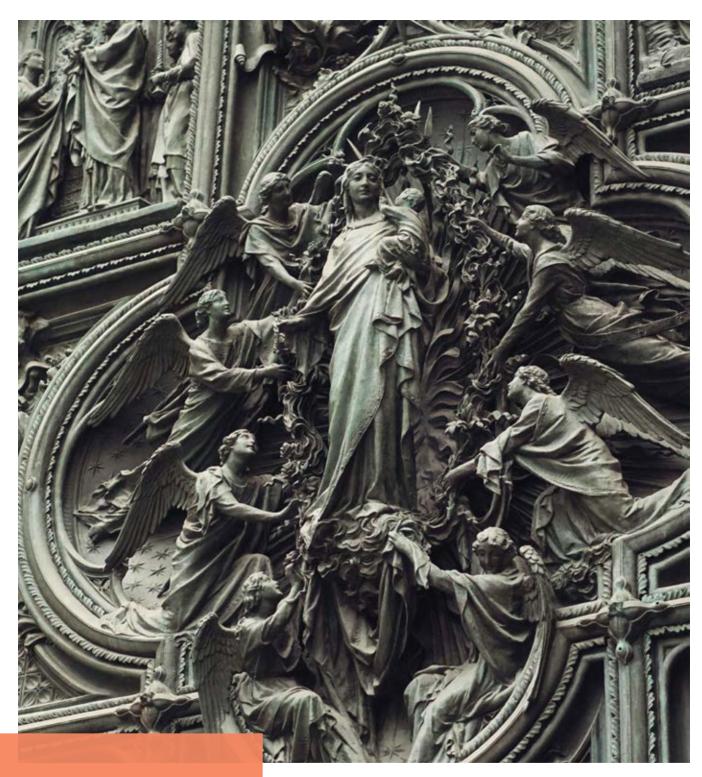
Jesus Youth



MARY, OUR MOTHER



Heavenly Mother and 'Mirror of Justice,' open our hearts to the light of God's countenance. Shine that merciful light upon our darkness so that we can accept the Gospel message into the depths of our being and enter more fully into the life of heaven. We ask this through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL





Catholics and Social Justice

he Catholic Church places significant importance on education, healthcare, scientific growth, and overall human development. This emphasis is deeply rooted in the belief that a fully developed person reflects the glory of God. As St Irenaeus of Lyons famously stated, 'The glory of God is man fully alive.' This belief propels the Church to become the largest agency worldwide, surpassing even governments, in running social support institutions. The Church's vast network of schools, hospitals, and charitable organisations underscores its dedication to social justice and human upliftment.

The motivation behind this extensive involvement in social work is rooted in the teachings of Jesus. In the Bible, Jesus teaches His followers to be compassionate and caring towards others, encapsulated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus' directive to *go and do likewise* (Luke 10:37) serves as a call to action for Catholics to engage in acts of kindness and mercy.

Furthermore, the teachings of Jesus emphasise the significance of serving others as a pathway to salvation. In Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus speaks of the final judgement, where individuals are judged based on their actions towards others: 'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' Jesus concludes by saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' We see that serving others is not only a moral obligation but also a spiritual mandate.

Many saints have also echoed these sentiments, reinforcing the Church's commitment to social justice. St Vincent de Paul, known for his charitable works, stated, 'Charity is the cement which binds communities to God and persons to one another.' His life and legacy exemplify the Church's mission to uplift the poor and marginalised through acts of love and charity.

The difference between ordinary social work and Christian efforts lies in the underlying motivation. While both aim to improve the well-being of individuals and communities, Christian social work is driven by a desire to save souls and express love for the Lord. St Teresa of Calcutta, or Mother Teresa, encapsulated this perspective when she said, 'Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.' Her work with the destitute and dying was motivated by her deep love for God and her belief in the inherent dignity of every human being.

The Catholic Church's extensive involvement in education, healthcare, and social support stems from its foundational belief in the sanctity of human life and the call to serve others as commanded by Jesus. This commitment to social justice is not merely

about alleviating physical suffering but also about nurturing the soul and expressing love for God. Through acts of compassion and service, we can strive to embody the teachings of Jesus and bring about the glory of God in the world.

Charbachet

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF chackochan.njavallil@jykairosmedia.org



LOOK OUTFOR

- My Hope is in Thee
- The Light we Cherish
- The Enduring Legacy of the Angelic Doctor



Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream Amos 5:24

KAIROS

PATRON

Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil (Ecclesiastical Advisor, Jesus Youth International)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Fr Joseph Ezhumayil (Jesus Youth International Chaplain)

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER

Dr Edward Edezhath

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr Midhun Paul (Jesus Youth International Coordinator)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr Chackochan Njavallil

MANAGING EDITOR

Joshy Joseph, Houston, USA (joshy.joseph@jykairosmedia.org)

ISSUE EDITORS

Fr Alvin Mundackal George Paul Aleena Joy Jyothsna DSouza Tania Rose Josun

CIRCULATION COORDINATOR

Anto Puthur, Cochin, India +91 96055 11644 (circulations@jykairosmedia.org)

ASSOCIATE CIRCULATION COORDINATORS

AUSTRALIA: Mintu Vijoy, Melbourne +61 452 538 785 BAHRAIN: Neenu Maria Jibin +973 33715472 BANGLADESH: Tias Victor Palma +880 1717-152023

CAMBODIA: Sophearong Ravy, Phnom Penh +855 96 426 5472

CANADA: Joby Joseph Ontario +1 2899 686 074

EAST TIMOR: Sr. Julie Antony +670 77827618 (Whatsapp+91 97447

32431)

GERMANY: Anna Paul, Berlin +49 176 83495451 **INDIA:** Austin Michael, Mangalore +91 8277405251

IRELAND: Suresh V Joy +353 87 963 0904

ISRAEL: Jaison K Thattil, Tel Aviv +972 55 9974339

ITALY: Anoop P Varghese **+39 3884256258**

KUWAIT: Rajeev J Chacko, Ahmadi +965 66388310 MALAYSIA: Sweety Kamala Prasad +60 162568139 NETHERLANDS: Jojo Varghese, Utrecht +31 684974552 NEW ZEALAND: Derick Daniel, Auckland +64 29 127 0650

OMAN: Jiju Paul, Ruwi +968 99467516

PAKISTAN: Asif Emmanuel +92 3022534254

PAPUA NEW GUNIEA: Abin Michael +675 7479 4368

QATAR: Metty Don, Doha +974 7040 868
SINGAPORE: Savio Francies +65 9021 9798
SRILANKA: Sonal Fernando +94 77 3818399
SWITZERLAND: Anu Jose +41 799177100
THAILAND: Vineeth Andrew +66 86 372 6601
UAE: Thomas Jose +971 521316868
UGANDA: Mboowa Ronald +256 706844152

UK: Mathachen Maduckakuzhy +44 7969 365686 USA: Denny Joseph +1 (832) 640-3106

03A. Denny 305epn +1 (032) 040-3100

Leena Shaju, Cochin, India +91 62382 79115; finance@jykairosmedia.org

DESIGN

Mustard Tree, Delhi, India

FINANCE COORDINATOR



REGULARS

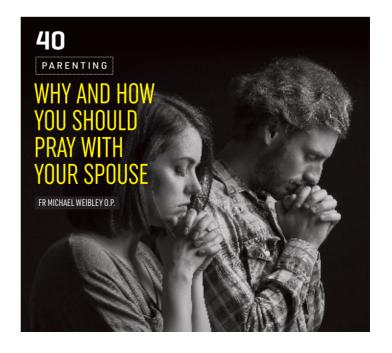
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MAILING ADDRESS

Kairos Media USA

- 3010 Mason Grove Ln Pearland, TX, USA. 77584
- info@jykairosmedia.org
- 9 +1 832 592 3675

Kairos Media UK

- St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU, United Kingdom
- infouk@jykairosmedia.org
- 9 + 44 7969365686

Kairos Media India

- No 8/174, Navodaya Studio Complex, Thengod P.O, Cochin, Kerala, India. Pin: 682030
- infoin@jykairosmedia.org
- 9 +91 9895711718



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ASK. FR.BITAJU

Fr. Bitaju Mathew, O.SS.T. belongs to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (The Trinitarians). He serves as the Director of Formation for students of Philosophy and Theology of their order at Bangalore and is currently the Chaplain of the Jesus Youth International Formation Team.

7

What does it mean to be perfect when it comes to living the Christian life?

hanks for your relevant question regarding the meaning of 'perfection' in the life of a Christian. In the Christian context, the concept of perfection is often understood in terms of striving to live a life of holiness and conformity to the will of God. Iesus himself calls his followers to be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Fathers is perfect (Mathew 5:48). This invitation to perfection does not mean that Christians are expected to be flawless or sinless, as human beings are inherently imperfect and prone to sin (Romans 3:23). Rather, it is a call to strive for moral and spiritual excellence, to grow in virtue, and to seek to align one's life with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

Living a perfect Christian life involves a commitment to following the commandments of God, practising the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and seeking to imitate the love and mercy of Christ in one's relationship with others. It also includes a willingness to repent of sin, seek forgiveness, and continually strive for conversion and spiritual growth.

Perfection in the Christian life is not achieved through human effort alone, but through the grace of God working in and through us. It is a lifelong journey of faith, marked by moments of success and failure, growth and setbacks. It is a process of continual conversion and renewal, as we seek to become more like Christ and to fulfil the purpose for which we were created.

Ultimately, the goal of perfection in the Christian life is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). It is a journey of faith and discipleship, guided by the Holy Spirit and sustained by the grace of God, as we seek to grow in holiness and draw closer to God each day.

In summary, being perfect in the Christian life means living in a way that reflects the love, mercy, and righteousness of God, seeking to follow Christ's example and teaching, and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us from within. It is a journey of faith, obedience, and discipleship that involves continual growth, learning, and reliance on God's grace.



YOUCAT 1

FOR WHAT PURPOSE ARE WE HERE ON EARTH?

We are here on earth in order to know and to love God, to do good according to His will, and to go someday to heaven. [CCC 1-3, 358]

To be a human being means to come from God and to go to God. Our origin goes back farther than our parents. We come from God, in whom all the happiness of heaven and earth is at home, and we are expected in His everlasting, infinite blessedness. Meanwhile we live on this earth. Sometimes we feel that our Creator is near; often we feel nothing at all. So that we might find the way home, God sent us His Son, who freed us from sin, delivers us from all evil, and leads us unerringly into true life. He is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' [John 14:6].



DR. KOCHURANI JOSEP

Prayer Intentions **September**

For the cry of the Earth

We pray that each one of us will hear and take to heart the cry of the Earth and of victims of natural disasters and climate change, and that all will undertake to personally care for the world in which we live.





When we receive Holy Communion we experience Jesus with us both spiritually and physically. He says to you, 'I am with you' not in words but in a gesture, in that act of love which is the Eucharist.

We are often held as 'prisoners' by haste, and these may seem like two incompatible things – resting and being compassionate – but they actually go together. Our hearts will not be consumed by the anxiety of doing, if we know how to stop.

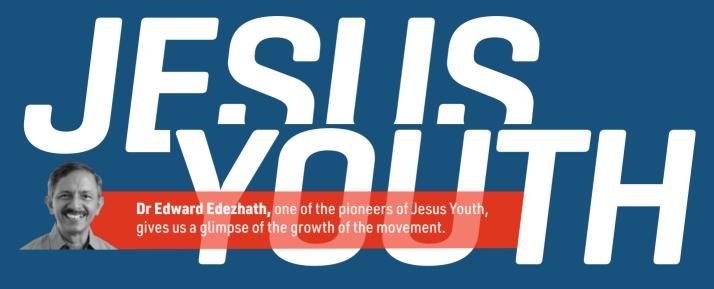
In the silence of adoration, if we know how, we receive God's grace and then our heart is not consumed by the anxiety of doing.



Christians need to be an example to others of how to live a sober, non materialistic lifestyle in peace with one's community by knowing how to guard sobriety, to know how to be sober in the use of things – sharing resources, skills, gifts, etc. and remembering 'excess enslaves.'

As Catholics, we cannot be satisfied with a marginal or private faith. Have the courage to make proposals for justice and peace in the public debate. We need to be a voice, a voice that denounces and proposes in a society that is often mute and where too many have no voice.

