

KAIROS

GLOBAL

PRIVATE
CIRCULATION
ONLY

WHY I LOVE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

VARIOUS AUTHORS

ALSO ↓

*A Miracle
Called Ezek!*

■ CHRISTIN JOHN AND AZA MATHEW

**The Fullness of
Womanhood**

■ SHEENA ANDREWS



MARY MY BELOVED MOTHER



Our Mother and Lady of Mercy, we pray explicitly for the ransom of all souls held captive to the devil's persuasions. With you, O Blessed Mother of Mercy, we ask that God's graces illuminate souls to clearly see His Will. May God grant courage for all to amend their errant ways, and may the peace of God perpetually accompany all who return to the right path, fixing them Heaven-bound. Amen

EDITOR'S ROOM

DR. CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL



THE FACT THAT CHRIST USES FLAWED PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK ON EARTH IS ACTUALLY A SIGN OF HIS GRACE, NOT A SIGN OF HIS ABSENCE

THE LOVELY HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Kairos Global readers may have noticed the two new columns we have started from Issue 41: Truth Memes and Faithographic. I am writing this not only to marvel at the great things God is doing at *Kairos* but also to wonder at the great contributions made by millions and especially laity through the Church.

The developments related to truthmemes.org started with a casual talk. How is it possible to respond to the negatives and vicious campaigns taking place especially in the era of social media? It came to light that various groups of people and organisations with varied interests and purposes were attacking the Church, leading believers astray from the way of Truth.

Many discussions took place, various approaches examined and some basic principles accepted. The responses should be truthful, decent, dignified, creative and interesting.

Finally the idea of truthmemes.org emerged, the website and memes developed. It is only the beginning and a lot more is to be done. Thousands of memes on several relevant areas are to be developed and many more enthusiastic missionaries to be associated with the initiative. A small group of deeply committed, learned lay people work behind this initiative – all of them voluntarily contributing their expertise in relevant fields.

The person behind Faithographic is Tena Conil from Trivandrum. In the late 80s and early 90s he was involved in the campus ministry in Kerala, later went abroad and returned back. It was he who came up with the suggestion of initiating such a column in *Kairos Global*. The time that he spends in developing the content and designing the material is enormous.

The same is true for all those who contribute articles to *Kairos*. In the last 25 years of Kairos Media's existence, we have never made any payment to any of the writers. They have spared their time and effort freely with the sole aim of building the Kingdom of God through *Kairos*.

If we look at the Catholic Church all over the world, we can only marvel and wonder at the unbelievable amount of good work done by millions of people in the last two millennia.

Would anybody be able to prepare a complete list of martyrs who gave their lives for Jesus and his Church? Can anybody be able to measure the tremendous amount of good work that has happened through the Church in the last twenty centuries?

For sure, the community is messy.

People sin. Leaders are sinful.

The fact that Christ uses flawed people to accomplish his work on earth is actually a sign of his grace, not a sign of his absence. Most of the New Testament is not the story of an idealised church where everything worked perfectly all the time.

The New Testament is a story of Jesus using his followers to spread his love in spite of themselves and as they overcome obstacle after obstacle.

I am awestruck whenever I think about the One, Holy, Apostolic, and Catholic Church.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

chackochan.njavallil@kairos.global



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Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.
Ephesians 5:25

PATRON

Bishop 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

Shoy Thomas
(Jesus Youth International Coordinator)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr. Chackochan Njavallil

MANAGING EDITOR

Josh Joseph, Houston, USA
(editor@kairos.global)

EDITORIAL COUNCIL

Ammu Zachariah, Maryland, USA
Jilu Jacob, Boston, USA
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Sonia Kurian, Houston, USA
Tania Rose Josun, Kerala, India

ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE EDITORS

Divya Immanuel, Mumbai, India
Jiss Jose Thoppil, Kuwait
Jothesh Thomas, Dallas, USA
Ponny Sebastian, Dublin, Ireland

CIRCULATION COORDINATOR

Leena Shaju, Cochin, India +91 6238279115
(circulations@kairos.global)

ASSOCIATE CIRCULATION COORDINATORS

AUSTRALIA: Mintu Vijoy,
Melbourne. +61 452538785
BAHRAIN: Roshan George,
Manama. +973 36906995
CAMBODIA: Sophearong Ravy,
Phnom Penh. +855 964265472
CANADA: Joby Joseph,
Ontario. +12899 686 074
GERMANY: Anna Paul,
Berlin. +49 176 83495451
INDIA: Jackulin Sheela,
Mumbai. +91 9967329244
IRELAND: Suresh V Joy,
Dublin. +35 3879630904
ISRAEL: Jaison K Thattil,
Tel Aviv. +972 559425308
KUWAIT: Anish Thomas Kappil,
Salmiya. +965 90063685
MALAYSIA: Deepu James,
KL Sentral. +60 12649 4628
NETHERLANDS: Jojo Varghese,
Utrecht. +31 684974552
NEW ZEALAND: Derick Daniel,
Auckland +64 291270650
OMAN: Jiju Paul,
Muscat. +968 99467516
PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Abin Michael,
Port Moresby. +675 74794368
QATAR: Jomichan P George,
Doha. +974 33688437
SINGAPORE: Jilu Nobin,
Sengkang. +65 93294529
SWITZERLAND: Joseph C Robert,
Zurich. +41 762499295
THAILAND: Mary Harris,
Bangkok. +66 843138626
UAE: Thomas Jose,
Dubai. +971 521316868
UGANDA: Dominic Mathew,
Kampala. +256 757207200
UK: Mathachan Madukkakuzhy
Stoke on Trent. +44 7969365686
USA: Denny Joseph,
Houston +1 8326403106

FINANCE COORDINATOR

Rani George, Cochin, India +91 9446563335 finance@kairos.global

DESIGN

Mustard Tree, Delhi, India

www.jy.kairosmedia.org @ReadKairosGlobal @readkairos

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MAILING ADDRESS

Kairos International Inc.
3010 Mason Grove Ln
Pearland, TX, USA. 77584
info@kairos.global
+1 832 592 3675

Kairos Media,
No 8/174, Navodaya
Studio Complex,
Thengod P.O,
Cochin, Kerala,
India. Pin: 682030
infoin@kairos.global
+91 9895711718

Kairos Media,
St Charles Street,
Sheffield S9 3WU,
United Kingdom
infofk@kairos.global
+44 7969365686

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ASK



Fr. Bitaju Mathew, O.S.S.T. belongs to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (Trinitarians). He serves as the Secretary Vice Provincial of the Order in India and is currently the Chaplain of the Jesus Youth International Formation Team.

FR. BITAJU

Q. Why couldn't God put forward enough proof so generations could easily believe in his existence?

Your question seems to presuppose that there are not enough proofs for God's existence. Yet, for those who are open to faith and reason, there is enough proof that God has provided for his existence. The most significant among those would be the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity (John 3:16). As the author of the letter to the Hebrews (1:1-2) puts it, *in the fullness of time God revealed himself through His Son, Jesus Christ*.

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans (1:20) says that God is 'invisible' by nature, his existence can be known 'through the things that are made.' According to Christian tradition 'things that are made' include ourselves and the physical universe, and both of these realities indicate God as their ultimate cause. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that, 'these ways of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world, and the human person' (CCC 31). As per Christian tradition the physical universe points to God in two ways, namely, by the fact that it exists and by the fact that it is orderly.

Questions on the existence of God is a perennial human quest and many men and women of different times have responded to it reasonably. The teaching of the Catholic Church affirms that God's existence can be known with certainty by the 'natural light of reason' (*Dei Filius*, Chapter 2, #1). The most relied and celebrated proof for God's existence in the Church was developed by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in the first part of his *Summa Theologica*. I would like to summarise

his five proofs for God's existence, for us and for the generations to come.

St. Thomas Aquinas observed that from our experience of motion (i.e., transition from potentiality to actuality) in the universe, there must have been an initial mover. Aquinas argued that whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another thing, so there must be an unmoved mover which he calls God.

The first cause argument of Aquinas started with the premise that it is impossible for a being to cause itself, because it would have to exist before it caused itself. Moreover, it is impossible for there to be an infinite chain of causes, which would result in infinite regress. So, there must be a first cause, itself uncaused, which he called God.

