Kierkegaard). The ‘only necessary thing’ (Luke 10:42) is to have soul-refreshing Mary-moments with the Lord, before we engage in Martha-moments in the world.

A personal time with God in the inner chamber of my heart, is an extremely essential daily plug-in to the spiritual power source, necessary to refrain myself from giving in to the desires of the flesh. Frequent reception of sacraments is irreplaceable cleansing of accumulated impurities and necessary to refill immeasurable supernatural grace, vital for the health of my immortal soul. Valuable guidance from a pastor or spiritual elder further propels me to stay on track, whenever I go astray. We have a plethora of saints whose intercession we can seek to aid us traverse the often-ignored narrow way. Our guardian angel will be extremely delighted to receive our repeated plea for heavenly assistance. Our helper – the indwelling Holy Spirit – always encourages and inspires us to continue to remain faithful and cooperate with invincible grace.

This journey of self-discipline is a spiritual journey. May we learn to satiate our unquenchable thirst, by redirecting our dependence on the *rivers of living water* (John 7:38) that never run dry. May we always invoke the powerful intercession of our spiritual parents whose exemplary immaculate lives motivate us to strive to live a chaste life. St Joseph, Terror of Demons, help me be chaste. Mary, most pure, come to my aid. May the pursuit of inner purity be the life of new martyrdom we are all called to embrace.



Chandeliers

☀ St Mary Magdalene

By Jisha John

Most Beloved Soul of Christ,
Shalom to you!
I'm excited to write back to
you.

Yes, my life before and after the Jesus' encounter is poles apart. And as everyone knows, I was someone who had fallen for bodily temptations. I was a woman of the world. But, his touch changed me completely.

I was born in Magdala, a village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. I had beautiful dreams like any other girl of my time. I loved the sea and its depths. But life took unexpected turns and I was fallen. I could never rise though I sometimes longed to. Alas! I was covered with shame and guilt. It weighed me down and my eyes were never raised.

Chastity is freedom. I realised it only when He set me free. I was at the end of my limits and when the demons left me, I returned to my original, beautiful person.

You asked me about being steady in faith. It's a relevant thought. Being faithful to God is quite difficult. We always feel tempted to go back to those worldly pleasures. But let me tell you, one thing that helped me was my proximity with Jesus. After the encounter, I was keen to walk with him. I clung to his every word. He kept me in him. I was always with him. That sustained me from falling. I made sure that I never walked away. I had many things to do with Jesus. I kept myself busy in keeping him. He loved me as one of his apostles. He cared for me. That was a new experience. No one ever cared or loved me and I was always in search of people who would love me selflessly. And finally, the guy was before me, Jesus of Nazareth.

My little soul, I know it's difficult to have a steady relationship. I know it pains you when you are wobbly. I understand you feel guilty. But the door is open. You can return. You are not less important. Each one is the most important.



I had beautiful dreams like any other girl of my time. I loved the sea and its depths. But life took unexpected turns and I was fallen. I could never rise though I sometimes longed to. Alas! I was covered with shame and guilt.

Mamma Mary is the other person who supported me in Jesus. Her purity was a wonder to me. Her presence was everything. I was always with the team. Jesus, the apostles, Mamma and some other women who followed Christ. Oh goosebumps! Walk along with him. This is what I would say. And this alone made me reach Calvary. I walked further. I found the tomb empty. And finally, that dawn was crucial. I saw the Risen Lord. He stood before me. He called me by name. He chose me to be the hero of the faith.

Walk ahead. Chastity comes at a high cost. But that can be achieved with Jesus. It's beautiful than all the wealth of the world.

My prayers.
He is mighty enough to keep you holy.
Trust Him.



FAITHOGRAPHIC

Why is the month of June dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus?