Let the Jubilee be a time of grace, during which we will open the holy door so that everyone may cross the threshold of that 'living sanctuary' who is Jesus.



Let's be Attentive to the Guidance of the Spirit!

ON THE JY CULTURE OF SHARING INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES

I have a habit of keeping bits of notes and pieces of paper from meetings and discussions. It is interesting to revisit them many years later. It is also inspiring to see in them patterns of divine intervention and God shaping things through simple events and ordinary people.

In Jesus Youth, we often speak of 'messages,' sharing of deep inspirations someone feels inside and giving with a conviction that God is speaking through them. This may seem guite strange for others, even for other good Christians. However, in Jesus Youth, there is a certain openness to these messages and a readiness to check what God is speaking through them. But won't there be a danger in this and even a misuse of it? Oh yes, there needs to be a wise and discerning approach. The Apostle gives us a balanced perspective: Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

BUILD A CULTURE OF OPENNESS TO THE SPIRIT

In my collection I have a handwritten paper, a letter Prof PC Joseph wrote

to me in November 1985. In it, he shares his concern for the youth on college campuses, discussing the need for a youth-to-youth approach. He wanted our First-line group to take the initiative. He was urging us to begin something by June 1986. What is amazing is that something momentous got started that very month.

Inspirational messages and prophetic utterances come in different forms. As I said, it could be a letter. Someone may speak out a persistent thought or a Bible passage that deeply inspired them. In a group setting, people often share images, visions, or messages that come up in their minds. For instance, in our prayer group, every week, after a time of praise and quiet listening, there is a time to share any inspiration someone may have. Different persons speak out at that time. It may be a work of assurance or consolation (1 Corinthians 14:3), but when we see a pattern or repeated messages, we often ask, 'Is the Lord telling us to take some special step or move in any direction?' Thus, out of those recurring messages and a reflection on it, there came about many initiatives, like starting a 'sharing group,' regular intercession, outreach to a poor colony, Christmas celebration, picnics, and so on.

A MESSAGE IS A SEED

People outside of Jesus Youth often marvel at the effectiveness of JY conferences, music performances, dramatic presentations, ministry groups, and social outreach programmes. However, they may not realise that almost every one of these initiatives was born from a message someone received and shared in some group. When complemented by other inspirations and shaped by good planners in the group, these messages become the foundation of our projects. It's not just at the beginning but at every step of its growth these inspirational messages shared in Jesus Youth groups play a pivotal role in shaping our initiatives, programmes, and projects.

SHOULD EVERY MESSAGE BE OBEYED?

As we prepared for the Jesus Youth '85 conference, everyone was encouraged to develop creative ideas and proposals. And there was a lot of enthusiastic response. Young people planned skits, dances, music performances, and other innovative programme elements. Then, several people came up with messages suggesting we should not venture into theatrical performances. There was



When our knowledge, reason, imagination, feelings, and aspirations all work together, it will be easier for us to discern the guidance of God.

much talk about their danger. After duly listening to and reviewing them in the proper forums, we disregarded the warnings and proceeded with stage performances.

Stories of inspirational messages derailing people's lives and splitting families are not rare. I can look back at some irreconcilable conflicts in some groups due to people following some inspirational messages blindly. Where do things go wrong about these prophecies and messages? Surely, God speaks through people. But these people who speak messages from God are human beings with weaknesses, past hurts, and cultural prejudices. It is like the crystal-clear water flowing out of a good spring, later becoming coloured by the soil or mud in the stream. How should we handle this?

The answer St Paul gives. Give due importance to inspirational messages or prophecies, but test everything and hold fast what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

BUILDING A CULTURE OF BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

'Faith and Reason' is the name of a famous encyclical by Saint Pope John Paull II. As the Church has always taught, brain and heart should go hand in hand as both are gifts of God. To hear God speaking to us and see the guidance of the Spirit, our 'spirit, soul, and body' should be alive and active to welcome the word of the Lord. When our knowledge, reason, imagination, feelings, and aspirations all work together, it will be easier for us to discern the guidance of God.

St Paul's idea of a Christian
Community is like a human body
with diverse but united and mutually
complementing organs (1 Corinthians
12:12, 25). Over the centuries, the
Church has always practised this group
listening approach, which later St
Ignatius Loyola and his followers called
Communal Discernment. And today,
we see the same spirit in operation
in Jesus Youth groups. In the face

of many challenges, the Holy Spirit moves people, and they share their inspirations with the community. The community listening attentively and discerning together moves to action step by step. Its result or best test is the love and joy that grow steadily in our groups.

Most people see only the tree, often forgetting the seed. The messages that set off many big waves in the Jesus Youth movement were often small. But some inspirations are repeatedly talked about. A piece of paper I have speaks of a gathering of about 175 people on 11 October 1981 at Vidyaniketan, Ernakulam. Two visions and a couple of messages different youths shared on that day mentioned a bright light that would be lit in a big church, and the Lord leading the movement step by step. For so many, these little messages have been sources of deep inspiration, guiding their steps with clear hope leading to great rejoicing.

2

One of the pioneers of the Jesus Youth movement, an international preacher and author, **Dr Edward Edezhath** is a retired professor from St Albert's
College, Ernakulam. He is presently a researcher at Amoris Christi in Florida, USA.

ENGAGE

MY HOPE IS IN THEE

In this first of a three part series, Fr Josemaría Guzmán-Domínguez, O.P. reflects on hope and how our ultimate fulfilment lies in God.

he Israelite singer-king, David, in Psalm 39 asks God: And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in thee. This verse (and many others) from Sacred Scripture reveals to us the key nature of Christian hope: it makes us await God as our ultimate happiness. Come December, the Church universal will enter the Jubilee year 'Pilgrims of Hope.' So, to prepare our hearts for this year of special grace, I want us to reflect on this little-known and often misunderstood theological virtue and its place in our life with Christ.

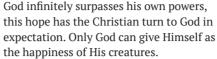
In this first of three reflections, I want to make the simple point that hope is all about God and orients us to God as our perfect fulfilment. In the second article, I will show how prayer sustains and trains our hope and anchors us to God. Then,



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in the third, we will contemplate the mystery of hope as a communal reality that binds us to one another in Christ Jesus who is our hope.

The great German Catholic philosopher, Josef Pieper writes that 'hope is the confidently patient expectation of eternal beatitude in a contemplative and comprehensive sharing of the triune life of God; hope expects from God's hand the eternal life that is God himself: *sperat Deum a Deo.* A Christian doesn't place his or her happiness on earth – on material success, political peace, even family wellbeing. All these are good, but they are not all-fulfilling. In fact, they are fragile and temporary. Rather, a believer in Christ and His promises hopes for God as his or her own ultimate happiness. And since



Through hope (and faith and charity) a Christian really reaches, even in this life, the one true God in himself. At the beginning of the questions on hope in the *Summa Theologiae*, Saint Thomas Aquinas makes an analogy to the passion of hope and calls God the future, arduous but possible good whom believers hope to possess. And he explains that a man rightly hopes for this greatest of good as possible not by his own strength but through divine assistance, through God himself, on whose help he leans.²

When we hope we look, on the one hand, towards a hoped-for good. For example, on a natural level, we can hope for a competitive position at the company we want to work for. That position would be the 'good.' Concerning God, we can speak of Him as hope's supreme Promised Good. This is why hope makes us 'pilgrims' and 'wayfarers' ... we have not yet received the promised happiness God wants to give us.

Often, when we hope, we look for things that can't be achieved by our own strength. In the example above, we might be in a place where we need help training for the job, or a good recommendation from someone inside the company. The people who do such things for us would be our helpers.

In the case of supernatural hope, since we hope for eternal happiness, which is utterly beyond our capacity, we also look to the divine helper through whom this greatest good alone becomes possible for us. When we place our hope in God, He is THE Helper, the one promising and assisting us with His grace in our pilgrimage towards the eternal possession of that infinite good He offers us, eternal life. Saint Thomas phrases this beautifully when he teaches that 'the good which we ought to hope for from God properly and chiefly is the infinite good, which is proportionate to the power of our divine helper, since it belongs to an infinite power to lead anyone to an infinite good. Such a good is eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of God Himself. For we should hope from Him for nothing

less than Himself, since His goodness, whereby He imparts good things to His creature, is no less than His Essence. Therefore the proper and principal object of hope is eternal happiness.' (Summa Theologiae II-II q. 17 a. 2.)

Faced by the difficulty, and futurity of the hoped-for good, the Christian looks with great confidence to God. Especially he leans upon God's omnipotence and mercy. He trusts that because God is powerful and merciful, divine promises never fail. Our faith in His omnipotent mercy lends hope a certainty that God will bring us to eternal happiness. This is why prayer, 'the raising up of our minds to God' is so tied to the practice of theological hope. I will continue our reflection on that specific connection in the next article.

For now, I will suggest two ways to act on this gift of supernatural hope. The first is to honestly see where we might be putting our hope elsewhere than in God. When we look honestly, we probably will discover that we seek ultimate happiness from earthly goods. Whatever these might be, surrender those desires to God and tell him with the Psalm 'my hope is in thee.' The second is to pray with this wonderful and time-tested prayer, 'The act of hope' which will orient all our hearts to God.

O my God, relying on Your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Your grace and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

Mary, Mother of hope, pray for us!

Reference

- ¹ Pieper, Faith, Hope, Love, 103.
- ² ST II-II q. 17 a. 1.

Fr Josemaría Guzman-Domínguez, O.P. is a Dominican friar of the Province of St Joseph. He and his family hail from Caracas, Venezuela and moved to the United States twenty years ago. After studying Italian Literature at the University of Notre Dame he entered the Order of Preachers. He was ordained a priest of Jesus Christ in 2021 and now serves as Chaplain for the Catholic Community at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.





EXPERIENCE ISSUE 78 1

e had been preparing for days, praying for months for this one day to come. A group of families from our parish were going to the National Eucharistic Congress. We called each other and made all the preparations for this blessed trip. One of the main things we planned was to attend Holy Mass during the journey. We used an app called Mass times for this.

With snacks, water, Gatorade, coffee and everything, we left on 16 July 2024 at 4 am, all of us in 4 cars. We had all gone to bed late the previous night, and barely had enough sleep when we woke at 3 am. Very tired, I had completely forgotten about Holy Mass when a friend called and asked, 'Where are we stopping for Mass?' That's when I remembered about it. I opened the app and looked at the Mass times of many churches, and saw a church: St Joseph Catholic Church, Muskogee in Oklahoma. Mass was at 8.15 am, if we drove another 80 miles we could reach there in time.

We arrived there expecting nothing more than a regular daily Mass. Three of our four families arrived first. The fourth family was yet to come. We entered and a nice parishioner showed us around the chapel. Inside there was a figure of a very young St Joseph. It was a large church with a small chapel attached to it. Throughout the chapel were stained windows of the 15 mysteries of the Holy Rosary. There were 15 minutes left for Holy Mass to start, so we waited in prayer.

When the priest entered the altar, he looked at us with great wonder. There were 15 of us, not counting the family yet to arrive. We occupied most of the pews in the small chapel. Holy Mass began. The priest gave a very beautiful homily on the humanity of Jesus. Our fourth family arrived during the sermon. There were 8 of them and they came and stood at the door one by one. Father called them into the chapel. Each one of us was welcomed with great love. When I saw it, I remembered Abraham who welcomed angels. To myself, I said that this priest is the son of Abraham. I saw Jesus in that father's eyes the moment he gave me the Holy Eucharist.



After Mass, Father thanked us, 'for coming to Holy Mass in the morning with so many children' and walked to the sacristy. One of the parishioners enquired about us out of curiosity and we said we were from Dallas, on our way to the Eucharistic Renewal Congress. Then they invited us to see the beautiful big church. We entered the main church, which also had exquisite stained glass work. My friend told me that they were done by Blessed Stanley F. Rother, who is now on his way to sainthood.

When the father came down from the sacristy, one of my friends asked father to pray for our journey. The father immediately said, 'Take your children and sit in the pews at the front of the church. I will come now.' Father came back with another parishioner, a large prayer book in hand, along with holy water.

Then, taking about 10 minutes, our 15 children were told very simply about the importance of the Holy Eucharist and the graces that can be received through this Congress. He also told them why our hearts need to beat together with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

And, he told us: 'Do not lose these graces that you are about to receive by even a little evil thought or gossiping.'