Nothing and no one exists forever and at any point in time; it is possible that all unnecessary things could go out of existence, yet that has not happened. Therefore, there must be a necessary being on which the existence of things is dependent or contingent. Aquinas called this necessary being God.

Aquinas argued from degree or gradation, considering incidence of degrees of goodness. He thought that things called good, must be called good in relation to a standard of good – a maximum. There must be a perfect goodness, which causes all goodness, and he called it God. The teleological argument affirms that things without intelligence are ordered towards a purpose. Aquinas argued that without an intelligent being doing it, unintelligent objects can't be ordered. Therefore, there must be an intelligent being that moves objects to their ends: God.



YOU CAT 4

CAN WE KNOW THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BY OUR REASON?

Yes. Human reason can know God with certainty. [31-36, 44-47]

The world cannot have its origin and its destination within itself. In everything that exists, there is more than we see. The order, the beauty, and the development of the world point beyond themselves toward God. Every man is receptive to what is true, good, and beautiful. He hears within himself the voice of conscience, which urges him to what is good and warns him against what is evil. Anyone who follows this path reasonably finds God.



POPE talk...

Dr. Kochurani Joseph
Cochin, India



PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR SEPTEMBER

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

We pray for
courageous choices,
for a simple and
environmentally
sustainable
lifestyle, rejoicing
in our young people
who are resolutely
committed to this.

their groups of friends and build social friendships, so necessary for living together well. Our world especially needs to have a renewed encounter with those on the peripheries of society, the most impoverished and vulnerable. We need to distance ourselves from populisms that exploit the anguish of the people without providing solutions, proposing

With our small offering, Jesus can do great things

God loves to do and can do a lot with our prayers, with a gesture of charity for others, even with our sufferings handed over to his mercy. Jesus also addresses an invitation to us, as received by the boy in the Gospel, with the loaves and fish; an unnamed boy in whom we can all see ourselves. It is interesting that his disciples ask this boy to share everything he had. It seems to be an unreasonable and unjust proposal. In human terms, it is illogical. But for God it is a heroic gift. We often try to accumulate what we have, but Jesus asks us to give, to diminish. God will multiply. Banish the false modesty of feeling inadequate. When Jesus directs his disciples to collect the leftover pieces, it reveals the heart of God, not only does he give us more than we need, he is also concerned that nothing be lost, not even a fragment.

Elderly are not 'leftovers from life'

Grandparents and grandchildren, young and old together manifest one of the beautiful faces of the Church and show the covenant between the generations. I worry when I see a society full of people in constant motion, too caught up in their own affairs. Our grandparents, who nourished our own lives, now hunger for our attention and our love; they long for our closeness. Let us lift up our eyes and see them,

even as Jesus sees us. Our grandparents and elderly are not leftovers from life, scraps to be discarded. Their prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need. May we never regret that we were insufficiently attentive to those who loved us and gave us life.

There cannot and must not be any opposition between faith and science

My meeting with distinguished scientists gives me a gift of hope for humanity. Never before as now have we been aware of the need to relaunch scientific research to face the challenges of contemporary society, thus testifying that there cannot and must not be any opposition between faith and science. Moreover, as I noted in the latest encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, it is important not to overlook the risk that a single scientific advance could be the only possible lens for viewing a particular aspect of life, society, and the world. Faced with new challenges, you are entrusted with the task of testifying to the possibility of building a new social bond, endeavouring to bring scientific research closer to all the community.

Dialogue is the path to seeing reality in a new way

The Bible says that whoever finds a friend has found a treasure. I would like to invite everyone to go beyond

a mystique that solves nothing.

God 'weaves' our history

The dramatic conversion of St. Paul should remind us that God has a plan for our lives. He experienced a 'radical transformation', from a persecutor to an apostle. We immediately discover that Paul has a profound knowledge of the mystery of Christ. None of this happens by chance, because everything has been prepared in God's plan. God weaves our history, the history of each of us. Paul chose to go deeper, and chose to take the more challenging route. Keep fixed in your heart and mind that encounter with grace, when God changed our existence. Let us allow ourselves to be led by the primacy of grace.

Pope Francis says ...

- We are called by God; we also receive a mission that he wishes us to undertake.
- Science is a great resource for building peace.
- To love, you need a lot of patience. However, it's worth it.
- We must never forget the time and the way in which God entered our lives.
- He does great things, starting from small, freely-given ones.
- The Church needs a new covenant between young and old.

JESUS IS YOUTH



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

The Beauty of Joyful Praise



OUR FIRST VOCATION IN LIFE – TO PRAISE GOD

'Maybe you always went to church to get your wishes fulfilled, but not here.' Fr Marcelino used to train us to participate in a prayer meeting. 'Here you come to lift Jesus high, praise him and glorify his Name. This is preparing for and getting a foretaste of what you will be doing in heaven through all eternity.'

This was something quite new and exciting. Of course, we had heard about praising God in an introductory retreat but making it a habit required patient guidance and a circle of friends who lived that new culture. Prayer, before this, was mostly repeating 'prayers', a 'counting challenge' or fervently wishing to get something done. Practicing praise was so different and it became all about celebrating God's presence.

A BRAND-NEW CULTURE OF JOY IN THE LORD

The earliest retreat for college youth was in 1976 September, held at a college hostel in Kalamassery¹. Fr Manakil, a well-known devotional song-writer was the hostel warden there and he too attended this new retreat. The songs used were so different and that fascinated him. Our preacher, Fr Marcelino would teach

many brief joyful songs of praise before every session. These were never in the mode of the traditional church hymns. The songs mostly repeated the words, 'rejoice', 'praise', 'glorify' and so on. Even before the programme was over, Fr Manakil composed some new songs of praise in the vernacular.

The best songs of praise are quite special. The usual devotional songs had a certain pattern, tone and language. These songs of praise were extremely youthful and full of joy. A lot of them were words directly taken from the Bible. No wonder, singing a few of these songs gave you a lot of joy and inner freedom, helping you to start praising God. Walking around and singing these exciting songs were already a beautiful way of praising.

The next good thing we learned was 'Free Praise'. 'In a semi-audible voice say short phrases talking of who God is, like "Lord you are Great! You are wonderful! I praise you! Love you! King of Kings, Lord of Lords!"' We were asked to be joyful, soft and loving. After practicing a little, this became an uplifting experience.

Another step was making 'spontaneous prayers'. We were asked to pray briefly, thanking God for something that happened in our lives or praise God for what he is. I had never heard anyone pray like that before,

but many youths responded so readily and prayed with much simplicity and sincerity. This caught on and everyone started making prayers.

Later we were also trained to 'Sing in the Spirit' and do 'Free Singing'. The Lord gives a joyful song in your heart, and you just sing it out with the others and that becomes a highly uplifting experience. Of course, some of us struggled in the beginning, but when most others in the group were singing joyfully, slowly everyone joined in.

Something I learned early in my renewal journey was that youth awaken to work of the Holy Spirit and its first fruit of praise in a seminar or retreat, but formation in the culture of praise happens mainly in a lively prayer fellowship. That formation is a long journey, yet it is worth the effort. A growing habit of praise becomes the greatest asset in one's life.

PRAYER OF WORRYING VS. PRAYER OF PRAISE

Pope Francis says, 'In union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks and we love what he loves. In the end, what we are seeking is the glory of the Father; we live and act "for the praise of his glorious grace" (Ephesians 1:6). If we wish to commit ourselves fully and perseveringly, we need to leave behind every other motivation.' (*Evangelii*



Gaudium 267).