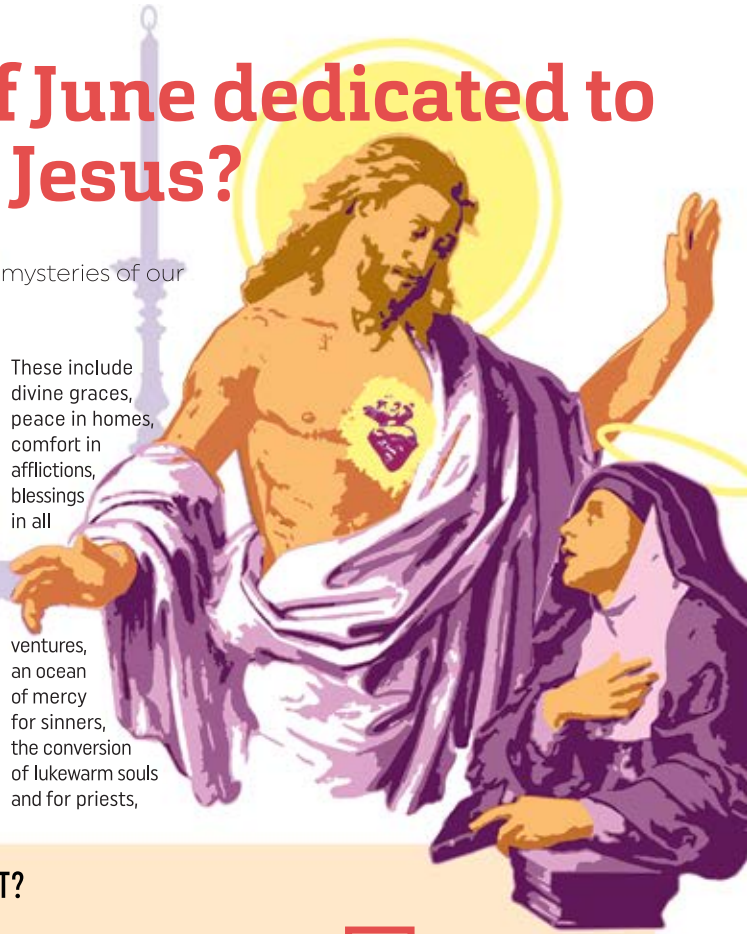
A monthly infographic by **Tena Conil**, illuminating the mysteries of our Catholic faith and values, one pixel at a time.

JESUS UNVEILS HIS HEART TO ST MARGARET MARY

Since ancient Greece, the heart has been widely recognised as a symbol of love and the seat of our soul. *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me* (Psalm 51:10). The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the heart as a 'dwelling-place (of God)... our hidden centre... (which) only the Spirit of God can fathom...; a place of encounter (and) a place of covenant' (CCC 2563). In 1673 a French Visitandine nun, Margaret Mary Alacoque, received a series of apparitions of Jesus, with his wounded, beating heart, visible outside (equivalent of bearing his soul). It was ablaze with fire and surrounded by the crown of thorns, inviting Margaret to take John's place (the apostle who rested his head on Jesus' bosom). He said, 'My Divine Heart is so passionately in love with humanity that the flames of its ardent love can no longer be contained within itself – but must be poured out... (But) in return I receive from most, only ingratitude.' He then told her of his desire to have a feast day and the establishment of a special devotion to honour his Sacred Heart. The Lord also promised twelve extraordinary favours to those who devote themselves to his Sacred Heart.

These include
divine graces,
peace in homes,
comfort in
afflictions,
blessings
in all

ventures,
an ocean
of mercy
for sinners,
the conversion
of lukewarm souls
and for priests,



HOW CAN I RESPOND TO THE LOVE OF JESUS' SACRED HEART?



Devotion to the Eucharist

Frequent Holy Mass and reception of Holy Communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament (often at perpetual Adoration chapels), and acts of reparation.



Act of Consecration

Regularly consecrating (setting aside specially) yourself and your family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in response to his burning love for me.



First Fridays Devotion

Holy Hour of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, devout offering of Holy Mass and reception of Holy Communion on First Fridays.