A solemn blessing was given at the end just like the blessing you get on big feast days. When we were about to thank him before leaving the church, he said, 'Before leaving, please use the restroom and other facilities here and make yourself comfortable.'

My eyes filled with tears: this priest was a true representative of God, burning with God's love! Those hands that served Holy Eucharist to us today were those same hands that fed 5000 people 2000 years ago! The tongue that spoke to us was the same tongue of Jesus that spoke to the Samaritan woman.

As we continued our journey, we recited from our hearts:

'Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.'

To be continued.

A Paediatric Nurse Practitioner, **Silvy Santhosh** loves spending time with Jesus in the Eucharist in her free time and writing about God's love. She loves to be with children, play with them and read to them about His love. She lives in Dallas, USA with her husband and three children.

8



Joseph Anthraper takes us through the lives of a few Catholics from around the world who, taking the pain of the poor and oppressed as their own, championed justice for them.

an is a social being and as the CCC says, 'The love of neighbour is inseparable from love of God' (1978). Social structures and norms that promote or foster injustice, thus become an affront to the innate dignity of the human being. As the Catechism rightly puts it, social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him (1929). Social structures and human freedom thus co-exist in a constructive tension, each providing the framework for the other to grow and thrive. Human freedom can only truly blossom in societies which provide a just framework for it, and social justice can only flourish within a community which fully understands and values the dignity of each person as a 'somebody'.

Yet, we are fully aware that we live in a fallen world and we, ourselves and those around us, are far from perfect. In every time and every age, wherever humanity has built communities, the temptation to ignore, rule over, or use the weaker sections has been far too difficult to resist. One of the first mandates that God gave Moses while giving the law was this, The Lord God executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:18). For the Hebrews as well for every human civilisation though, social justice has often been nothing more than an unrealisable dream. Yet, every so often, God raises us people who, believing in their Saviour's promise not to fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul, stand up for the weak and the downtrodden, becoming the voice of the voiceless, and give comfort to those in the margins of society, to the ostracised and those considered outcasts by the society.

MARTIN DE PORRES

What would you, as a Catholic, do when because of your race you are considered a second-class citizen in your country, with unjust laws preventing you from achieving your dreams. Well, if your name is Martin de Porres, you stand tall, firm in faith, and start chipping away at the unjust social framework, one brick at a time.

Martin de Porres is the patron saint of social justice and mixed-race people. He was born out of wedlock in Lima, Peru in 1569, to a Spanish man and a formerly enslaved Peruvian woman. Although he was ridiculed for being mixed-race throughout his life, little did that hinder Martin from taking care of the sick and orphans. All Martin longed for from a young age was to enter the Dominican community and become a friar - even though the law in Peru at the time prevented people of African, Native American or mixed-race from entering religious communities. Yet through perseverance and prayer, Martin was finally accepted into the community, first as a servant and then, ten years later, becoming a Third Order Dominican, when the prior decided to disregard the law and accept Martin into the order. Even as a



Third Order Dominican, it didn't get any better for Martin as there were many of his fellow friars who were not as gracious as the prior, with the ridicules and abuse getting more vicious. Yet, Martin was always focussed on his mission, caring for the sick with utmost love and charity, founding a hospital and an orphanage for abandoned children, and having a special compassion for enslaved people.

St Martin De Porres' life teaches us that not all social injustices are fought with force – in fact, as St John Paul II said, evil is never defeated with evil. Only truth and goodness has the capacity to make changes that sustain.

DOROTHY DAY

What would you, as a Catholic convert and journalist, do when you see millions struggling with poverty and disillusionment, losing their hope and purpose in life? Well, if your name is Dorothy Day, you look at the various ways of living Matthew 25 – for yourself and for your fellow countrymen.

Talk about living a radical Catholic life, rooted in the gospel and oriented towards social justice and one name invariably pops up, that of Servant of God Dorothy Day. A bohemian who flirted with far-left communist ideologies in her youth, she had a profound conversion experience after the birth of her daughter, while juggling life as a single mom.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, she along with Peter Maurin, started the Catholic Worker(CW) newspaper and Movement, with the aim of providing hope 'for those who think that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight....to call their attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social programme — to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare.' For the rest of her life, until her death in 1980, she lived with the CW movement, founding 'houses of hospitality' for the poor and 'farming communes' for the unemployed.

She lived through and commented on the central events of the twentieth century: wars, economic depression, class struggle, the nuclear threat, and the civil rights movement. The Catholic Worker and her prodigious writings always focus the light of



the Gospel on our conscience as we struggle with these issues. She wrote to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. Dorothy Day, even through her many struggles and failings, tried to live a life oriented to the gospel values, especially Jesus' mandate in Matthew 25.

Dorothy Day's life and legacy is a radical movement, faithful to the Gospel and the Church, immersed in the social issues of the day, with the aim of transforming both individuals and society. In an age marked by widespread violence, impersonal government, shallow interpersonal commitments, and a quest for self-fulfilment, Dorothy Day's spirit fosters nonviolence, personal responsibility of all people to the poorest ones among us, and fidelity to community and to God. (Praying with Dorothy Day)

ST KATHERINE DREXEL

What would you, as a cradle Catholic, do when you have inherited a fortune, but have also seen the needs and necessities of the Native American community, largely ignored and swept to the sidelines by those considering themselves more

civilised? Well, if your name is Katherine Drexel, you use your inheritance to build schools and educate the native American children, of course!

Born in 1855 into an affluent and pious family, her father being a very wealthy banker and investor in Philadelphia, Katherine and her sisters had a very privileged upbringing. Her parents instilled in her the seeds of living the corporal works of mercy, and when as a young person, she saw the afflictions of the Native Americans, she longed and prayed for a way in which she could help them. So it was that during a private audience with Pope Leo XIII, she pleaded with him to send missionaries to start schools for Native Americans, and Pope Leo looked at her lovingly and invited her to be that missionary.

The meeting with the Pope became a turning point in her life, and despite inheriting a fortune once her parents passed away, Katherine became a nun, choosing a life of poverty and using the money inherited from her parents to start schools for Native American children. Katherine established a

religious community called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Coloured, and until her death at the old age of 96, she worked tirelessly to empower and uplift the different native American communities. Like a mustard seed, Saint Katharine's dedication to the education of those less fortunate grew into a plentiful network of 145 Catholic missions and 62 schools. She also helped establish Xavier University of New Orleans, the first Catholic college in the United States for African Americans.

St Katherine's life and witness nudges us to be that change from within, rather than waiting for others to bring in that change we aspire from without.

ST DAMIAN OF MOLOKAI

What would you, as a young Catholic priest, do when you come face to face with a deadly epidemic, and the people suffering from the disease are pleading for spiritual care at a faraway place in a godforsaken island? Well, if your name is Fr Damian, you volunteer to not just visit the place once in a while, but live with them, fully knowing that you will eventually become one of them!

Joseph de Veuster was born in Belgium in 1840, and was sent across the globe to Hawaii where he was ordained in 1864, whence he took the name of Damian. At that time in order to stop the spread of leprosy, the government in Hawaii were exiling all those suffering from the disease to an island called Molokai, where they would eventually die. Leprosy

at the time was an incurable and highly contagious disease, and it was thought that the best course of action would be to isolate those suffering in a place far away, to keep the rest of the population safe.

Father Damian, coming to know of the plight of the hapless lepers in Molokai volunteered to become their pastor, and left for Molokai in 1873. For the rest of his life at Molokai, Father Damian became much more than a loving pastor for his people. He brought hope to this hell of despair. He became a source of consolation and encouragement for his flock by becoming the doctor of their souls and of their bodies without distinction of race or religion. He gave a voice to the voiceless and built a community where they discovered new reasons for living. That once lawless place had now become a place where the law of love prevailed.

Fr Damian contracted the disease in 1885, truly becoming one with the people he served. Father Damien died on 15 April 1889, having served sixteen years among the patients with leprosy. Catholic social teaching is predicated on the innate dignity of human life - from its moment of conception to its natural death. Father Damian had eyes to see the dignity of the sick people in Molokai being trampled and ignored by the able and powerful, and with a heart open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, he decided to let his light shine in the midst of the prevailing darkness, bringing hope and dignity to those considered outcasts. St Damian poses this question to us also – are we





aware; do we care for those on the fringes of our society today!

FR STAN SWAMY

What would you, as a Catholic, do if you see the most underprivileged of your fellow countrymen, the tribals and the Adivasis who are already at the bottom rung of the social, economic and class ladder, being unjustly treated by the whole nation, aided by the ruling class which is hellbent on maintaining the status-quo, using fear, torture and all other immoral means? If your name is Father Stanislaus Lourduswamy, then you begin by educating and helping the tribals, thus fighting the unjust system through non-violent and legal means.

Fr Stan Swamy was a Jesuit priest, who died while being unjustly held in prison wrongly accused of terrorism, sedition and multiple other sections under the dreaded UAPA act – his actual crime – standing up for the poor and



vulnerable Adivasi people and Dalits in some of the poorest communities in India. According to Swamy, his mission was to 'focus on two issues, land alienation and displacement caused by developmental projects like mining, dams and creation of townships without the consent of the people... and it was often such people who were at the receiving end.... Our task [is] to work with (young people of the Dalit and adivasi communities) and help them to understand scientifically the issues they are facing.'

Of course, not everyone is willing to accept truth, and his work with the most underprivileged sections of the society drew the irk of the rich and powerful, especially the legislature and executive arms of the government machinery, which then swung into action by arresting him and denying him bail as well as basic human necessities for an 83-year-old suffering from Parkinson's disease.

Denied medical care multiple times, Fr Stan died of a cardiac arrest while in custody.

Fr Stan lived and died for the cause of truth. Like for Pilate, truth is inconvenient for the rulers of every age, yet, as a pinch of yeast leavens the whole dough, little

by little, truth will work through and will invariably have the final victory.

ST OSCAR ROMERO

What would you, as a Catholic prelate of a poor country, do if your country is in the middle of a civil war, with rampant corruption and the ruling military government is using threats, torture and murder as a means to root out all opposition to its regime, and every day you come face to face with the plight and pain of your people? Well, if your name is Archbishop Oscar Romero, you use the pulpit to denounce the extra-judicial killings and tortures that are rampant, and demand that justice be done for the people of the country.

Archbishop Oscar Romero was the prelate of El Savador, a country in Central America, long stricken by poverty, corruption, natural disasters and civil wars. Romero saw the struggles of his people, and gave voice to the voiceless. From the pulpit, he became the voice of his country, condemning human right abuses, calling out injustice, corruption and violence perpetrated by both wings, right and left, and pleading with the warring ideologies to negotiate for the

sake of the people of the country. He did this primarily through his weekly radio broadcast to the entire nation, which was listened to by the majority of the country, giving people hope, as well as a glimpse of what was happening in the country.

Oscar Romero was killed by a lone gunman who shot him while celebrating Mass at his cathedral on 24 March 1980. On the previous day, Archbishop Romero had delivered a sermon in which he called on the 'soldiers to obey God's higher order and to stop carrying out the government's repression and violations of basic human rights.'

Oscar Romero's life and example reminds us to be courageous in our daily struggles and to be steadfast champions in pursuing justice, shedding that apathy towards all matters political which sometimes come naturally for the faithful religious.

SR THEA BOWMAN

What would you, as a Catholic convert, do if you and your community experience deep-seated institutional racism, within and without the Church, even from those shepherds and pastoral leaders who ought to be the leaders in modelling justice?



In every time and every age, wherever humanity has built communities, the temptation to ignore, rule over, or use the weaker sections has been far too difficult to resist. One of the first mandates that God gave Moses while giving the law was this, *The Lord God executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing* (Deuteronomy 10:18).

Well, if your name is Thea Bowman, you fight this prejudice with your life and talents, not giving into despair, knowing fully well that the day of justice and equality is not far off.

Thea Bowman, born into a Black Protestant family in Mississippi in 1937, converted to Catholicism at the age of 9, through the witness of her fellow pupils at her Catholic school. But even after becoming a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, she experienced racism and the effects of segregation. She responded to them by educating 'American Catholics on Black culture and the Black Catholic experience', and becoming an evangelist as well as a beacon of hope within the Black community. It is said that 'arguably no person in recent [American] memory did more to resist and transform the sad legacy of segregation and racism in the Catholic Church than Thea Bowman, a scholar and public speaker who inspired millions with her singing and message of God's love for all races and faiths.'