The Bible is full of sentiments of praise and adoration of God and the word 'praise' is used more than 200 times there. Liturgy, especially the Holy Mass is full of orientation to praise. But as a teenager and youth, what I heard and grasped about prayer was raising intercessory prayers and increasing the count of rosaries or other prayers. In brief, prayer was all about my wants and the needs of others.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the prayer of praise, 'Praise is the form of prayer which recognises most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS.' (2639)

There is the flip side, in the name of prayer we go on worrying. These days there is much discussion on 'negative self-talk'. Life experiences often make us anxious, hurt or upset and then a kind of monologue begins in us. This self-talk and overthinking leads to many emotional, physical and spiritual illnesses. The Word of God cautions us repeatedly against the growing negativity inside. Don't be anxious (Matthew 6:25), have no anxiety about anything (Philippians 4:6), cast all

Youth awakens to work of the Holy Spirit and its first fruit of praise in a seminar or retreat, but formation in the culture of praise happens mainly in a lively prayer fellowship. That formation is a long journey, yet it is worth the effort. A growing habit of praise becomes the greatest asset in one's life.

anxieties on him (1Peter 5:7). The solution Jesus offers is not a prayer that becomes 'negative self-talk' but looking at lilies and birds. Instead of seeking these matters, he asks us to praise God who does everything beautifully (Luke 12:28) and seek his reign.

Personally, this journey from worrying to praise is a daily struggle I go through. When I sit for prayer or go about daily activities, I see that I am 'grounded' by my needs and others' problems. That's when I tell myself, 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look at his glory and praise him. Leave the rest in his hands.'

LIKE A KITE FLYING HIGH

The Church's liturgy and glorious prayers gives us amazing locations and occasions of excellent praise. But

for that to enter my ordinary daily life I needed a simple gathering of friends who came together building a castle of praise. In that simple spontaneity I learn to translate the glorious concepts of the Bible and the liturgy into my ordinary life situations.

The best antidote for a youngster's troubled mind is to climb the ladder of praising. But this may not be reached through teachings or readings. You need places where friends come together to experience the joy of journeying in spontaneous praise of God. In many Jesus Youth gatherings they do this through simple songs, informal chat and shared prayers of praise. I thank God that I received good guidance on praising God in a community early in life. This community experience will help transform individual lives into beautiful kites that fly high in the glorious life of the Spirit. ■

¹ Kalamassery is a place in Kerala, India.

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

ENGAGE

THE PERSEVERANCE CHECKLIST

Alex Njavally shares wisdom on persevering in faith amidst life's curveballs.



...THE LORD IS YOUR REAR END. ... THINGS. YOU'RE LIVING IN A BROKEN WORLD AND YOU HAVE TO LIVE. BE MERCIFUL AND COMPASSIONATE. TREAT EVERYONE RESPECTFULLY. ... IN VAIN, SO ALWAYS WATCH OUT FOR HIM. DO NOT LOOK TO THE NEGATIVES OF THE PAST BECAUSE ... DAY IN THE WILDERNESS. DON'T ALLOW PRIDE AND STUBBORNNESS TO BLOCK THE CHANGE THAT IS NEEDED. ... BE HALF-HEARTED AND LEAVE NO ROOM FOR SLOTH. BE JOYFUL, REJOICE AND ALWAYS POSITIVE. SEEK HIS GLORY THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD YOU WILL ENJOY THE BEST OF THE LAND. REMEMBER YOU ARE HUMAN. LEARN TO ENJOY FAMILY AND ... EVERY THOUGHT, IMAGINATION, DESIRE, AND INTENTION CAPTIVE TO CHRIST. THERE ARE TREASURES TO BE MADE FOR HEAVEN ALL ... SURPRISE YOU. IT IS A PERPETUAL WAR AGAINST SIN. STRIVE FOR SILENCE AND STILLNESS OF HEART IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. CELEBRATE RELATIONS ORDER TO OUR LIFE. HE WANTS US TO LOVE HIM FULLY, WALK HUMBLY AND TO ACT JUSTLY. THE JOY THAT REMAINS IS THE KNOWLEDGE ... IN HIS HANDS. ORDINARY LIFE TAKES A DIVINE DIMENSION. THERE HE WANTS TO BE YOUR BROTHER. YOUR BROTHER. WHAT YOU MEANT FOR MY HARM ... JOSEPH THE PATRIARCH'S STATEMENT WILL BE TRUE FOR YOU. ... GIVE YOUR BEST TO ALL YOUR ENDEAVOURS. TRUE FREEDOM IS NOT A PRIEST OR A NUN OR A PREACHER WHO ... LY. IT IS NOT A PRIEST OR A NUN OR A PREACHER WHO ... ZONE BECAUSE WE ARE THE CHURCH MILITANT. WISDOM ... REMAIN WITH HIM, TO OBEY HIM, TO BE FAITHFUL ... INFLICT ALWAYS BECAUSE THE WORLD ... NO PROBLEM THAT HE CAN'T ... AND DO THINGS ... YOUR BEST TO ALL Y ... IT IS NOT A PRIEST OR ... BECAUSE WE ARE THE C ... WITH HIM, TO OBEY HI ... ALWAYS BECAUSE THE WOF ... THAT HE CAN'T SOLY ... THROUGH AND DO THINGS. YOU' ... OF LIFE. BE MERCIFUL AN ... SO ALWAYS WATCH OUT F ... THE PAST BECAUSE HE IS ABOUT TO DO A NEW THING. HE WILL MAKE RIVERS IN THE DESERT AND A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS. ... THE CHANGE THAT IS NEEDED IN YOUR LIFE. BE WILLING TO PUT ALL YOUR ENERGY INTO LIFE. DO NOT BE HALF-HEARTED AND ... VS POSITIVE. SEEK HIS GLORY MORE THAN THE GLORY FROM MAN. IF YOU ARE WILLING AND OBEDIENT TO THE LORD Y ... EARN TO ENJOY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY. KEEP READING, KEEP LEARNING, BRING EVERY THOUGHT, IMAGIN ... MADE FOR HEAVEN ALL THE TIME. BE A MAN OF PRAYER. HE WILL SURPRISE YOU. IT IS A PERPET ... CELEBRATE RELATIONSHIPS. HE ONLY MATTERS. HE BRINGS ORDER TO OUR THAT YOU ARE AN INSTRUMENT IN HIS HANDS. OPR ANT END MY GOOD ...

The greatest tragedy in life is to die without becoming a saint.

POPE FRANCIS

Looking back at my life I must say that I committed my life to Jesus during my second-year of graduation. It was a very personal experience. And I realised, he knew everything about me and that he was not just God of the heavens but an intimate personal Saviour. Being a people person, I had a lot of friends. It was a challenge for me to remain faithful to him because my friendship was more with brothers of other faiths. But the truth that I am a child of God and God has a plan for me and the Holy Spirit will lead me and reveal his plans for me was an intriguing mystery and novelty. A new spark and a new dimension came into my life as God led me to some wonderful people who listened to the Holy Spirit, and were guided and obedient to him.

As a young man because I delighted in him, I saw his delightful ways entering my life. The words spoken to Joshua of the Old Testament, 'I will never leave nor forsake you' became a guarantee for me. I started looking to him for everything.

The heart of God yearns for his children and is always trying to bring everyone to his loving fold. This dream of God took root in me. I would do all I could to bring youngsters to him and to remain in him.

With his presence in my life, my nature started changing. I started winning over my broken nature and also found wonderful friendships. Just as Jesus grew in stature and wisdom, when we remain in him, we also grow in stature and wisdom. So that he can use us as his instrument to proclaim his great love. One thing I realise when I look back at my life, it is grace alone that kept me in him.

LESSONS I TREASURE:

- Celebrate relationships.
- He only matters.
- He brings order to our life.
- He wants us to love tenderly, walk humbly and to act justly.
- The joy that remains is the knowledge that you are an instrument in his hands.
- Ordinary life takes a divine dimension when he is there.
- He wants to widen our boundaries.
- 'What you meant for my harm God meant for my good' – Joseph the patriarch's statement will be true for you.
- You will always be challenged to forgive.
- Ignore an insult and overlook an offence.
- He expects you to give your best to all your endeavours.
- True freedom comes from his Spirit
- To remain faithful is the goal.
- He has given us the right to discern, so discern clearly.
- It is not a priest or a nun or a preacher who has called you, it is the Lord himself.
- Remain under the umbrella of his one holy Catholic Church.
- It is a war zone (because we are the Church Militant).

WISDOM WHEN HANDLING DIFFICULTIES:

- Storms in life will be plenty. But he is there at the helm of my boat.
- My duty is to remain with him, to obey him, to be faithful to him. And he will always see me through.
- He always brings the person needed in my life.
- There is constant conflict always because the world's ways and the Lord's ways are different.
- The Holy Spirit who hovered over the earth and gave shape to it is in you and there is no problem that he can't solve.
- The Lord is your real portion; all the rest will vanish.
- Be open to all people, and accept everyone.
- Do not react, always think through and do things.
- You're living in a broken world and you are living with broken people.