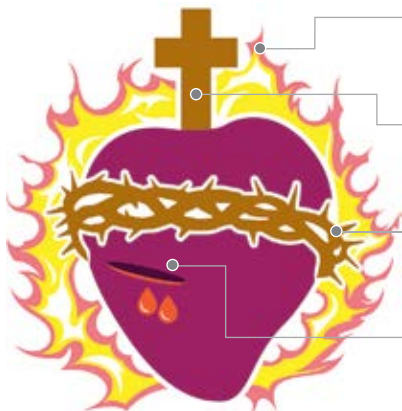


Honouring the Sacred Image

Installing and honouring publicly the Sacred Heart image at home (called 'Enthronement' the first time) and annual house-blessing by a priest (traditionally during the month of June).

SYMBOLISM OF THE SACRED HEART

Below is a short explanation of the four symbols seen in the Sacred Heart – 'all the love of God hidden in a human heart' (Pope Benedict XVI):



SPILLING FLAMES

The heart which overflows with consuming love for each of us.

THE CROSS

The ultimate sacrifice – the Lord loving us to the very end.

CROWN OF THORNS

His suffering – especially on account of our ingratitude.

WOUND & BLOOD

The fount of Mercy – his last drop of blood, shed for us.

the gift of touching the most hardened hearts. It ends with the great promise of final perseverance for those who receive Holy Communion on nine consecutive first Fridays. Honouring the Lord's wishes, in 1856 Pope Pius IX instituted the Feast of the Sacred Heart (Friday after the second Sunday after Pentecost) and the First Friday devotion was promulgated in 1899 by Pope Leo XIII.

EUCCHARIST – BREAD FROM CHRIST'S WOUNDED HEART

The Church's placement of the Feast of the Sacred Heart just days after Corpus Christi (the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ) and the Eucharistic focus of the First Friday devotion shows the intimate connection between the two. 'Let every knee bend before Thee... so supremely humbled in the Holy Eucharist' (St Margaret Mary). Scientific tests conducted on the miraculous host (which turned into flesh) from the Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano, was found to be composed of tissue from the myocardium (heart's wall) and endocardium (membrane lining the heart cavities). Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a wonderful means of responding to and deepening our love for Christ. It calls us to conversion, repentance and gratitude, leading us on the path towards holiness. Let us commit to bringing all, to this inexhaustible font of redeeming Love.

NewsWatch



Pope Francis appoints Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão as member of Dicastery for New Evangelisation

Pope Francis has appointed Cardinal Filipe Neri António Sebastião do Rosário Ferrão, President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, as one of the members of the Section for Fundamental Issues of Evangelisation in the World (New Evangelization) of the Dicastery for Evangelisation on April 25. The Section, which is headed by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, is responsible for overseeing the upcoming Jubilee Year 2025, also known as the 'Holy Year'.

Earlier, Cardinal Ferrão was appointed as member of the Dicastery for Evangelisation on October 7, 2022. Pope Francis elevated Cardinal Ferrão as cardinal on August 27, 2022, and was named as the cardinal-priest of Santa Maria in Via.

Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão was born on January 20, 1953, and ordained priest on October 28, 1979. Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman on December 20, 1993, he received the episcopal ordination on April 10, 1994. On December 12, 2003, he was appointed the Archbishop of Goa and Daman and Patriarch 'ad honorem' of the East Indies and installed on March 21, 2004. He was elected as president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, at its 31st plenary assembly, held in 2019 in Chennai.

Farming nuns reach out to the oppressed and marginalised through eco-centric spirituality

Small scale farmers and farming workers struggle for livelihood and are often ignored by policy makers in the modern economy. Helpers of Mount Rosary, a diocesan congregation in the Mangalore diocese in India, organise each June 5 – World Environment Day – as a farmer's festival. They plant trees, distribute saplings to their neighbours, and organise voluntary farming, in which villagers provide free labour to the nuns to learn and practise scientific and organic farming, as it is the beginning of monsoon season. The sisters also teach the villagers watershed management during monsoons, as many villages experience water shortage in summer.

The nuns have formed self-help groups for women in the nearby villages, and as part of the programme, the women volunteer to plant rice paddy in the convent farms. The nuns reciprocate by helping them with their home gardens.