Sr Thea Bowman's legacy impels us to resist and fight all elements of prejudice and evil, even those that have become entrenched and ingrained in the sacred corridors of His Holy Church.

SATOKO KITAHARA

What would you, as a young Catholic convert, reeling from the aftermath of the social, economic and moral destruction sown by the Second World War, do when you meet with ragpicker children living in a slum? Well, if your name is Satoko Kitahara, you leave the comforts of your home, to live and die with them!

Satoko Kitahara was born in 1929 into an affluent family in Japan and by the time she finished her university education, Japan was devastated by



the Second World War - the economy destroyed, lives shattered, and to top it: all, daily dealing with the aftereffects of the atom bomb. She converted to Catholicism around this time and through a chance meeting with a Franciscan Friar, met for the first time, the ragpickers of the slum known as the 'Ants Town'. Initially she did what she could out of her spare time, but gradually became convinced of her Lord calling her to be more for these children. As she herself said, 'I had thought I was a great Christian because I condescended to dole out some free time, helping Ants children with their homework! ... It hit me now. There was only one way to help those ragpicker children: become a ragpicker like them!'

And that is what she did – leaving the comforts of her life in post-war Japan to live the rest of her days with these children, becoming one among them. She died in 1958 at the young age of 29, loved by and loving the people she came to serve. Satoko's life convicts us of our

hypocrisy when we dish out the leftovers in the name of charity, keeping the best for ourselves.

St James puts it unequivocally, 'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.' Peace in our world is a precious commodity; like a mirage, which the whole world is searching for, yet cannot grasp. News of violence, conflicts, wars and terror rule our lives - both within and without, so much so that most of us have conformed ourselves to the status-quo, at times out of fear, and other times out of resignation looking at the enormity of evil. Yet, the witness of these people, ordinary Catholics like you and me, ought to inspire us to take a step in making the places where we live a more just society. IN FOCUS KAIROS GLOBAL





Writing on how the Church upholds the dignity of women, Sonia Kurian calls out to every woman to be her very best for God and creation.

t Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, or Edith Stein once wrote, 'The world doesn't need what women have, it needs what women are.' Our understanding of what she means, will take us a great way in understanding why women are so beloved in the scriptures by Christ, and held with a similar love by the Catholic Church through the ages. The secret lies in the fact that we believe in a God who loves us for who we are, and not what we have, can produce or showcase for bonus points. The world rewards and looks for productivity, God has simply loved us into existence without an eye on what we offer in return. Does the Lord ask us to use our talents effectively and not waste them? Of course! A healthy body is given so it may be used, not wasted away on a couch. Talents are given to be similarly used and wonderfully multiply precisely when they are used well, which is yet another blessing from God. How wonderful it is that nature, even our bodies and talents teach us that 'it is in giving that we receive,' as St Francis of Assisi used to say.

Now the world seems to have, for its major part, regarded women as the weaker sex through the ages and in many cultures preceding Christianity; even today it is considered an insult for men to be called effeminate, and so on. Some Christians may even point to the sin of Eve as being a reason for which women can't be trusted and use it to justify that she must be dominated by a man to avoid yet another tragic downfall of mankind. Others may cite Eve's creation after Adam, and her designation as his ezer or 'helpmate' to be sufficient reason to rule over her. In fact, the title *ezer* is found twenty-two times, within twenty-one verses of scripture. Within these use cases, sixteen of the instances refer to God as being an ezer to Israel and to those in need of God's help. While two of the remainder were

used in reference to woman in Genesis, the remaining three occasions refer to powerful nations whom Israel called on for help while being attacked. Within these contexts, it is evident that the title of ezer is not one of subordination, but of a strong and sure strength and assistance found in moments of helplessness.

Philip Payne in his book Man and Woman: One in Christ points out that 'The noun used here [ezer] throughout the Old Testament does not suggest "helper" as in "servant," but help, saviour, rescuer, protector as in "God is our help." In no other occurrence in the Old Testament does this refer to an inferior, but always to a superior or an equal... "Help" expresses that the woman is a help/strength who rescues or saves man.' Thus studying this word in its scriptural context reveals to us that woman being called helper does not make her subordinate to or for man, rather it allows her the dignity of working with man, in the salvific plan of God. She is not a tool to be used by man, but a true support and companion to him, without whom man is declared by God as 'not good'.

Even if we were to set aside the scores of women throughout scripture like Deborah, Ruth, Naomi, Abigail, Huldah, Shiphrah, Puah, Esther, Judith, Rahab, Mary and the women of the NT, whose role as ezer is vital to salvation history itself, we would only need to look at Christ to see how tenderly women are loved by God. It has always been a matter of delight to me ever since a friend pointed out that while God seems to make men climb up mountains to see Him, He visits women where they are – in the home of Mary to ask for her 'yes' to bring salvation to the world, at the well waiting for the Samaritan woman to make her way through her daily chores, at the homes of Martha and Mary to console and dine with them, at the home of Peter's mother-in-

law to heal her. Of course I'm being a little tongue-in-cheek, but I won't complain if God wants to give me special treatment as a woman.

Similarly throughout the ages of the Church, women have been prized for their particular witness and courage. Before the Catholic Church is denounced for keeping women in the dark ages, let us not forget Mary, who in her teens was waited on by Gabriel with bated breath for her fiat; the 17-year-old St Joan of Arc who led armies into battle; St Catherine of Sienna who was solicited for spiritual advice from powerful people around Europe as a young girl and convinced the Pope to pack his things and return to Rome all before she turned 30; the 24-year-old St Therese of Lisieux whose humble reflections took the world by storm and is still beloved in the hearts of generations of Christians. I will also point out, as a priest I know once said, even in Kerala let us not forget that it was St Alphonsa, a humble nun who became the first saint from our little state, not the scores of no-doubt-holyand-illustrious men who had established institutions and structures and other feats for the Church in India. The Church

values holiness, and in this she holds no bias against men or women.

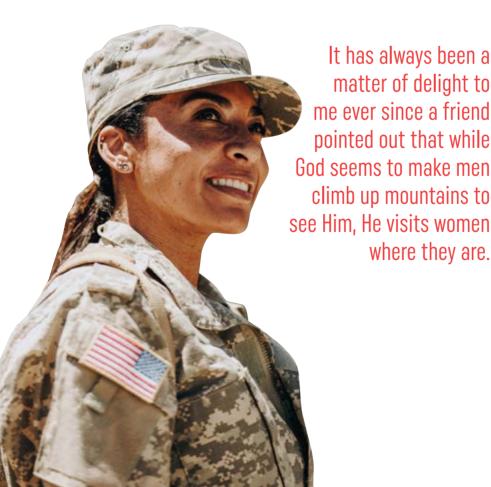
It may disappoint some to hear that the Church pays no heed to one's wealth, or how many letters appear after one's name, or whether you did much or did little, but she looks to see the fruits you bore on earth, the degree to which love was showered on your neighbours, and the passion with which you lived for and loved Christ and His flock. Women as such may have a natural advantage in love. Eve was made to bring Adam back into communion and relationship, to bring back to the home what wants to scatter, through her nurturing gift of motherhood; to allow their love to multiply and create the miracle of new life and form a home and a family. This gift of motherhood allows women to reach out to the broken-hearted, to the struggling, to the orphaned, restoring them into relationship with the world and with God, as Mary did with Elizabeth, with John the apostle and the women at the foot of the cross, and with the apostles at Pentecost. This maternity is a gift for all women, to see the helpless, the weak and the vulnerable, to possess a motherly heart so

where they are.

easily moved to tears for them, and to act and plead on their behalf, so they can be restored into right relationship with the world and with God. This call is needed today, to bring a world with eyes for the forest, down to see the trees, to humanise what corporations and the powers have dehumanised, and to see the weakest links in our societies with the eyes of the mother, and work eagerly to bring them back into the fold.

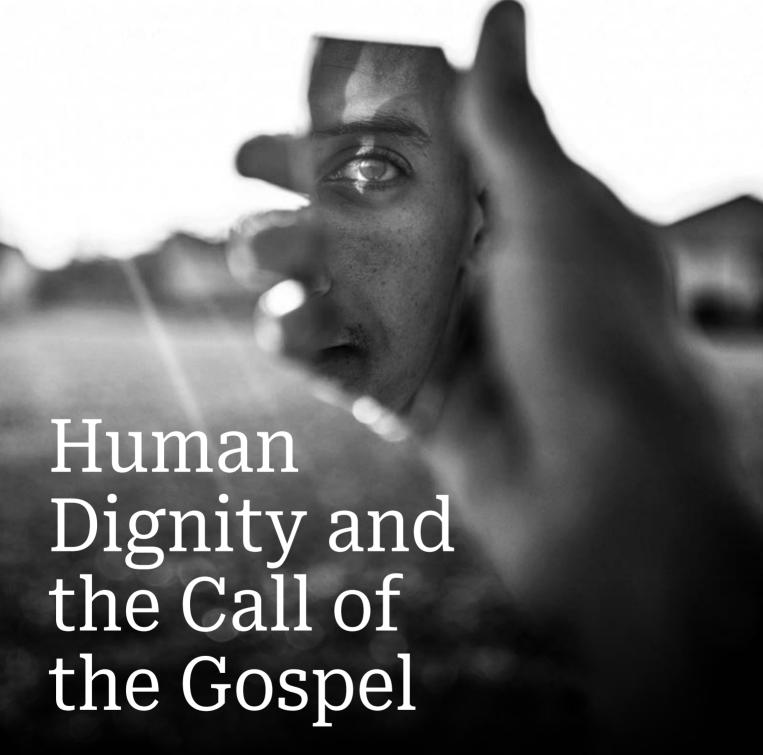
What Genesis tasks to woman as ezer, the letter to the Ephesians describes as the relationship between the head and the body, a symbol of Christ and his relationship to the Church. Thus the woman embodies in her being a symbol of the Church. Her right formation also provides the Church with living examples of how the Church itself can be a fitting bride to Christ. Women embodying their role as bride, and in their careful cultivation of their gifts, can model for the Church the deep mysteries and treasures that can be uncovered in the life of every Christian, if they are able to become better brides of Christ. In raising the title of the Church to the bride of Christ, the Church has elevated the nature and giftedness of women as possessing something essential to the understanding of the body of Christ. In women's ability to capture that essence and enter into dialogue with God and creation rightly, she can truly become the ezer that unlocks a much needed balance, all by simply being fully herself.

Thus I invite women to ask the Lord what talents and gifts He has hidden for the world, within your womanhood. I implore you to look to the examples of the holy women throughout scripture and women saints to see powerful examples of women of every temperament, every shade of beauty, those gifted differently intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, from introverts to extroverts and every shade in between, who have all become saints. Find a sister saint amongst them and ask her to pray for you as well. May you be the gift you were made to be.



Sonia Kurian lives in Houston, USA and is a clinical systems analyst in the healthcare sector. Her interests include writing, reading, iconography and animated karaoke





From her experience living with the L'Arche community, **Dr Agnes Santhosh Thomas** writes about human dignity and Christ's teaching on it.

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began to understand and explore the concept of human dignity as a core value when I started living in the community of L'Archei. Understanding what it means to uphold your dignity, dignified behaviours, etc., was commonplace in terms of growing up. However, I later realised that the notion of dignity was often intertwined with social constructs like class, caste, gender, occupation, and abilities. It was not seen as an inherent quality possessed by all humans ii but rather as something earned or inherited, placing individuals in a hierarchical or social order. L'Arche offers a different worldview by organising community life where people with and without disabilities live together, sharing everyday life and work. This inclusive design removes barriers to participation, ensuring that everyone has a role to play. In L'Arche, upholding the value of human dignity is not just an aspiration but a way of life; I am not seeking to idealise L'Arche, acknowledging that the community has its drawbacks, but to share a few characteristics of community life that are transformational for people who are open to taking a long look at themselves and dare to ask how we treat the world and people who are not like us.