With his presence in my life my nature started changing. I started winning over my broken nature and also found wonderful friendships. Just as Jesus grew in stature and wisdom, when we remain in him, we also grow in stature and wisdom.

- Aim for calmness and to answer softly.
- Celebrate the little joys of life.
- Be merciful and compassionate.
- Treat everyone respectfully whatever be their position.
- Unless the Lord builds the house the builders labour in vain, so always watch out for him.
- Do not look to the negatives of the past because he is about to do a new thing, he will make rivers in the desert and a way in the wilderness.
- Don't allow pride and stubbornness to block the change that is needed in your life.
- Be willing to put all your energy into life, do not be half-hearted and leave no room for sloth.
- Be joyful, rejoice and always positive.
- Seek his glory more than the glory from man.
- If you are willing and obedient to the Lord you will enjoy the best of the land.
- Remember you are human.
- Learn to enjoy family and community.
- Keep reading, keep learning.
- Bring every thought, imagination, desire, and intention captive to Christ.
- There are treasures to be made for heaven all the time.
- Be a man of prayer.
- He will surprise you.
- It is a perpetual war against sin.
- Strive for silence and stillness of heart in the presence of God.



A member of the JY International Formation team, Alex Antony Njavally lives in Bangalore, India. He is married to Thresy Alex and they have three children – Tia, Anna and Katrina.

...AND HE CALLED YOU IT IS THE LORD HIMSELF...
...WISDOM WHEN HANDLING DIFFICULTIES STORMS IN LIFE WILL...
...FUL TO HIM, AND HE WILL ALWAYS SEE ME THROUGH, HE ALWAYS BRING...
...AND THE LORDS WAYS ARE DIFFERENT, THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HOVERED OVER THE...
...AND IS YOUR REAL PORTION, ALL THE REST WILL VANISH, BE OPEN TO ALL PEOPLE AND A...

EXPERIENCE

'LATE HAVE I LOVED YOU!'

From his mother's tearful prayers began a faith journey that brought him into the movement. **Michy Tom** tells us more.



I was born into a pious family in Kerala. My father worked in Hyderabad¹ and my mother in Kerala². Being an only son, I got all freedom and was a constant headache to my mother. She would tearfully pray for me during the family prayer. As a result, I attended my first retreat – Joy Conference – when I was a teenager. There was no dramatic experience or such but there was peace in our house once I returned. After the programme I met elders in Jesus Youth who spent long hours with me, patiently listened to me and motivated me to take small steps for Christ. During the programme I heard about full-timership and started earnestly praying for it for a couple of months, but later, forgot about it. My prayer, however, was heard by the Lord. During the last year of my engineering course, I met a forerunner and she encouraged me to go for full-timership.

After the training I was placed in Trichy in Tamil Nadu³ where I had a deeper experience with Christ through personal prayer. I felt as St. Augustine did when he said, 'Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you!' I realised that God was a friend more than any friend, he is a lover more than any lover, on whom we can rely more than anyone in this world.

Once, I was to conduct a retreat for teenagers. A day before the programme and the number of registrations we received were only a handful. Throughout the preparation, the Lord revealed that there would be 60 participants, but reality was different. Much to my

surprise, when the programme started I could count 60 participants in the hall. This was an eye-opener for me that nothing was impossible for God; his ways are mysterious. We only need to believe in him, do what he says, and the rest will fall in place.

Life after full-timership was not easy at all. The first news I received after full-timership was my sister's cancer diagnosis. But God miraculously healed her. As Isaiah 43:2 says, *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

Later I moved to New Zealand for my higher studies. There too, I was able to experience a JY fellowship. There were families who opened their hearts and homes to me with food and shelter, so much that I never missed home.

My journey with the movement over the years helped overcome my stage fear and to be more sociable. I became friendlier and compassionate to the needs of others. Each day during personal prayer, God slowly unveils his plans for my life. Though I am unworthy, I feel the Lord is on my side to defend me. Whenever I fail, he calls me back to his bosom through the sacraments. Just like Pope Benedict said, 'The happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy, has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth.'

^{1, 2, 3} Hyderabad is a city, while Kerala and Tamil Nadu are states in South India.

Michy Tom lives in Ashburton with his wife, Reshma. He is the assistant coordinator of JY New Zealand.



A HEART MADE SIMPLE

Sonal Fernando, the JY National Coordinator of Sri Lanka reminisces about a 'not cool' meeting that brought him to the movement.

I was invited to the movement at an unexpected moment in my life. One of my school friends, Dilan, called me one day and asked to join a team called Jesus Youth. But I had no idea about JY. With his guidance I joined my very first meeting on Saturday, 22nd of February 2014. That day; the first meeting was not cool. They started the meeting with praise and worship. I had to play guitar for them. I was not comfortable with shouting and praising as I was an ordinary Catholic. After praise and worship they started Bible study and experience sharing; during the sharing one girl started to share her life experience with us. She started to cry in front of us, in front of unknown people. I didn't find that very nice, such sharings from someone I don't know. I was expecting a jovial, funny environment there. However that incident made a mark on me and tied my heart with the Jesus Youth movement. I think God tied



Sri Lanka JY National Team 2018-2020

my heart and soul with him through this incident to start the journey with him. Even now I reflect on that incident when I am weary.

In 2014, I got the opportunity to attend the Discipleship Training Programme. I was a young boy who was uncomfortable with praise and worship before. But through the journey with JY, I started to praise God, and also became a member of the music ministry. Day by day, God moulded my life with his blessings, the gift of sharing the Word of God, leading adorations, taking leadership in the prayer group and the local movement. DTP was an amazing training programme. I began to live in the Holy Spirit and consciously practice the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Living in the Holy Spirit was an amazing opportunity I got from God. Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6 verses 25 to 34 makes my life meaningful. Depend on God and stop worrying are the main things every JY should have. Six pillars in Jesus Youth movement, is an extraordinary lifestyle belonging to every JY. It taught me the value of personal prayer, living the Word of God, meaning of all the sacraments and it opened my mind to do something for the society to share the love of God. I didn't want to do big things; I needed to do small things with love and passion. Home-visiting, supporting other prayer groups, conducting programmes for teens, and supporting retreats with music and conducting adorations were what made my life strong to maintain a better relationship with Christ.

My education ended in 2015 and I began work as a voluntary teacher because I wanted to teach students and share Christ encounters with them. That opportunity set my life on another path. Life with the students gave me plenty of opportunities to share Christ with them and direct them on the right path. This was also my personal mission for God. After one year of working as a voluntary teacher, I resigned from the school and began to look for a new job. But it took

me seven months of waiting and I used this period for God's work. Working in parishes and apostolates was challenging. Soon I had to face another challenge – managing family members with regards to my career choices. But God saw me through it all. However much they found fault with me, they eventually came around and began to encourage me. However there is a special thing that I have to share about my parents. They believed in me and my work and it was a blessing for me. Finally I got a job as an office executive in an educational institution.

After a couple of months, I unexpectedly got the opportunity to shift my career onto my passionate path, and I became a teacher in 2017. It was a Catholic school. I started my mission again; working with students and encouraging them in studies and living in God. I met a lot of wounded students there and did what I could do for them. In 2018, I was appointed as a National Team member of my country, Sri Lanka. I got the opportunity to work more for God.

Two years ago, Sri Lanka witnessed a huge disaster. It was the Easter attack, which took place on 21st April 2019. After that incident, we supported our priests and nuns to help the victims recover. That year I got another opportunity to attend the National Leaders Training in India. After DTP, it was an amazing training programme. It encouraged me to do more as a leader in the movement. With the pandemic, we started virtual missions and gatherings. Also as a teacher I had a huge responsibility towards my students and youngsters. Walking with the Lord in every situation is a challenge to me. But the guidance of Spirit and missionary enthusiasm I have as a Jesus Youth, has never discouraged me.