The congregation, founded in 1990 by Msgr Edwin Pinto, a Mangalorean diocesan priest, aims to serve the sociopastoral needs of the local people. Its mission is to promote organic farming and protect the environment, said Pinto, who lives in the congregation's headquarters in Alangar. The priest, now in his early 90s, said the

congregation serves farmers who are mostly poor. Most members of the congregation have come from farming families, he added. The congregation has developed 40 acres of agricultural land in Alangar that now serves as a model farm and training field.

They also welcome students from different parts of the world through exchange programmes, where not just scientific knowledge but faith is also passed on. One such student, Valerie Gastager said being with nature and its soil and plants automatically brings divine energy. She said she has rediscovered her spirituality after being with the nuns. 'Though born a Catholic, I was not very regular to Church and spiritual services,' she said. 'But after working with the sisters in the farms, I have started attending Mass regularly.'

Valerie is among two male and two female students from German universities who have come to study tropical agriculture on an exchange programme to learn under the Helpers of Mount Rosary. As part of their nine-month training, which started in November, the Germans learn from the nuns how to cultivate grow vegetables and cash crops.

At St Joseph's Convent, the congregation's formation house in Alangar, and its farms, postulants and novices spend time farming and in prayer in preparation for their

future mission, especially among villagers, said Sr Celestine D'Souza, the formation superior. 'For us, work is part of worship, and we experience fulfillment and God while working in the farms,' Sr D'Souza said, adding that their eco-spirituality helps them become attuned to nature and the environment.



By **Ajith Jacob**, Stuttgart, Germany

Vatican Sends Relic Of True Cross To Britain's King Charles

When Britain's King Charles III walked into Westminster Abbey for his coronation, he walked behind a processional cross containing a relic of Christ's cross given to the king by Pope Francis.

'The fragments of the relic of the True Cross were donated by the Holy See in early April, through the apostolic nunciature, to His Majesty King Charles III, supreme governor of the Church of England, as an ecumenical gesture on the occasion of the centenary of the Anglican Church in Wales,' Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office said April 20.

A Vatican official said the two fragments in the coronation cross came from a relic preserved in the Lipsanoteca Room of the Vatican Museums.

The fragments now are under glass in the center of the coronation cross, which is made of recycled silver bullion.

Anglican Archbishop Andrew John of Wales blessed the cross during a service April 19.

King Charles has given the cross to the Christians of Wales, and after the coronation it will be shared by the Anglican and Catholic churches there. Chris Trott, the British ambassador to the Holy See, said on Twitter that 'we are deeply moved and grateful to Pope Francis for this extraordinary gift.'



HONG KONG BISHOP VISITS BEIJING IN HISTORIC TRIP AMID SINO-VATICAN TENSION

Hong Kong's top Catholic cleric visited Beijing during the last week of April, on the first visit to the Chinese capital by a bishop of the former British colony in nearly 30 years, despite signs of new Sino-Vatican tension.

The visit by Bishop Stephen Chow and several of his senior priests at the invitation of Bishop of Beijing Joseph Li Shan comes weeks after the Vatican announced that China had unilaterally installed a new bishop to Shanghai, an appointment that took the Vatican by surprise.

The Vatican said it was informed of the decision just a few days before the Chinese announcement, and has previously accused China of violating a bilateral accord, renewed last October, over the appointment of bishops. For the first time since the 1950s, both sides recognised the pope as supreme leader of the Catholic Church.

In a statement ahead of his five-day trip, Chow – who was appointed by the pope – said he hoped to 'promote exchanges and interactions' between the mainland and the broader Church, in particular with Asia.