A couple of decades later, various themes emerged as I began to critically examine the notion of human dignity from the lens of a believer, social scientist, and social justice advocate. In this article, I am to present some of those themes and experiences that influenced me over the years. I will also address the questions that I am challenged with and that still influence my choices and leadership practices, which involve humans from all walks of life, particularly people facing disparities and living on the margins of our societies. The key questions we would reflect on here are: What do we mean by human dignity, and what are some examples of that in the teachings of Christ? How does a community like L'Arche provide us with tools to assess our own views and assumptions of human dignity? What can we learn from the L'Arche example, and how do we apply that in our everyday lives?

Two accidental sublime discoveries shaped different periods of my life: my time in the communities of L'Arche and my discovery of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST). At L'Arche, I encountered people with intellectual disabilities for the first time. Admittedly, I was unfamiliar with this aspect of life and had never met anyone with disabilities before, so saying it was a shock is an understatement. However, life quickly turned into a journey where there was no turning back but going forward on the 'joyride' with people. It was lots of learning and unlearning, and some of it included learning to hold the moments as they defined a new understanding and way of looking at life. Others included acknowledging graces seeping through your being to embrace the sacredness of life that was unfolding in front of you. The first few years provided a lens through which to understand the world from the perspective of a community and people who were often rejected and excluded from participation. Many were denied of existence and presence, and this made me realise why I never met a person with disabilities and why nobody ever talked about such life as if it were a forbidden topic.

One question I had during those early years was why, if all were made in the image of God, are some accepted and considered 'normal' while others were rejected and deemed unfit? It seemed contradictory to Genesis 1:27, the very first book of the Bible: So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. L'Arche offers the gift of discovering a way of life within a community where genuine relationships of mutual care and respect are nurtured. Through early friendships in the community, I was able to experience the unique gifts of individuals and truly understand the meaning of the word 'created in the image of God.' The life and relationships in the community provide you with a mirror to understand why the majority of the world misses the opportunity to experience the riches of diverse gifts of people, especially if they

lack a high transactional value. Life in the community offers an antithesis to what it means to be successful and fast in fact, it reveals the beauty of life and people in the most mundane things, living and owning life as a celebration and, at times, causing big chaos but always knowing and accepting life as sacred and worthy to be lived and celebrated with all of its vulnerabilities and strength. The most important lesson here for me was that the gift of people is revealed to us when we accept them for who they are and their capacity to help us transform into better humans. These experiences led me to understand the Beatitudes (Matthew, 5:1-12) and the Gospel's core teachings, which challenge us and offer clear guidance for a life of righteousness, grace, and compassion.

The core principle of Catholic Social Teachingⁱⁱⁱ (CST) is upholding human dignity, and L'Arche embodies this fundamental truth. When I discovered CST, I saw how its teachings are naturally applied at L'Arche, without having an intellectual debate. This is how life is there. L'Arche offers four key lessons about human dignity as articulated in CST: the right to life and relationships, the sanctity of every person, the opportunity to participate in community and work within one's ability, and access to dignified care.

For example, meaningful participation is ensured by having the opportunity to work with your hands. Life is organised in the community, with opportunities to create, learn, and produce together and sometimes earn a small wage for spending or keeping in the bank. For some community members, having the opportunity to work in or outside the community and earn a salary is significant as it allows them to contribute to the community and add value. I remember Peter, a retired worker from one of the communities where I lived, saying, 'Having the opportunity to work gives me respect, and I have something to look forward to when I get up in the morning; I don't want to be stuck in my room all day, and that is not fair for anyone.'

Of course, this isn't an option for

IN FOCUS KAIROS GLOBAL



The most important lesson here for me was that the gift of people is revealed to us when we accept them for who they are and their capacity to help us transform into better humans. These experiences led me to understand the Beatitudes (Matthew, 5:1-12) and the Gospel's core teachings, which challenge us and offer clear guidance for a life of righteousness, grace, and compassion.

everyone for example, Adam, who is nonverbal and uses a wheelchair, found working outside the community challenging. However, enjoyed being the greeter and helping in the candle-making workshop or gardening with assistance. There is always something for people to participate in, which I believe is essential to living and upholding the dignity of each individual in the most real way.

Reflecting on my years living and working with people at L'Arche, I can attest that we all carry immense power and potential to transform the world into a better place. No one is less than the other as we all are created in the image of God. When we deny the chance of the other to fully live, we deny ourselves an opportunity to encounter the mystery and gift of life each person offers. Treating one another with dignity and respect is imperative, and that starts with us; if we don't practise and demonstrate these values in our daily interactions—like how we respond to someone seeking help at our door or to those who demand lots of our time and attention within our vicinity -we remind ourselves and others of what we genuinely value and prioritise.

Beyond our homes, how we conduct our work and interact with others,

especially those we lead or differ from us in values, reveals whether we truly uphold dignity as a core value. In our communities and cities, our responses to those who are displaced or struggling with poverty or addiction reflect our collective commitment to human dignity. On a broader scale, we can assess our social systems by examining how well they ensure access to education, clean water, healthcare, housing, and essential services. When these needs are met, we can affirm that human dignity is a guiding priority in our society.

Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical Pacem in Terris, emphasised respecting the rights of every person as essential for peace. A deeper look at the root cause of all chaos, wars, and calamities around the world, reveals it all began from the breakdown or absence of respect for human dignity. When we learn to treat each other with dignity despite our differences in abilities, strengths, values, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, we will begin to see humans as sacred gifts. The absence of dignity and respect leads to absence of love, peace and joy. We all have the power to be a source of hope and change and be a true instrument designed to respond to

the call of the Gospel – to love and to be loved so all can live in harmony, and the brokenness of the world can be healed.

Reference

- L'Arche: We are people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an International Federation. Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need of one another. https://www.larche.org/about-larche/
- " Human Dignity: https://www.vatican.va/content/ catechism/en/part_three/section_one/chapter_one. html
- "Catholic Social Teachings: <a href="https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching-te

Dr. Agnes Thomas is the Executive Director of Catholic Crosscultural Services, a non-profit organisation that provides assistance in the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in Canada.

The Light We Cherish

In remembrance of and on the first anniversary of his passing, Kairos Media is soon to publish a book on Jerin Thobias Vakayil, put together by the Mandya diocese and his parents, Blessy and Thobias Vakayil.

n 26 September 2023, Kairos Media missed a heartbeat. Jerin Thobias Vakayil was just twentythree when the Lord called him back to heaven. Kairos was blessed to know, love and grow because of Jerin for over three vears.

During the pandemic, when things had nearly come to a standstill at Kairos, Jerin came forward to help with his talents and abilities - this while he was doing his engineering studies. To say the least, things took off from there. From starting the YouTube channel, being a crucial part of various undertakings in Kairos like video interviews, Truth Memes, CraftCity, webinars to overhauling Kairos' website and laying the foundation for the Cloud Catholic app, Jerin quickly became an indispensable part of Kairos.

His gentle manner, calm demeanour, humility, and ready-to-help attitude endeared himself to each and every one at Kairos.

To commemorate this first anniversary in heaven, the Mandya diocese (to which Jerin belonged), along with Jerin's parents, Blessy and Thobias Vakayil, have put together a book on Jerin's life, complete with personal sharings of all who knew and loved him. This book will be soon published by Kairos Media.

Below, His Excellency Raphael Thattil, Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church writes about Jerin.

To Jerin's beloved parents, ■ I wish to convey my heartfelt reflections on Jerin, whom I had the privilege of knowing through our shared experiences within the Jesus Youth community. Our paths crossed numerous times, particularly in the context of our involvement with various activities. Jerin often engaged with my YouTube content, expressing genuine appreciation for my efforts. He consistently uplifted me, affirming that my online contributions were instrumental in furthering the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jerin, who obtained his engineering degree in 2023, possessed a steadfast devotion to Jesus, surpassing any earthly attachment. His dedication was evident in his endeavours to spread the message of Christ, leveraging the power of media. Notably, Jerin exemplified diligence and loyalty as a faithful servant of the Lord, joyfully multiplying the talents entrusted to him.

The news of Jerin's sudden departure deeply shook us all. His untimely passing leaves a void in our hearts. Jerin poured his heart and soul into organising the national conference of Jesus Youth, JaaGo, held in Bangalore in 2023. From

designing event posters to harnessing the internet for publicity, his commitment was unwavering. Throughout his journey, Jerin drew strength from the sacrament of Holy Communion, starting each day with reverence and fortitude.

Amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, Jerin wholeheartedly embraced digital platforms to disseminate the Holy Mass and Gospel, steadfast in his mission to uphold faith. It is no surprise that some likened him to the 'Carlo Acutis of India,' given Jerin's tireless efforts to propagate the sacred teachings and values.

I am confident that Jerin's devotion will be richly rewarded in the eyes of our Lord. As we mourn his absence, I find solace in envisioning his presence among the heavenly saints. May Jerin find eternal peace and occupy a place of honour at the right hand of the Lord.

With heartfelt love and prayers,

Raphael Thattil

Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church



SPECIAL ISSUE 78 29

aving a nightmare is terrifying, but experiencing one in reality is even more frightening. Hearing the news of the devastating landslide that wiped out the Mundakkai region in Wayanad, Kerala, was a catastrophic moment for all of us. Yet, for those who witnessed it first-hand, it was a harrowing experience that led to a profound realisation: to take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit to fend off the arrows of evil.

Is God cruel? Why wasn't He merciful to those innocent lives lost, those left homeless, or the children orphaned? Even with our knowledge of God's endless mercy and unconditional love, we sometimes find ourselves in conflict when faced with such tragedies. However, these are the moments where God reveals His might and abundant mercy, and it is in these times that He calls us to be His battalions.

Listening to the heart-wrenching and touching experiences of those who volunteered in Wayanad with the Nalla Ayalkaran (Good Neighbour) project moved me deeply*. It made me reflect on God's sacrificial and merciful nature and how He was literally working through these volunteers. It also prompted me to think about how God unites people beyond caste, creed, religion, or gender. Despite my concern for the disaster's victims, I found an answer that made me more aware of God's mysterious ways. Let us take a journey back to the days when God sent disasters to push the Israelites out of their comfort zones and save them from the slavery of Egypt. This is also a moment for us to reflect on the fact that we are alive today solely because of His unconditional love. It is not that those who perished in the disaster were unworthy in God's eyes, nor that those

of us who survived are perfect. We are living purely because of His mercy.

Yes, His mercy is all I am!

Pranoy Tomy realised the importance of listening to others through his volunteering. He experienced the pain of those who had

This is also a moment for us to reflect on the fact that we are alive today solely because of His unconditional love. It is not that those who perished in the disaster were unworthy in God's eyes, nor that those of us who survived are perfect. We are living purely because of His mercy. Yes, His mercy is all I am!

no one to listen to, and now says, 'I listen to everyone. I understood the depth of the pain of those who do not have anyone to listen to. A handful of people lost everything in a single night. Only a good listener will have a place in their lives. Nothing can ever replace anything they have lost in their lives.'

Soul Sebastian was deeply touched by three incidents that left a lasting impression on him. First, the orphaned corpses in the mortuary and the desperate relatives searching for their loved ones with a photo of them in their hands. Second, a policeman carrying a small child, which brought Soul to tears as he remembered the joy of holding his own child, who was born eight long years after their marriage. Third, the condition of Chooralmala was even more terrifying than what was shown on television. He continued, 'We feel a heavy weight in our hearts standing amidst those who lost everything. A minute is enough for everything to be taken away, even if we gain the whole world. But if God is with us, we need not be afraid.'