In 2020, August I married Nethmi, both of us wanted to do more for God. She is also a JY and a passionate missionary, and is a blessing to my life. Staying together and doing something with love for God is our mission as a married couple. This March, we had a reconstitution to the National Team and I was appointed National Coordinator. God filled me with his blessings and gave me a big responsibility. He has a better plan for me as well as the movement to fulfill through my work. I need to maintain my life with a simple heart for him.

From 2014, the year I started a strong relationship with God, until now, I have faced many struggles but God made my heart simple to face every situation with a smile.



Sonal Fernando joined the Jesus Youth movement in Sri Lanka in 2014 and worked within the prayer groups and ministries in Sri Lanka to spread the love of God. He is currently serving as the National Coordinator. Sonal is working as a teacher at Catholic school

T H E M I N I S T R Y O F S E R V A N T L E A D E R S H I P

JY UAE assistant coordinator, **Rijo John** speaks about servant leadership and some crucial events that occurred during his tenure.



The disciples of Jesus were ordinary folk who worked and lived in a difficult time, had their own weaknesses and grappled with egos and other issues that arose from a disparate group thrown together. But when Jesus, their teacher, their Rabbi, their dear and revered Lord, in the midst of the Passover supper, went on his knees, washed and wiped their feet – and commanded them to do likewise – what would have gone through their minds? And yet, all of them except Judas, went on to become servant leaders.

How can one strive to be a 'Servant Leader'?

Though a challenging invitation from the Lord, 'servant leadership' has been somehow gracefully embedded in the JY lifestyle from the very beginning. It is radically different from the leadership styles propagated through motivational books and leadership gurus. I have always admired how some of the movement's leaders strive to avoid the limelight and are only revealed at a thanksgiving speech of a programme or, as you realise later on, it was the same

Clockwise:
UAE JY National Council
team; Archbishop Abraham's
memorial; JY Jubilee; PR-18
Workshop; Dream sharing



jovial person who served your lunch. However, when I was personally called to such a leadership role, I began to realise that I needed the grace of the Lord and the strong intercession support of those around. Looking back, I am grateful for this phase in life because in order to do 'all' things, the 'I' should decrease, and 'Christ' should increase, in order for Philippians 4:12 to be fulfilled in me: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Signs from above

I had just finished a two-year term as the Dubai Regional Council coordinator in 2018 and was looking forward to taking a break from leadership roles for a while. However I realised God had other plans when I was elected to the National Council on 14th April 2018. I still remember the day quite vividly. Most of us in the elected team had been many years in the movement and we were wishing for a more youthful team. I had mixed feelings of gratitude and anxiety when I was also called to serve as the assistant coordinator. The opening words of Sajan Julious, the National Coordinator humbled us all in the team, just as it touched the attending assembly to tears: 'I am just a humble donkey who has been chosen to carry Jesus for the next three years.' As the assembly exited from the hall, we were surprised to witness unusual heavy rain and thunder outside which even damaged some of the canopies installed in the compound. Some of them took it to be the sign from the Holy Spirit of things to come and looking back, I suppose they could be right...

Good Shepherd

Just a week later on 19th April, we received the unexpected news of the sad demise of our dear



The opening words of Sajan Julious, the National Coordinator humbled us all in the team, just as it touched the attending assembly to tears: 'I am just a humble donkey who has been chosen to carry Jesus for the next three years.'

Archbishop Abraham, and the first programme that we did together as a team was to organise a commemoration Mass the next day. As Jesus Youths from all over UAE flocked into the Ras Al Khaimah¹ church on such short notice, it was very evident that our dear archbishop had indeed touched the hearts of many, despite his short and limited visits to the region. That day I remember, as a team we passionately rose to the moment and pitched in wherever needed, under the guidance of our coordinator. During the homily, Fr. Varghese Chempoly OFM Cap., spoke of how inspired he was in meeting an archbishop who enjoyed every moment of his life, while always having his eyes focused on the Good Shepherd. As a team, we all could take to heart that this was the leadership that the Lord wanted us to follow, and all the more we were now privileged to have one more intercessor for us in heaven.

Dynamic and Innovative

Coming together as a team we had great dreams and expectations. Usually there's a training conducted for all the newly elected members, for two whole days in one of the church halls. However, this time we thought of a more dynamic and innovative step and we named the training, 'PR-18 Workshop', short for Post Reconstitution 2018 Workshop. Rather than focusing only on the days of the training, we prepared the teams from the eight regions, weeks ahead, to take up some challenges such as attending Mass together, having a meal together and just before the training, a treasure hunt with different checkpoints leading to the venue of the training. Along with simple practical tips from the main resource, Dr. Edward Edezhath, the training concluded with great joy and expectations that united us all together as one family.

Dreams do come true

Even though it took weeks and months to plan the vision and focus for the coming three years, one major task that clearly lay before us was to celebrate the Jubilee year, after 25 years of abundant blessings in this desert country. After consulting a few of the

senior leaders, this event was definitely one to be initiated from the heart of every Jesus Youth. With this in mind, on 11th September 2018, hundreds of Jesus Youth were invited to a gathering in Dubai to share their dreams and expectations of the Jubilee. It came as a great surprise that a vast majority shared that their dream was the Papal visit of 2019. Though many were skeptical at the very thought of having such an impossible dream, on February 3rd, 2019, the Lord was so generous to fulfill this for us. From the inaugural mass of the Jubilee year on 11th January 2019, the Jesus Youth in UAE was on gear to experience a beautiful journey of faith like never before. Once we reached the summit of the Jubilee year on December 2nd, with the Jubilee conference attended by around 3000+ congregation consisting of cardinals, bishops, priests and Jesus Youth from different parts of the world, we were all in one heart boldly witnessing like the first apostles with burning hearts and exclaiming: 'It is true!' (JY Monthly reflection Feb 2019).

Without a mask?

Ending 2019 on such a high note, we had great expectations for the year 2020. And indeed, we know how it turned out, shattering all our plans and expectations and forcing us to re-think newer platforms and channels. The attendance of prayer groups started to dwindle and for the first time even just living the JY lifestyle needed to be in an alternative reality. Sacraments, fellowship and evangelisation were all on the spur shifted to the social platforms and soon it was evident what we all really missed, what we had so long taken for granted: the blessings of praying, sharing and celebrating together. Typical sessions of unmasking the true personality, going outdoors, and sharing meals, and the importance of attending Mass in church, all needed to be reworked in the new context. But thankfully once again, as servant leaders we only need to look up to our great leader, our Good Shepherd for the comfort we seek (Psalms 23:4). So, looking back, I stand in awe of the Lord for he has guided me through green pastures and quiet waters. As I now look forward to the new responsibilities after completing my term in the National Council, I now realise that all I need is to trust in his goodness and mercy: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long* (Psalms 23:6).

¹ Ras Al Khaimah is one of the seven emirates of UAE.



An engineer, **Rijo John** has served in various JY leadership roles in the Middle East and national teams of UAE and Qatar. He lives in Dubai with his wife Christeena and their three children.

IN FOCUS

TEN REASONS WHY I LOVE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

George Paul shares succinctly and beautifully ten reasons for his love of the Catholic Church.

1 » TRUTH

In an essay describing his conversion to Catholicism, G.K. Chesterton wrote, ‘The difficulty of explaining “why I am a Catholic” is that there are ten thousand reasons all amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true.’ When our Lord entrusted the keys of His Church to St Peter, that included the deposit of faith, the Church’s possession of unchangeable truth: what God has revealed through his prophets in the Old Law and through his Divine Son in the New Law. The Catholic faith seeks the truth about all matters in the light of our divine faith. Being open to ideas from every quarter that seeks the truth, including science, psychology, literature, sociology, theology and philosophy, the Church’s view of mankind has an unsurpassed intellectual depth, thoroughness, consistency, and integrity. As I began to understand the richness of this truth, it changed my world view and my understanding of everything else. It gave me direction and helped me to make sense of the big questions regarding the meaning and purpose of human life, the cosmos and everything in it.

2 » GOODNESS

Throughout its history, the Church has served as a beacon of goodness and charity in every part of the world. In fact, the Church has been the world’s biggest





charitable organisation for a very long time. Jesus cured the sick, cleansed lepers, made cripples walk and the blind see. He fed the hungry, thousands of them. And so did his apostles and the generations of Christians that followed them. The Catholic Church's institutional apostolate for the sick gave rise to the gradual development of a more systematic nursing and medical care that we see today. From Fr Damien to St Mother Teresa, there is no dearth of concrete examples of heroic charity in the Church and they never cease to inspire us to go the extra mile in serving our brethren.