Ajith Jacob works as a product designer. He lives with his wife Neethu and their children Diego, Georgio and Ephrem in Stuttgart, Germany.

time out

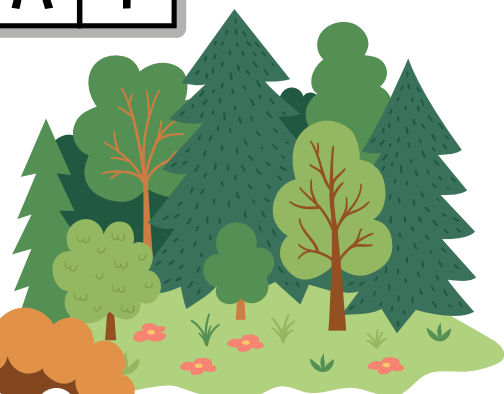
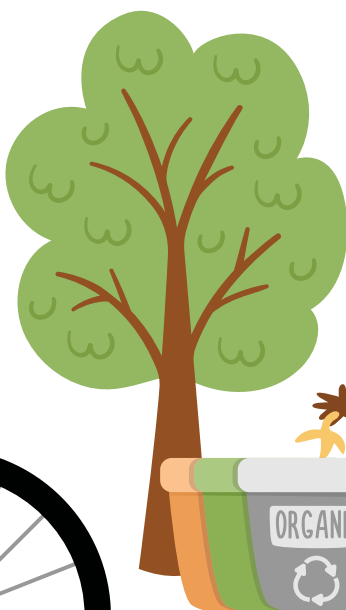
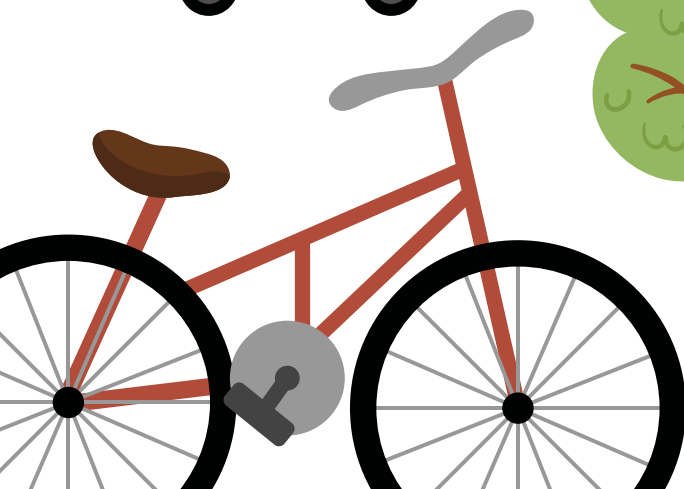
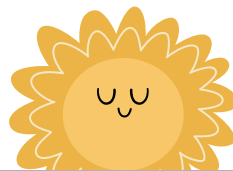