Amidst these struggles, Jesus Youth volunteers stood strong as intercessors, praying fervently for those working day and night to rescue the affected. They transformed prayer into service and service into prayer, beginning each day's rescue operations with Holy Mass and by kneeling in front of the Holy Eucharist. Organising programmes for the children left orphaned and engaging them was another highlight. Nithya offered Bible verses as solutions to their problems,

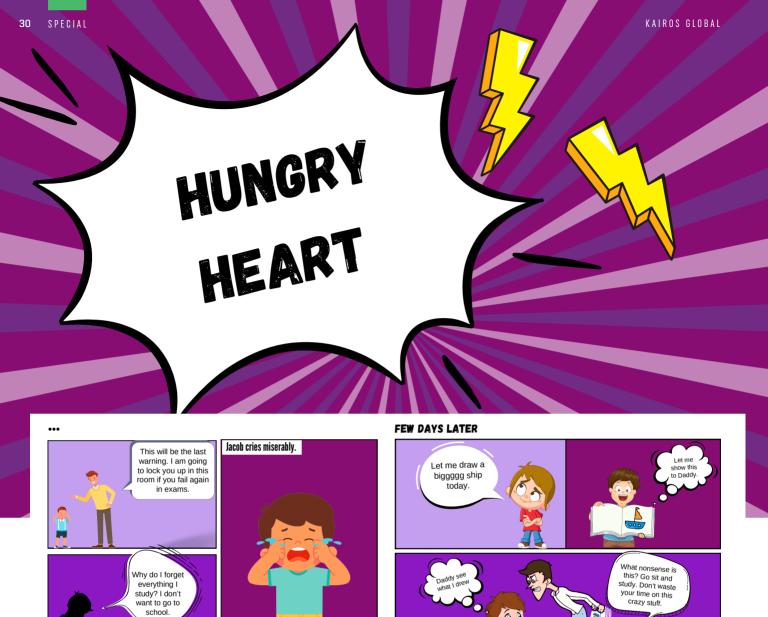
while Eldho George said that 'Man is like dust, or a passing breeze...' He was deeply convinced that what happened to them today could just as easily happen to any of us, whether you or me.

Hearing the experiences of my friends who were blessed to be part of this initiative made me realise the greater call we are all given. Aren't we supposed to live a life of gratitude for the gift of life God has given us? Moreover, we are called to be the hands and feet of our Lord. running and working for those in need. God's ways are mysterious, but there is a purpose behind everything that happens in this world, and in our personal lives. If we were spared from this disaster, it is because God's plan for us is to help those who were affected. Yes, we are called to be a Good Neighbour. As Christians, we are specially anointed and called to be His hands and feet, to work, to run, to console, and to listen to those in need!

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me' (Matthew 25:40).

* The Nalla Ayalkaran project is a Jesus Youth initiative that was started in 2018 in response to the deluge that devastated the South Indian state of Kerala.

Aleesha Wilson lives in Bangalore, India with her husband Job Jose. She works as a trainer in the HR Department of Christ University.





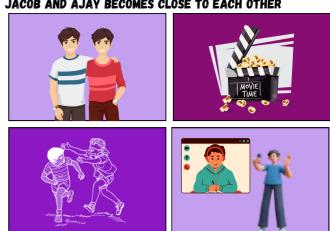




ISSUE 78 **31** SPECIAL



JACOB AND AJAY BECOMES CLOSE TO EACH OTHER







FEW DAYS LATER



JACOB AND AJAY ARE ALONE IN HOSTEL. THEY STAY BACK FOR STUDY LEAVE.



They start studying together.





SPECIAL KAIROS GLOBAL



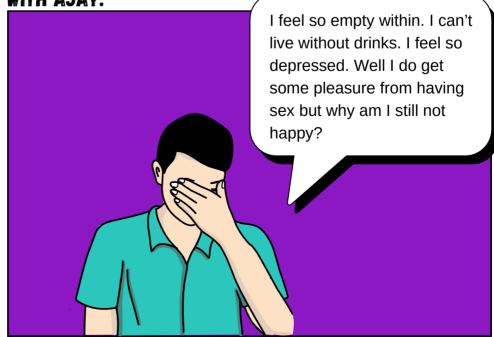
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The wound from the lack of a father's love distorted Jacob's need for love from the same sex, coupled with alcohol and porn, he slipped into a physical intimate relationship with Ajay.





SPECIAL ISSUE 78 33

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



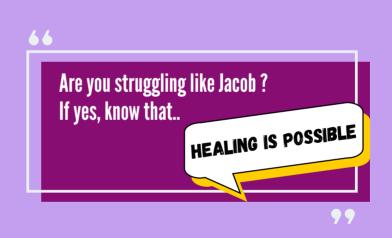
A child needs both feminine and masculine love. When children are treated as valuable by parents it builds a strong foundation.

Jacob had 'gaps' in his foundation as he was not loved well by his dad.

Those gaps were hungry like a vacuum and he was in constant search for masculine love.

He failed to understand that the sexual attraction towards Ajay was fueled by the desire for masculine love.

To be set free for real love (either between a man and woman in the sacrament of marriage or for a celibate life) Jacob needs healing in those historic areas of hurt caused by his father.



CONTENT: **Dino Raj Paul** is an IT engineer, currently living in Bangalore, India with his wife, mother and four kids. He is the coordinator of JY India pro-life ministry.

Esmin Thayana Phils lives in Bangalore, India with her husband Anse. She is a speech therapist at St John's Hospital.

DESIGN: **Celesteen Sebastian** lives in Bangalore, India with her family. She is a business owner.

To know more:



Dino-+91 98860 42540

Esmin-+916361004926



FAITH & REASON ISSUE 78 35

The Enduring Legacy of the Angelic Doctor

George Paul deep dives into the life and works of St Thomas Aguinas.

f I had to identify one individual who embodies the essence of this series (Faith and Reason), it would be St Thomas Aquinas. A Doctor of the Church, St Thomas was an Italian Dominican friar, priest, philosopher, and theologian. He was born in Roccasecca, Italy, to a noble family, and began his education at the Monte Cassino monastery at the age of five. Once, he asked his teacher the profoundly simple question, 'What is God?' Dissatisfied with the response, he resolved to become a theologian to seek the answer. In 1239, he joined the Dominican Order against his family's wishes, as they had hoped he would become a Benedictine. He pursued his studies in philosophy and theology in Paris and Cologne.

St Thomas was a large man who preferred walking thousands of miles across Europe over riding donkeys (which were too small for him) or horses (which were too costly for him). He studied under St Albert the Great, a renowned Aristotelian who emphasised scientific inquiry. Despite being so shy, silent, and placid that his peers nicknamed him 'the dumb ox,' Albert famously prophesied, 'You may call him a dumb ox, but I say his bellowing will be heard around the world.'

As a theology professor at the University of Paris, St Thomas relished public debates known as 'disputed questions,' where professors had to address unpredictable questions and objections from students and faculty with clear, logical arguments. The format of his seminal work, the *Summa Theologiae*, naturally reflects these debates.

GK Chesterton's book, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*: 'The Dumb Ox' is often considered one of the best books on St Thomas. Chesterton succinctly captures his essence: 'St Thomas Aquinas was one of the great liberators of the human intellect... who reconciled religion with reason, who expanded it towards experimental science, who insisted that the senses were the windows of the soul and that reason had a divine right to feed upon facts, and that it was the business of Faith to digest the strong meat of the toughest and most practical of pagan philosophies.'

Aquinas synthesised faith and reason, Christianity and Greek philosophy, and religion and science more completely than anyone before or since. His inclusive mind synthesised insights from nearly every major philosopher before him, combining meticulous detail with a broad, cosmic worldview. He was judicious and moderate, carefully avoiding extremes and oversimplifications.

St Thomas was both a saint and a practical man, offering practical advice to peasants, kings, and popes alike. For instance, he advised those dealing with depression to have a glass of wine, a hot bath, and a good night's sleep. His theoretical points often have practical,

life-changing applications. He united the essential ideals of philosophical thought: exact logic and intuitive wisdom; clarity and profundity. He wrote clearly and simply about the most profound questions concerning God and man, life and death, good and evil, mind and will, soul and body, fate and freedom, virtue and vice, and the natural and the supernatural.

Since he thought and spoke four times faster than anyone could write, St Thomas Aquinas composed his two massive *Summas* by dictating simultaneously to four secretaries, one sentence after another, without any revisions or second drafts. His own handwriting was hurried, scribbled, and barely legible. A few months before his death, he refused to complete the *Summa Theologiae* or to write anything more, dismissing all he had written as 'straw' compared to what he had experienced in his mystical visions.

In his brief 25-year career, St Thomas Aguinas wrote tens of thousands of pages (over 8 million words), including 2 million on the Bible and 1 million on Aristotle, along with his unfinished masterpiece, the Summa Theologiae ("summary of theology"). The Summa is not a closed system but an ordered summary, mirroring reality. It begins with God, moves through creation, focuses on humanity, and culminates in man's quest for happiness and return to God, the Alpha and Omega. Reality is depicted as a cosmic circulatory system, with God's heart pumping the blood of being through creation, and the universe reflecting a human face. The cosmos is returned to God through man's free choices of moral virtue, faith, hope, and love.

Aquinas was primarily a theologian who saw philosophy as an essential aid to theology, much like mathematics aids physics. The medieval slogan *philosophia ancilla theologiae* (philosophy is the handmaiden of theology) reflects this view. Theology, for Aquinas, was a 'science' in the broader sense: a rationally organised body of knowledge about God. He distinguished between two types of theology: 'natural theology,' based on what human reason can discover, understand, and demonstrate, and 'revealed theology,' based on divine revelation, such as the belief that God has

FAITH & REASON KAIROS GLOBAL

When comparing faith and reason, Aquinas compared two bodies of truths, asserting that faith is a form of knowledge, not just a feeling. Aquinas argues that while the truth of the Christian faith surpasses human reason, the truths that human reason can naturally comprehend cannot contradict the truths of the Christian faith. Since only falsehood opposes truth, it is impossible for the truth of faith to conflict with the true principles known by human reason.

spoken through Christ and the Church, revealing truths beyond human reason, like the Trinity and God's sacrificial love. For Aquinas, 'faith' meant both the act of believing in divine revelation and the truths revealed by God. When comparing faith and reason, Aguinas compared two bodies of truths, asserting that faith is a form of knowledge, not just a feeling. Aquinas argues that while the truth of the Christian faith surpasses human reason, the truths that human reason can naturally comprehend cannot contradict the truths of the Christian faith. Since only falsehood opposes truth, it is impossible for the truth of faith to conflict with the true principles known by human reason.

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Aguinas famously tells us in his Summa Theologiae that 'the existence of God can be proved in five ways' (ST I.2.3). They are (in the order in which he presents them) the proof from motion, the proof from causality, the proof from the contingency of the world, the proof from the grades of perfection, and the proof from finality. Each argument begins with an empirical observation of the world, such as motion, existence, contingency, degrees of perfection, and order. Using the principle of causality, Aquinas argues that these phenomena require a First, Un-caused Cause, which is a property of God. The five proofs correspond to different types of causality: motion, existence, necessity, perfection, and order. The core argument is that without a First Cause, there would be no second causes, yet second causes exist, implying a First Cause. This leads to the conclusion of a being with five divine attributes: unmoved mover, uncaused

cause, necessarily existent, perfect standard of perfection, and intelligent cause of order. The Five Ways are brief summaries of arguments that Aquinas' readers would have already been familiar with. These arguments are detailed more extensively and precisely in other works.

Aquinas' proof from motion argues that change is the reduction of potentiality to actuality, and this can only happen through something already actual. For example, fire, which is actually hot, makes wood, which is potentially hot, become actually hot. Aquinas asserts that nothing can be both potential and actual simultaneously in the same respect, leading to the conclusion that anything in motion must be moved by another. This implies an infinite regress of movers is impossible, necessitating a first mover, which he identifies as God. Critics argue this does not prove the first mover is God, but Aquinas maintains God is the ultimate explanation of why things happen. The proof avoids the objection of 'what caused God?' by not claiming everything is in motion, only some things. Animals moving themselves isn't a counterexample, as their movement involves different parts causing each other to move. The principle that whatever causes something to be in a state must itself be in that state is not applied; instead, Aquinas argues that only something actual can cause potentiality to become actual. He insists the idea that 'whatever is moved is moved by another' is a metaphysical certainty. Finally, Aquinas claims an infinite series of movers is impossible because it would eliminate the need for any movement, thus requiring a first, unmoved mover.

Aguinas's second way argues that there is an order of efficient causes in the world, and nothing can be the cause of itself. An infinite regress of efficient causes is impossible because removing the first cause eliminates all subsequent causes and effects. Therefore, there must be a first efficient cause, which everyone calls God. The third way is based on possibility and necessity; some things can either exist or not exist. If everything could not exist, then at some time, nothing would exist, and nothing could come into existence. Therefore, there must be a necessary being that causes the existence of other beings, which is God. The fourth way considers the gradation found in things, with some being more good, true, or noble than others, resembling a maximum. This maximum, which causes all perfections in things, is God. The fifth way observes that natural things act towards an end, not by chance but by design, indicating an intelligent being directing them to their purpose, which is God.