3 » BEAUTY

Bishop Robert Barron often talks about the aesthetic approach to evangelising. He writes, 'I might suggest that the evangelist start with the Sainte Chapelle or the life of St Francis of Assisi or the Little Flower's *Story of a Soul* or Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* or Gregorian chant, or perhaps best of all, a carefully executed liturgy of the Roman rite', and I couldn't agree more! Many a time, I have stood awestruck at the resplendence of the Church in her liturgy, art, music, architecture, saints, monasteries and literature. Besides, her beauty is founded on the truth and that gives it a timeless, eternal character that the secular world is devoid of. According to Dr Peter Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College and a prolific author, 'the most beautiful thing in the world is a saint. Mother Teresa's wrinkles are far more beautiful than a movie star's vain, shallow, and bratty face.'

4 » THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1324-1327), states that 'The Eucharist is "the source and summit" of the Christian life. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.' I'm yet to meet a faithful Catholic who is not Eucharist-centred. One of the most inspiring stories is that of Dr Scott Hahn, who was still a Presbyterian minister when he attended his first Catholic Mass in a basement chapel. Captivated by the liturgy of the Word, the prayers soaked with Biblical language, and above all the liturgy of the Eucharist, it did not take long for him to convert to Catholicism in 1986 and since then he has been an ardent defender of the Faith and one of its most passionate promoters. Even though veiled by our mode of existence, the Eucharist is a real participation in heavenly worship and there is no place on earth where heaven is so accessible. I've been fed, healed, instructed and energised by the Mass and the real presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

5 » THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

There is no rosy Way of the Cross. I'm responsible for my choices in life and confession serves as a constant reminder of the ongoing spiritual battle I'm waging against my own sinful inclinations and ignorance. Besides, it is a tangible sign of God's merciful forgiveness in the face of our iniquities. Every time I kneel before the priest, the Lord is ready to forgive and forget my past. Sin is never committed in isolation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1422) states: 'Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offence committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labours for their conversion.' We are intimately connected to one another, which is why the sacrament reconciles us with God and it reconciles us with the Body of Christ. The sacrament of Penance is seen as a joint work of the Church through the minister and the person who confesses. Confession demands a firm determination of the will to correct my wrongs and to stay away from sin in the future. The graces bestowed upon us through the sacrament strengthens us to fight the good fight.

6 » PAPACY

In a tribute to St John Paul II, the editorial published in The New York Times on April 2, 2005, pointed out, 'The papacy is a unique instrument of human governance. No other institution combines spiritual and political authority in quite the same way and with the same global reach, and no other can claim a continuous history stretching back to antiquity.' I consider it a great blessing to have come of age during the JP II years. As the head of the Church, his words, actions and writings always served as a guiding light to the Church as well as the world in a time of darkness and confusion. Although different in their leadership style, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have continued the work of articulating the Christian faith, inspiring and challenging us in our Christian life. *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 16:18). These words continue to ring true in the Catholic Church through the Petrine Office. The Chair of Peter is the visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion in the Church. As the Vicar of Christ, the Pope is a living symbol of the Lord's salvific mission continuing in this world via his apostolic ministry and emphasises the fact that God chose us as his friends and co-workers!

7 » THE BIBLE

'To fail to appreciate the role that the Catholic Church played—and plays—with respect to the Bible,' says apologist Jimmy Akin, 'is to fundamentally misunderstand the Bible.' The Bible is a precious and

irreplaceable resource that speaks to the core of our faith. Nonetheless, God chose to give the Church not only the written Gospel but also the spoken one. Both of these are complementary and have been passed down under the protection of the Church. *Dei Verbum* states, 'This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face' (DV, 7). Throughout the ages, the Church has kept the principle it utilised from the time of the apostles: Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium are inseparable. Reading and understanding the Scriptures with a Catholic lens, in the light of Tradition and the Magisterium, has helped me tremendously in learning the faith as the apostles and fathers taught it.



Even though veiled by our mode of existence, the Eucharist is a real participation in heavenly worship and there is no place on earth where heaven is so accessible. I've been fed, healed, instructed and energised by the Mass and the real presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

8 » RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Catholic religious life has its beginnings in the 3rd century when the ancient hermits of Egypt left their homes and went off to the desert to lead a solitary life of prayer. Soon afterwards, Pachomius the Great founded the first cenobitic communities in which male or female monastics lived together and held their property in common under the leadership of an abbot or abbess. In 516, Saint Benedict wrote his Rule of Saint Benedict as a practical guide for monastic community life, and its message spread to monasteries throughout Europe. Monasteries became major conduits of civilisation, preserving craft and artistic skills while maintaining an intellectual culture within their schools, scriptoria, and libraries. They functioned as centres for spiritual life as well as for agriculture, economy, and production. The later religious orders also made significant contributions to the Church and society in every part of the world. A religious sister or priest is a unique sign of Christ, wholly consecrated to God and His Church, as ministers of worship and service; in the world, healing, teaching and nurturing, but never of this world, they remain citizens and harbingers of another kingdom. In the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, 'Monasteries are true and proper oases of the spirit in which God speaks to humanity.'

9 » FAMILY

According to Catholic doctrine, marriage is not only a human or secular relationship, but also a sacrament and a sanctified state of life. The Catholic Church has always stood firm in asserting the truth about marriage and family in God's plan, in the face of the

great challenges posed by secular ideologies and state regulations. Through the Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, and the *Theology of the Body* series, St John Paul II presents his vision of marriage and family in the current socio-cultural context. He was confident that no ideology, however daunting, could extinguish what God has set in motion. While the family finds itself in the midst of an eroding cultural crisis, facing militant attempts to redefine marriage contrary to reason and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, John Paul II redirects our gaze to the truth of Christian marriage as a fruit of the redemption of Christ. He saw the family in its full potential in the order of grace—that if lived according to this potential in Christ, could change the culture and the world. For the Church, the family is an active and vital agent in establishing a civilization of love and the renewal of Christian culture. This is a uniquely Catholic conception that has revolutionised every society that has been influenced by it.

10 » THEOLOGY

Catholic theology is an extraordinary synthesis of human reason with divine revelation and a tremendous gift for the intellectual mind. The Church teaches that true faith and correct reason can and must work together, and viewed properly, can never be in conflict with one another, as both have their origin in God, as stated in the Papal encyclical letter issued by Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*. St Anselm has aptly defined theology as 'faith seeking understanding'. The early Church did not hesitate to absorb what is good and true in Greek philosophy and in the process, made it a handmaid of Theology. St Justin, St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas held that whatever there was of Truth in the writings of Greek philosophers should be taken from them and adapted to the teaching of the true religion. This gave us a new way of talking about the faith, God's revelation expounded and expressed in philosophical language. As Boethius has written about the consolation of philosophy, I've found immense joy and comfort in the theological writings of the great Catholic intellectuals. As one of the oldest and unbroken intellectual traditions in the world, Catholic Theology continues to nourish the Church by offering new insights on the Word of God as well as by answering questions posed by the dominant culture and other disciplines of knowledge. ■



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.

YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, I CHOSE YOU

Catholic-convert, **Jini Lobo** writes about how God drew her to the Catholic faith and a family life of mission with the Santvana Community.

Born to an upper middle-class family, I learned at an early age that money and comfort was not what life was all about. Even though we were well-fed and well-educated, life had its own twists and turns; as a teenager, the strained relationship between my parents, a controlling father and my secular upbringing made me a confused and insecure person.

As a family, we never practiced any faith because my father believed in socialist ideologies rather than in God. My siblings and I were not baptised and did not go to church either. At 17 years of age, when I needed a community certificate to apply for entrance examinations, we were all baptised together. We couldn't pray openly at home but I remember seeing my mother praying at nights when my father was not at home. This was the only experience about God I had as a teenager.

Even though I wanted to become a medical doctor, I did not qualify for the same. Contrary to my desire to then opt for BSc in Agriculture, I was forced to pursue engineering. That's how I landed up in TKM Engineering College, Kollam¹, feeling miserable. It felt like the whole world was against me and I was utterly dejected.