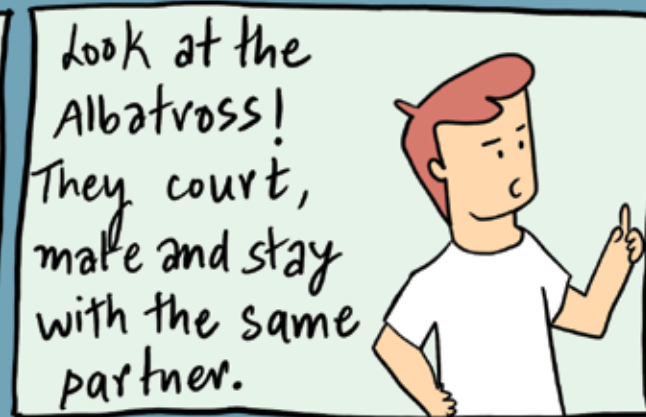
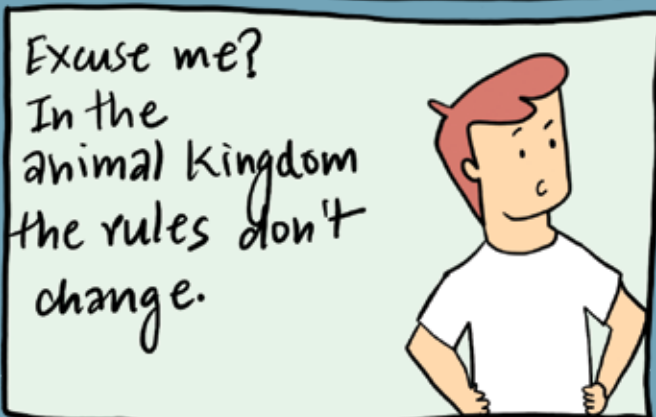
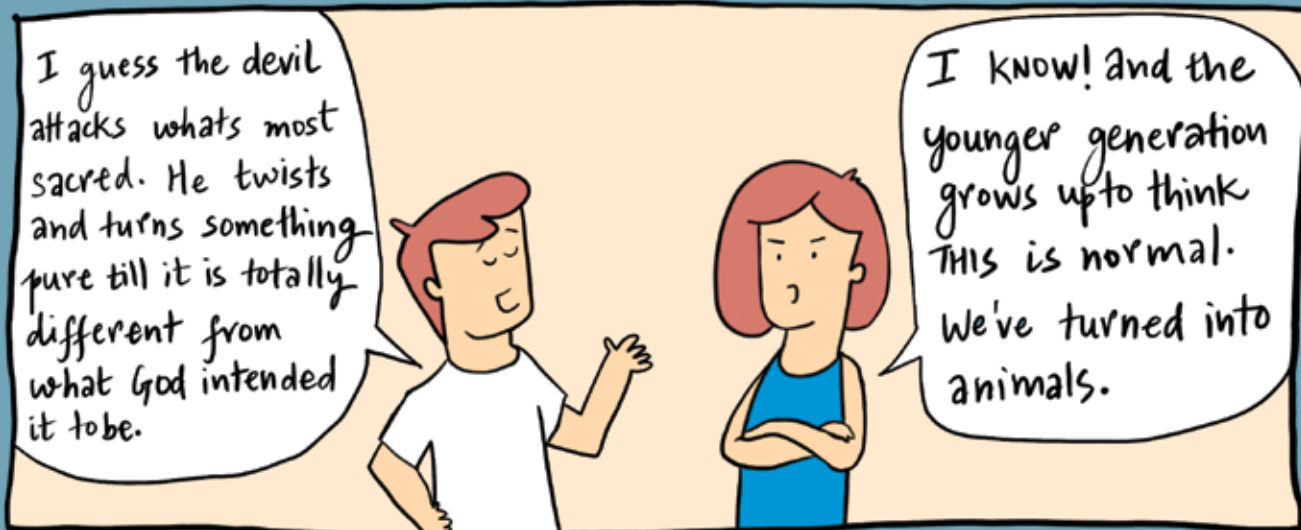
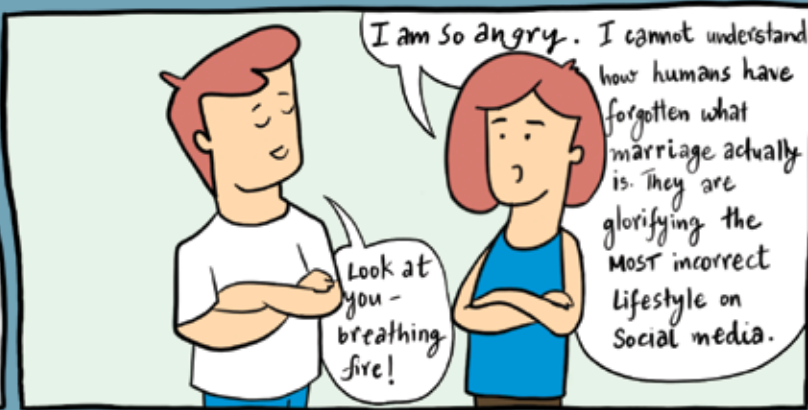