Aquinas' Five Ways offer a profound exploration into the existence of God through various philosophical lenses, each illuminating different aspects of divine causation and necessity. For those interested in delving deeper into Aquinas' thought and its implications, several valuable resources can provide further insight. G K Chesterton's Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox presents an engaging and accessible introduction to Aquinas' life and work. Ralph McInerny's First Glance at Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists serves as a practical guide for understanding Aquinas' complex ideas. Additionally, Peter Kreeft's Summa of the Summa offers a concise and insightful summary of Aquinas' seminal work, the Summa Theologiae. These readings will enrich your comprehension of Aquinas' arguments and their significance in the broader context of philosophical and theological discourse.

George Paul is a Communication Designer currently working with the Catholic Health Association of India. An avid student of Theology, Philosophy and History, George is still active in JY, helping youngsters connect with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

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FISHING NETS

THE ONE STOP-**DESTINATION FOR BIBLE** STUDY

Maria Teres Sebastian reviews the Catholic Study Bible app.

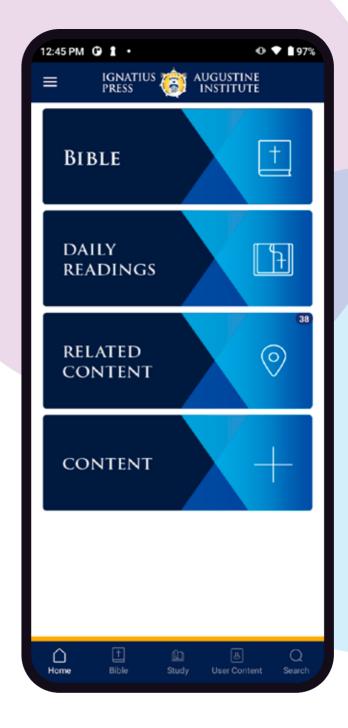
tudying the Bible is no small task, so it is natural to refer to multiple sources Uin the process. But what if we had everything we needed at a single source?

Multiple resources, numerous perspectives, text, audio, and video, all for free or a discounted rate! The Catholic Study Bible App (Bible - Catholic Study for iOS users) from the Ignatius-Augustine Institute is the ultimate Bible tool I recently found to this end.

The app offers the complete Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition (RSV-2CE) Bible in text and audio, but you can get that on any Bible app, right? What makes this app different is the treasure trove of resources designed to enrich your Scripture study and make our faith journey meaningful.

The simple but handy interface allows easy navigation - specific passages can be quickly discovered with the keyword search function and verses are easily accessible with a simple tap using the Bible Grid. We can create custom playlists to personalise our scripture study and even challenge ourselves with pre-made reading plans. The audio version that the app offers is in sync with the text, providing a verse level synchronisation.

The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, available at a discount within the app, features insightful footnotes from the study tools developed by renowned Bible teachers Dr Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. The study notes, providing additional



context and deeper insights, are linked directly to the text and pop up once we touch the underlined word or verse.

The Truth & Life Dramatized Audio New Testament, (endorsed by the Vatican and with a foreword by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI!) brings the Bible to life with sound effects and dramatic narration from award-winning actors (the Gospel of John is currently available for free, and believe me, it's really good). To truly hear the Word of God spoken helps bring a deeper connection to the stories and teachings within.

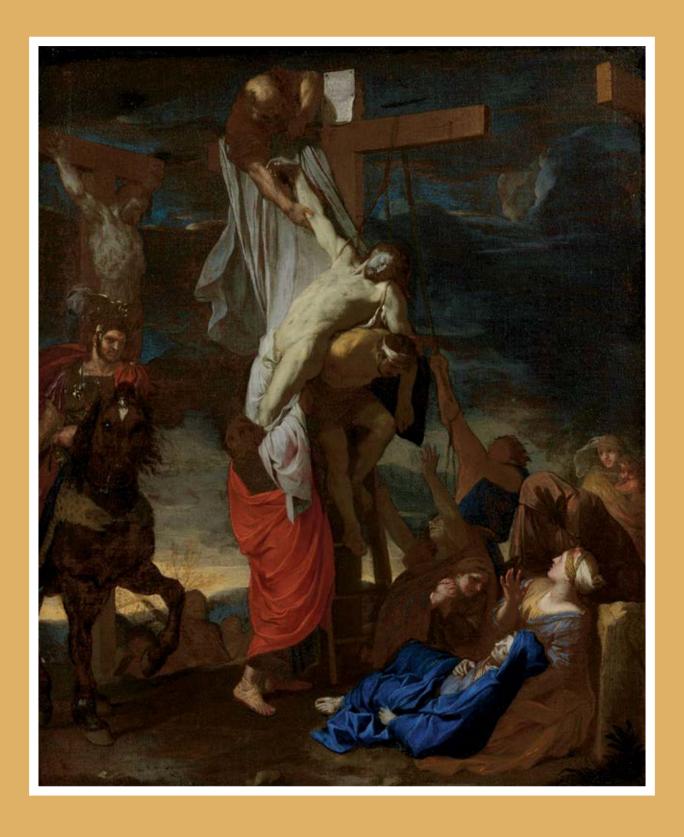
But that is not all! The app also

contains over 140 inspiring Lighthouse talks including a 10 hours of free audio commentary from Dr Scott Hahn and the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology.

Compatible across Android, iPhone, iPad, and even our computers, the app syncs our progress and content across all platforms, allowing us to pick up right where we left off, no matter the device K being used.

Maria Teres is a social worker by education, and writer by passion and profession. In her spare time, you may find her curled up on a couch crocheting, reading, or sketching

ART



Charles Le Brun's

Descent from the Cross

Shaji Joseph Arakkal examines the Baroque painting of the great French painter of the 17th century.

ich in contrast, movement, exquisite detail, depth of colour, majesty, and wonder – the Baroque style dominated French painting in the 17th century. Beginning in Rome in the early 17th century, the style quickly spread to Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, and then to Austria, southern Germany, and Poland. By the 1730s, the Baroque style had evolved into and dominated a more flamboyant style called Rocaille or Rococo, which appeared in France and central Europe in the mid-to-late 18th century.

One of the most famous examples of Baroque style is Charles Le Brun's *The Descent from the Cross*. The subject is depicted in the dim light just before sunset. The bright colours with which the figures are painted stand out against the darkness of the background. Christ on the cross and the grieving figures are highlighted against the evening sky.

In the foreground, we see the Virgin Mary overcome with grief and fainted, the crown of thorns that the soldiers had rammed onto her son's head in mockery, upon her lap. With her are her sister Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, a woman with a child and two other women. Also included in the picture are Joseph of Arimathea, who had obtained permission from Pilate to bury Jesus, Nicodemus, who brought spices for the

burial, Saint John, Christ's beloved disciple, and another man. As though to separate them from the group preparing Christ's burial are a Roman soldier on horseback – probably in charge of carrying out the crucifixion, and one of the two thieves crucified with Jesus. This must have been a conscious effort on the part of the painter. The main source of study and reflection for Charles Le Brun was the 19th chapter of the Gospel of John.

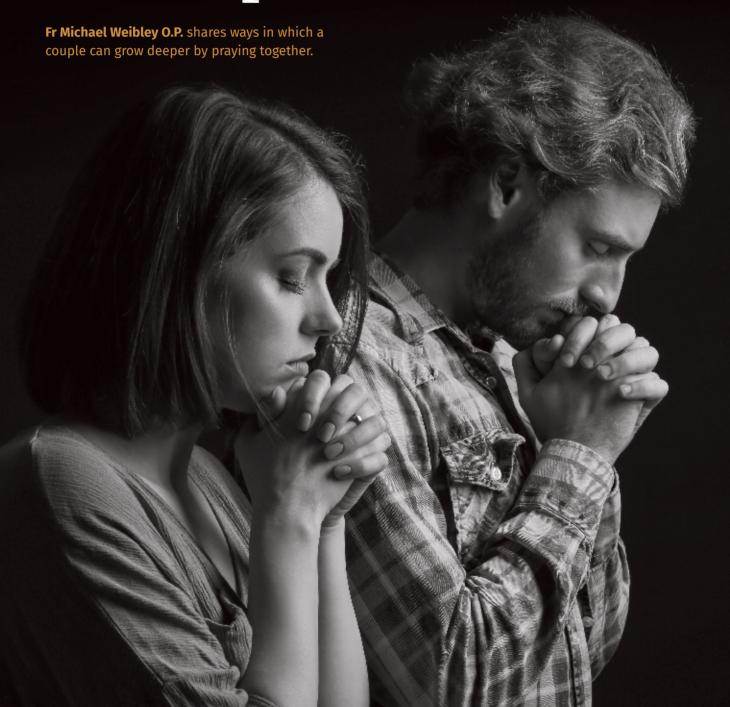
Charles Le Brun (24 Feb 1619-22 Feb 1690) was a French painter, art theorist and director of several art schools of the time. King Louis XIV of France, also known as 'Louis the Great', declared him 'the greatest French artist of all time.' Le Brun was born in Paris. At the age of fifteen, he received a commission to paint from Cardinal Richelieu and proved adept at its execution.

During the reign of Louis XIV, Le Brun produced or oversaw numerous paintings, sculptures, and decorative objects commissioned by the royal court over a period of nearly thirty years.

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PARENTING

Why and How You Should Pray with Your Spouse



PARENTING ISSUE 78 41

hen a couple prays together, they share the deepest part of themselves with each other and God. As couples get to know each other, they start off by sharing surface things about themselves. Where they live, what they do for work, what school they went to, what their favourite food is, what their favourite hobbies and activities are, etc. They may start doing things together like bike-riding, or dinner and a movie. Then there is the stage of 'meet the parents' where they get to know where they come from and the families of their partner.

As couples grow closer together, they begin to share more intimate details about what their family is like, who their other friends are, events from the past, struggles they have endured. Soon they begin to share their hearts. What they love about the other person and what makes them vulnerable. What breaks their heart and what amazes them with joy and gratitude. A couple will learn to grow together physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In some ways, how we understand ourselves spiritually and our prayer are very much individual and personal, but if a couple can learn to share even this, they will experience intimacy like nothing else can provide.

We all know that emotional intimacy is just as important as physical. The same is true for spiritual intimacy. However, many couples never get to this level, either because they themselves haven't learned how to pray or because they are afraid their partner may not understand or feel awkward themselves. While it may be awkward in the beginning, everything else is awkward in the beginning too. It's all about taking a risk to be vulnerable and then discover love and acceptance by your partner. If you can do this emotionally, and physically, imagine the intimacy and love that you can experience when you share the experience of the God who is Love.

It is important that a couple grows together in prayer. Because prayer is such a deep and intimate experience it is also a potentially painful experience for a spouse if the other is not willing to enter into prayer together. One of the most painful experiences is to have a deep

We all know that emotional intimacy is just as important as physical. The same is true for spiritual intimacy. However, many couples never get to this level, either because they themselves haven't learned how to pray or because they are afraid their partner may not understand or feel awkward themselves.

spiritual life and not be able to share it with your partner.

Be patient and gentle with each other. Don't judge the other person's prayer or make fun of it. Don't act like you know it all. We are all beginners in prayer. Have reverence for each other. Affirm each other. Accept each other. Learn from each other. Talk to your partner about what's on your heart and share stories from your memory on how you learned to pray. Maybe it was a teacher at school or your mom or dad praying with you before you went to sleep. It could be a devotional like the Rosary or devotion that you have to a saint.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PRAY TOGETHER:

Start your day with a Morning offering. Kneel next to your bed or before a crucifix in your bedroom and try this prayer together: 'Jesus we kneel before you and offer our lives to you both individually and as a couple. Help us to be a visible sacrament of marriage so that through us, others may see that you love in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, all the days of our life, your love will never fail.'

Bless One Another. You can do this by making the sign of the cross with your thumb on your spouse's forehead and then sign yourself with the sign of the cross saying out loud 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.'

Go to Mass Together. Nothing unites a couple more closely than participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass together.

Pray the Rosary Together. Uniting your hearts with the Blessed Mother's is a

beautiful way to enter into a relationship with Jesus together, offering your Rosary for various intentions including one another and your family.

Pray Lectio Divina Together. Picking a passage from Scripture, or the upcoming Sunday readings and meditating on them together for 20 minutes each day can help centre your relationship on the Word of God and its importance in your marriage and family.