As first years in college, we were invited by our seniors for prayer meetings and I began to attend them for fear of ragging (which unfortunately prevailed then); later it became an escape from my low spirits. After a few months, I started enjoying the songs (music) and the company (fellowship) out there which made me a regular attendee.

Until then, my understanding of love was something I had to work hard for, being obedient and getting good grades were my means to seek love, especially from my father. I felt let down when my father stopped talking to me after I failed to qualify the medical entrance exam. And it was through this Jesus Youth prayer meeting that I was introduced to a Father God, who loves me personally and unconditionally, who had sent his own Son to save me even when I was still a sinner (Romans 5:8); this shook me to the core of my being.

I was introduced to a God (in the Holy Eucharist) who comes and waits to meet me personally, every single day. I felt loved and healed to know that the Creator of the universe waits to see me every morning in the Holy Eucharist. So meeting my Creator every day became my habit, even though I was not able to receive him (but received him spiritually as my elders guided me) for the next nine years.

The loving concern, care, empathy and constant follow up from my seniors, one of the important attributes of Jesus Youth lifestyle, accelerated the healing process which gave me a positive outlook about life. As a new believer I was very enthusiastic about different aspects of faith. Daily Mass, daily learning a Word of God and sharing it, daily Rosary, outreaches to old age homes and orphanages which developed my compassion for the less fortunate, etc. were all what I learned from JY TKMCE prayer group.

I was a novice in faith and did not know anything about God. Reading the Bible was an unavoidable exercise because my elders told me that God revealed himself to us through the Scriptures; for the next three years I read the New Testament three times which gave me a good grounding to my faith. Being from Protestant background, I had friends and relatives who were concerned about my new-found Catholic faith. God clearly talked to me through the Scriptures to clarify my confusions about Catholicism.



Once it so happened that I attended a retreat with my prayer group members in Kottiyam² Retreat Center. I hadn't informed my parents about it, knowing very well that permission would be denied. Unfortunately that weekend, my father decided to visit me at the hostel and so came to know that I had gone for a retreat. He came to the retreat centre and took me home. Having discovered my newly-found faith, I was barred from attending prayer meetings and spiritual activities. But God showed me another way, some of us started coming together for a Rosary every day after dinner in the hostel, which helped me stay in fellowship and grow in my faith. Scripture came to my help with assurance, promises and admonitions which helped me to grow in Christian maturity. My favourite verse is Romans 8:28, *We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* This verse kept my spirits up and helped me walk through the darkest valleys of my life, and does so even today.

Seeking God's counsel and guidance through eldering was a special gift from God for a naïve Catholic like me, which guided me throughout my life in taking the right decisions, even when I did not understand what God had in store for me. I used to feel sad and discouraged that I could not receive Communion for nine long years, it was the loving guidance of my elders that helped me stay patient for the Lord's time. The patient waiting bore fruit in the form of my call to Santvana, where in all our houses we have the Blessed Sacrament in our chapels. *The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.* (Psalm 145:13) Thus I learned that waiting for Lord's time brings abundant grace!

Another challenge was my marriage. As a Protestant, I was expected to marry from the same community but I wanted to marry a Catholic. My family was not very keen about it as they did not understand the significance of being Catholic. But

I had loving elders who prayed for years, took initiative to find a suitable partner. Naveen's proposal was a miracle in my life. I was blessed with a wonderful partner, a loving family and a beautiful community

(Santvana Community). After my engagement, I was received into the Catholic fold, finally I could receive my Lord and Saviour after the long wait of nine years.

Today when I look back, I am so grateful to God for letting me study in TKM Engineering College, even though I have never worked as an Electric Engineer in all the six years I worked before joining the mission. But my personal and spiritual formation in the JY prayer group instilled in me a love for the Eucharist, commitment towards the constants and a matured understanding about the world around me. I learned some of the important virtues of life like compassion, temperance and charity from here, which made me a better human being.

I had learned one important lesson over these years, that being part of a matured Catholic fellowship was important to keep growing in faith. As the Scripture says, *Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together ... but encouraging one another...* (Hebrews 10:24,25). God was gracious enough to use this naïve Catholic to start a few Jesus Youth prayer groups in different parts of Kerala, which helped me personally to grow in my faith and as well as share my newly found to many youth and it is a great joy to see many grow up as leaders in the movement today.

During the initial days of my encounter with the Lord, I happened to read about Francis of Assisi and Clare which gave me a deep desire to serve God. *You, Lord, know every one of my deepest desires* (Psalm 38:9). The Lord respects even your smallest desires and his response to mine was my call to Santvana Community of Disciples, to serve him as a lay missionary family. I did not even understand what it meant to be a lay missionary, how a missionary worked nor had I personally met a missionary family in my life, when I got this call. But God gave me the grace to respond positively, without worrying about the future. Even when people told us it was foolish to leave our jobs and become volunteers in mission, the Lord was faithful to us all these 18 years. He not only took care of all our material needs but also blessed us abundantly with joy and peace which surpasses all understanding. *...the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...* (Deuteronomy 7:9)

In November 2004 I landed in Delhi, the capital city of our country with Naveen, as newlyweds, our honeymoon was the cultural exchange programme. We got back-to-back transfers to Agra, Ranchi and Delhi³. Being a novice to mission, the Lord, through the community and a few other missionaries, taught us what it was to be a missionary. To walk along with those entrusted in your mission – not ahead or behind, to respect their culture, to love their language and food, to entrust responsibilities, to build native leadership and to finally accept the destiny of your



people as your destiny, are a few lessons learned; still in the process of learning to be a missionary.

The Lord in his mercy used us in his vineyard to form youth and catechists in different parts of India. We could also serve the Jesus Youth in the Hindi-speaking belt. All in all, there are just a couple of states where we have not had the opportunity to work these 18 years.

After eleven years of marriage and being in North Indian mission, God gave both of us (Naveen and me) an opportunity to do our Masters in Theology of Family and Marriage, with our five children. During this study we were introduced to the treasures of the Catholic Church, especially on family and marriage which transformed us as persons and family.

It amazed us to know that the Church teaches and has answers to all problems pertaining to life. After all these years of spiritual journey I did not know about the significance of the Magisterium and its teachings. The course opened our eyes towards the time-tested wisdom of the Catholic Church, which is more than 2000-years-old. Now I spend a lot of time reading and understanding these teachings rather than speculating on answers in my personal capacity on any topic.

During the course we were introduced to Church History and the teachings of the early Church Fathers. I am sure that if any one goes through the history of the Church, they cannot but be convinced about the authenticity of the Catholic Church.

I feel unworthy of the greatness of the riches of the Holy Catholic Church. *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God* (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). I am really grateful to Father God, to Jesus Christ, his Son, and to the Holy Spirit, the helper, who out of mercy called me to the Catholic Church!

^{1,2} Kollam and Kottiyam are cities in Kerala, India

³ Agra, Ranchi and Delhi are cities in North India



Jini Lobo and her husband, Naveen work as lay missionaries in Santvana Community of Disciples and presently reside in Mysore, India. They have six children who are home-schooled. Jini is presently part of the Karnataka JY Formation team.

WHY I LOVE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CALL TO ENGAGE ACTIVELY, ENDLESSLY WITH GOD

As a Cradle Catholic, much of my life was spent immersed in Catholic culture, surrounded by Catholic tradition, and taught the Catholic faith. However, it wasn't until university and my journey with the Jesus Youth movement that I really began to understand the richness of the Catholic Church. Over the years, I have come to discover and appreciate the inherent beauty of the Church. While there are many reasons to fall in love with the Church, the saints, the sacraments, and the social teachings of the Church played a role in shaping my relationship with the faith.