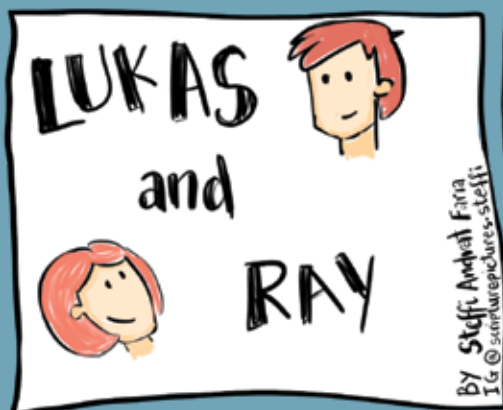
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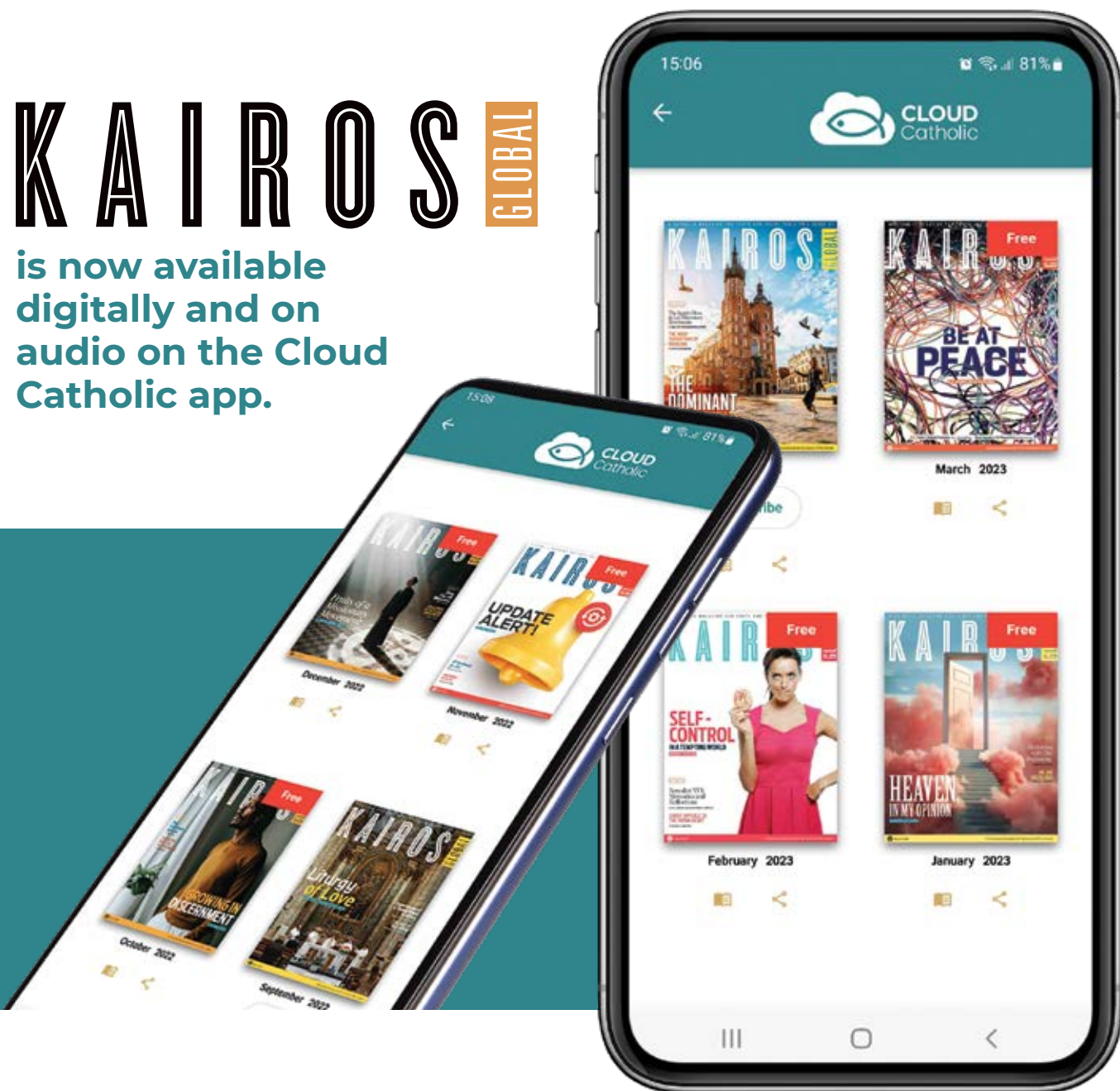
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