Make a Holy Hour Together.

Intentionally going before the Blessed Sacrament with your needs and your desire to be united with Jesus more and more, together as a couple, can breathe tremendous amounts of life into your marriage.

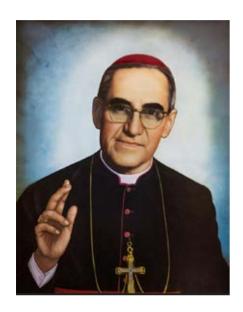
Make a List of Petitions. Having a daily list of petitions to pray for and things to be grateful for can make your joint prayer deeply personal and relevant to your daily lives.

These are just a few examples of ways couples can pray together. Uniting your hearts together with His by taking a step to intentionally pray with one another opens a new dimension in your spiritual lives, one that unites you in the very grace that binds you together in the sacrament of marriage. So pray! Pray every day with your spouse!

A Dominican priest, **Fr Michael Weibley** is the pastor and superior of SS. Philip & James Catholic Church, Baltimore, USA. He was ordained in 2016. He loves the Lord, baseball, good beer, a good book, and getting to know people through a good meal.

Chandeliers

St Oscar Romero, Champion of the Poor



comprehensive interview with St Oscar Romero, a champion of the poor, delving into his early life, formation, and evolving role within the Church. The questions explore Romero's journey from a focus on spiritual matters to becoming a vocal advocate for social justice and human rights. The interview aims to understand the motivations behind his courageous stance against violence and oppression, and to capture his legacy and message for contemporary audiences.

EARLY LIFE AND CALLING

Aji Thomas: Can you share some insights into your early life in Ciudad Barrios and what inspired you to join the priesthood?

St Oscar Romero: Ciudad Barrios was a simple place, where I learned the value of hard work and community. My family was deeply rooted in faith, and the local church was a central part of our lives. Witnessing the priest's dedication to serving the people ignited a spark within me. It was there, surrounded by the challenges and joys of everyday life, that I first felt the call to dedicate my life to God and His people.

FORMATION AND ORDINATION

Aji Thomas: What were the most formative experiences during your time at the minor seminary and later in Rome that shaped your spiritual and pastoral vision?

St Oscar Romero: My seminary years, marked by prayer and community, ignited a deep spiritual passion. Ordained a priest in Rome on 4 April 1942, I encountered a universal Church. These experiences shaped my belief in a Church deeply connected to the people, a Church that must be a voice for the voiceless.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Aji Thomas: How did your roles as Secretary of the El Salvadoran Bishops Conference and later as Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador influence your views on social justice and human rights?

St Oscar Romero: As Secretary of the Bishops' Conference, appointed in 1967, I witnessed first-hand the growing chasm between the rich and poor. The Church's role in addressing this injustice became increasingly clear. As auxiliary bishop, ordained in 1970, I was immersed in the daily struggles of our people. This solidified my conviction that the Gospel demanded a preferential option for the poor and a fearless defence of their human rights.

BISHOP OF SANTIAGO DE MARÍA

Aji Thomas: What challenges did you face while serving as Bishop of Santiago de María, and how did these experiences prepare you for your later role as Archbishop of San Salvador?

St Oscar Romero: In Santiago de María, I confronted the harrowing reality of systemic poverty and injustice. The suffering of my flock, exacerbated by government indifference, ignited a fire within me. The courageous example of Fr Rutilio Grande, a martyr for the poor, profoundly influenced me. His selfless dedication to the oppressed strengthened my conviction that the Church must be a voice for the voiceless. These experiences forged in me a deep empathy and a fearless spirit, preparing me to confront the escalating violence and repression as Archbishop of San Salvador.

APPOINTMENT AS ARCHBISHOP

Aji Thomas: How did your appointment as Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977 change your approach to addressing the social and political issues in El Salvador?

St Oscar Romero: As archbishop, the

The martyrdom of Fr Rutilio Grande was a turning point. The escalating violence against the innocent transformed my role from gentle pastor to outspoken prophet. I could no longer remain silent: the Church's voice had to echo the cries of the oppressed. My homilies became battle cries, denouncing injustice and calling for an end to the bloodshed.

full weight of El Salvador's crisis fell upon me. As I mentioned, the martyrdom of Fr Rutilio Grande was a turning point. The escalating violence against the innocent transformed my role from gentle pastor to outspoken prophet. I could no longer remain silent; the Church's voice had to echo the cries of the oppressed. My homilies became battle cries, denouncing injustice and calling for an end to the bloodshed.

SPEAKING OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE

Aji Thomas: What motivated you to become a vocal critic of human rights abuses and violence in El Salvador, despite the personal risks involved?

St Oscar Romero: The brutal murder of Fr Rutilio Grande, a close friend, shattered my silence. The escalating violence against the innocent, the cries of the oppressed, and the government's indifference forced me to become a voice for the voiceless. Fear couldn't silence the truth.

LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

Aji Thomas: Could you elaborate on your decision to write a letter to US President Jimmy Carter, urging him to

stop military aid to El Salvador, and the response it received?

St Oscar Romero: The letter expressed deep concern over news reports that the US government was considering providing military aid to El Salvador. I informed President Carter that such a decision would undoubtedly intensify the repression of Salvadoran organisations fighting for fundamental human rights. But he did not directly respond to the letter

ASSASSINATION AND MARTYRDOM

Aji Thomas: In the days leading up to your assassination, what were your thoughts and feelings about the escalating threats against you and your mission?

St Oscar Romero: The threats grew increasingly menacing as March 1980 approached. Fear was a constant companion, yet it never eclipsed my duty to defend the oppressed. Every sermon was a potential farewell, a testament to the injustice plaguing our nation. I was ignited with a fire, a resolve to speak truth to power, no matter the cost. I knew I walked a perilous path, but I was guided by faith and a love for my people that transcended fear

LEGACY AND CANONISATION

Aji Thomas: How do you hope to be remembered, and what does your canonisation as a saint signify for the people of El Salvador and the global Church?

St Oscar Romero: I hope to be remembered as a shepherd who defended the voiceless. My canonisation on 14 October 2018, signifies the Church's recognition of El Salvador's suffering during the civil war and a call to global justice. It's a beacon of hope, urging us to stand against oppression and protect the marginalised.

MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Aji Thomas: What message would you like to convey to today's leaders and believers about the importance of social justice, human rights, and living out the Gospel in times of conflict?

St Oscar Romero: Leaders and believers, the cries of the oppressed echo through the ages, from the enslaved Hebrews to countless victims today. Like the Israelites groaning under Pharaoh's yoke, humanity suffers beneath new forms of bondage: poverty, inequality, and violence.

Remember, Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream (Amos 5:24). Be the river of God's mercy, quenching the fires of injustice. Stand with the marginalised, defend the innocent, and challenge systems that perpetuate suffering. Your faith is incomplete without action. Let your lives be a living Gospel, a beacon of hope in a world shrouded in darkness



Imperishable Light

What does God require of me?' **Anil Israel** puts this question to us as he reflects on the theme, Catholic social justice.

an is a social being, meaning man lives a life dependent on social relationships. We are created in the image of the Trinity – a communion of persons. We do not belong to ourselves and we cannot live isolated lives independent of the rest of creation around us. We are created for one another, for it is only in interdependent relationships that we learn that we are human – fragile and imperfect. We cannot do everything by ourselves, so we need others to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Likewise, there are others whose lives depend on us - we are designed to contribute in some unique way, to be of some special help - some significant value - in the life of others who are dependent on us.

Everything that God created is for mankind. Man has been entrusted as a steward and caretaker of God's beautiful creation. *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it* (Genesis 2:15). This is indeed a serious responsibility. 'To till and to keep' does not merely indicate cultivating the land and harvesting the

yield. We are not only caretakers of the visible environment, but we are also responsible for the humanity around us – we are our *brother's keeper* (Genesis 4:9). In response to our obedience to the commandment to love our neighbour, we are called to be a 'good neighbour'.

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred, and it upholds the dignity of the human person from womb to tomb. We are taught to stand against the evil of abortion and euthanasia, to celebrate the life of the unborn and to respect the life of the frail. Every life is precious and a unique masterpiece of *God's workmanship* (Ephesians 2:10). The dignity of the human person is inherently inviolable. We are therefore indebted to do everything in our capacity, for the welfare of humans. We are called to be the good Samaritan to the needy around us.

The Word of God places a special consideration to those who have lost their near and dear ones. *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction* (James 1:27). *Do not mistreat any widow or orphan* (Exodus 22:22). We need therefore to extend essential aid to those who have lost the breadwinner in their family.

Everything we are blessed with is not our doing but given to us graciously. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above (James 1:17). And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift? (1 Corinthians 4:7). To whom much is



Justice as defined by St Thomas Aquinas is the virtue that consists of a constant and firm will to give God and neighbour their due. When it comes to acting justly, am I returning to God what belongs to God? Am I giving to the needy what is their due?

GIFT AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE > JAMES 1:17



given, much will be required (Luke 12:48). It all only reminds us that whatever is in excess, belongs to those who need it. 'When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor' (St Basil the Great). The poor you will always have with you (Matthew 26:11). We will never fall short of opportunities to do a good humanitarian deed.

What does God require of me? To do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God (Micah 6:8). Catholic social justice teaches us that all people are made in the image of God and so possess an equal and inalienable worth. Because of this essential dignity, each person has a right to all that is needed to allow him or her to live their full potential as intended by God. Justice as defined by St Thomas Aguinas is the virtue that consists of a constant and firm will to give God and neighbour their due. When it comes to acting justly, am I returning to God what belongs to God? Am I giving to the needy what is their due?

Jesus teaches us to walk the extra mile (Matthew 5:41). Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you (Matthew 5:42). Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed (Proverbs 19:17). Almsgiving atones for sin (Sirach 3:30).

It's not only about giving material support, but we are also called to give our time, our talents and our resources. Many are spiritually poor. There are a lot of spiritually malnourished souls out there. The Lord tells us: *You give them something to eat* (Mark 6:37). Like the poor widow who gave *everything she had to live on* (Mark 12:44) and the boy who give his *five loaves of barley bread and two small fish* (John 6:9), we too are called to give from what we have. What are my *two little copper coins* (Luke 21:2)?

Maybe it is a refreshing smile that can lift someone up, who had a bad day. Maybe a listening ear to someone going through troubled times. It could be helping someone cross the street or offering a pen when asked for. It could also be giving free tuition or helping students in paying their fees. It could be babysitting for a family in need or accompanying someone to attend a church service. Everybody has got a long list of needs. Surely, we can find a way to fulfil a tiny need in the lives of those around us.

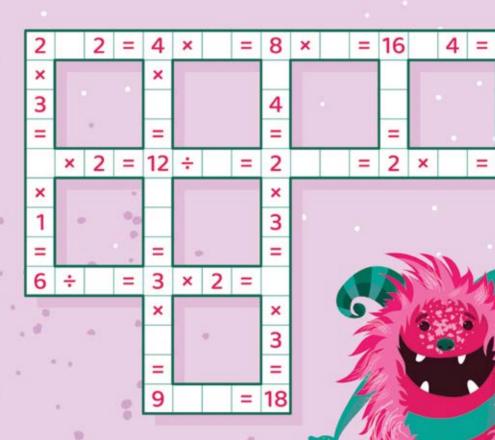
May all that we can joyfully offer, from all that we are blessed with, be the *imperishable light* (Wisdom 18:4) for someone whose life is clouded by darkness of poverty – material or spiritual. May our lives radiate the light of Christ dwelling in us. *Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His body.* Am I?



Take a picture of the solved image and send it to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 25th September 2024.
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global

MATH CROSSWORD

MULTIPLICATION AND DIVISION



* Fill in the missing numbers and signs









I'm conducting an experiment.

My hypothesis is that the plant

CAN in fact survive without

an ecosystem. The blanket

stops the light, insects etc.











MONTH OF PRAYER September 2024





PUSH BEYOND

Step out of your comfort zone and dedicate a day to prayer. Sign up now to make your commitment!

PUSH YOURSELF

Break free from the busyness of life. Spend time before the Eucharistic Lord, renewing your spirit and interceding for the Church and our movement.

PUSH TOGETHER

Encourage all councils and teams to create a sacred space for everyone to connect with Jesus, and support each other in this journey.



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