Many of my most powerful encounters with Christ were facilitated by various saints. From a very young age, they played a critical role in my faith formation. Mamma Mary was and remains my favourite. She has been a mother

to me throughout my life. I never fail to find comfort under the protection of her blue mantle and long for her gentle embrace in all the difficult moments of my life. She has helped me understand and believe that her Son is good, gentle and loves me with an everlasting love. St Teresa of Calcutta has taught me what it means to trust and surrender, and to allow God to work through me. During my high school years, she inspired one of my favourite prayers – 'to radiate Christ's light into the world'. St Monica has taught me about the power of praying for our loved ones and that sainthood is not a call for just the 'St Pauls and St Peters' of the world. St Therese of Lisieux has been to me a kindred spirit and dear friend. St Joseph is the quiet, gentle, foster father who never fails to calm my anxious heart and guard my family in his quiet, meditative manner. Each of the saints has taught me something different. They have interceded for me in

different ways during different seasons of my life. They are similar in that they have all contributed to one common life lesson – that holiness looks different for each of us but is a call we are all invited to answer. The saints are one of the greatest blessings given to us by the Catholic Church and one of my favourite reasons to love the Church.

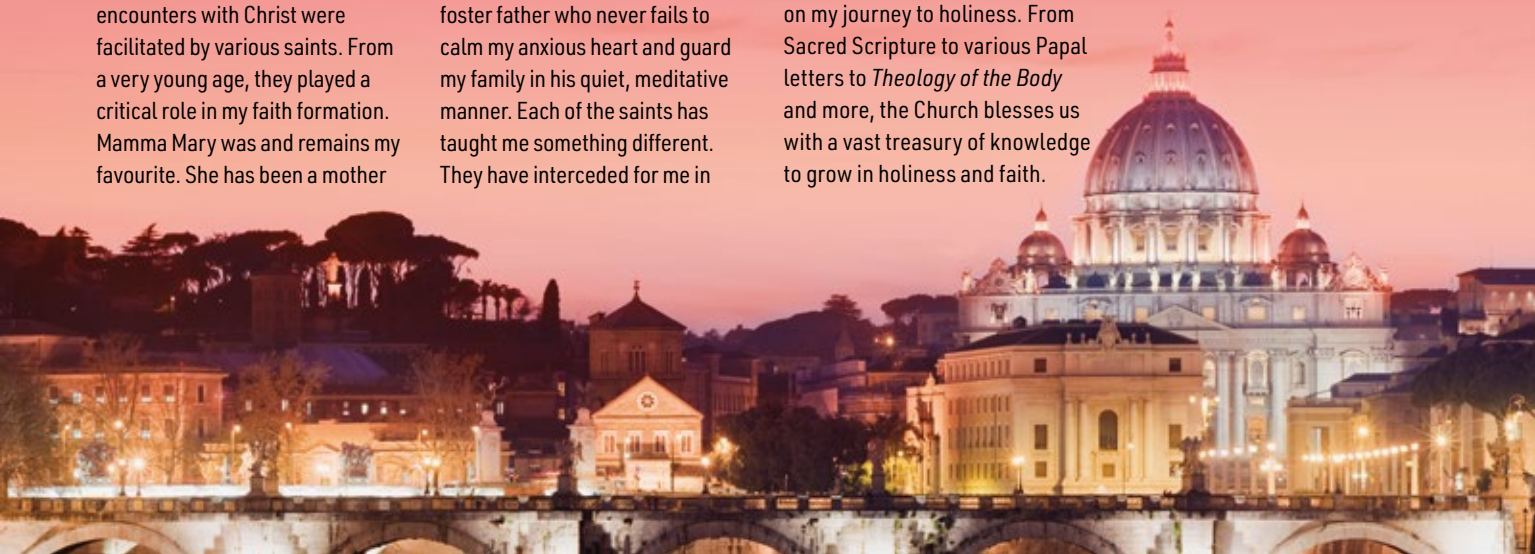
The Church also gifts us with the sacraments. Last year during an especially difficult season in my faith, I was blessed with the unexpected opportunity to spend an evening in adoration, attend Holy Mass, and the sacrament of Reconciliation. That evening, I was reminded in more ways than one, that the path of discipleship is challenging. Fortunately, God has given us the sacraments as a source of strength, guidance, and healing to help us along the way. We need not do this alone. The Lord humbles himself in the Eucharist at every Mass, he heals us through reconciliation and penance, and actively guides and supports us in our vocations. As Catholics, the sacraments play an integral role in our lives, and rightfully so! I personally could not imagine my life without the sacraments.

Finally, the teachings of the Church – two thousand years of wisdom and knowledge to reference when seeking support on my journey to holiness. From Sacred Scripture to various Papal letters to *Theology of the Body* and more, the Church blesses us with a vast treasury of knowledge to grow in holiness and faith.

The teachings of the Church are not random but inspired by the Spirit. They offer the faithful an opportunity to dive deeper into the powerful realities of our lives and our faith. Anytime I sit down to understand one of the teachings in greater depth, I'm blown away by the wisdom I'm faced with. Additionally, I love that the Church acknowledges that not everything is meant to be understood completely – the Church realises that certain aspects of our faith are beyond comprehension and are best kept as 'mysteries' to ponder and reflect upon.

For me, what makes the Catholic Church different from any other denomination is that our faith is defined by God's active and continuous involvement in the lives of his people. He acts through the Holy Spirit in the wisdom of Catholic teaching, he allows us to encounter and experience His Love in the various sacraments, and he provides us with innumerable examples of faithful disciples to inspire and intercede for us on our own journey to His Kingdom. The Church in her wisdom recognises this and allows itself to not only experience God's love, mercy and grace, but also to engage actively with God in endless ways.

DEEPA JOSEPH, MANITOBA, CANADA



EVER NURTURING MOTHER

Almost hundred days into the lockdown, I remember completing the ascent to Mont Royal and squinting at the closed wooden doors of St. Joseph's Oratory. It had been almost 100 days without receiving the Holy Eucharist, and never had things felt so desolate before. It was a time of intense longing, retrospection, and renewed promises. As I stood before one of the magnificent physical representations of Mother Church, I could only think back to the times when I had been so forgetful, cold, and ungrateful to the greatest gift that God had given me – the Catholic Church. I remember gazing at those closed doors, begging for forgiveness and mercy and a humble request to open the door to His altar once again and allow me to be a physical participant in the greatest sacrifice of all time.

One of the worst side effects of Covid-19 was breathlessness. Breathing comes so naturally and effortlessly to all of us, that after our first breath, we usually forget about the life-giving oxygen that surrounds us. Covid brought back our focus on the primary thing that sustains us and is available so easily and readily to us – oxygen. Similarly, though invisible, grace nourishes us, sustains us, and constantly builds us up. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 'The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us'. The Church, being the Body of Christ, freely, yet through great sacrifices and struggle, executes this great task entrusted by Christ. The Church constantly surrounds you, right from your conception with these sources of grace and protects you from the snares of the evil one. I love my Mother Catholic Church because she continuously provides my soul – sustaining, eternal life-giving grace through the sacraments. Being born into the Catholic Church, we have been privileged to be continuously enriched through the sacraments.

Being washed of sins, marked with the indelible seal of Christ, we share in the communion with all Christians through baptism. Through sacraments, we become partakers of the body of Christ, confirm our faith, constantly reconcile, and renew ourselves, be blessed to lead our vocation and



unite our sufferings with Christ. What more can any child ask for but to be always present in the bosom of her loving mother.

In May 2020, I remember taking the decision to attend the Holy Mass daily when lockdown began, and the churches were shut down. When the lockdown was temporarily relaxed, God gave the grace to attend Holy Mass regularly for months. Once, I suddenly fell sick and was worried if I had been infected. I decided not to go for the Holy Mass to avoid any possible spread. During those four days, while I was awaiting the result, I realised how petty, anxious, and worried I was over trivial things. The people, situation and surroundings were the same as before, but now, I found myself angrier and not having control over myself. I was instantly reminded of how often this was the case on days when I did not receive the Holy Eucharist. Eucharist helps fight the weaknesses of the human spirit and fills us with the Holy Spirit, forming Christ within us. When the sacrifice is made on the altar, we too, as members of the body of Christ, should join ourselves completely as

a sacrifice. Eucharist, administered through the Catholic Church, makes me partaker of divinity, and allows me to stay in the world yet, not be a part of the world. It leads us to being repentant sinners and attain higher degrees of sanctity. The Eucharist being the Body and Blood of Christ, and food for the soul is only provided through the Church. Thus, the Church through the guidance of the Spirit, helps me to love the Lord more and more and turn into him completely.

As a child, it is my responsibility to love and serve my Mother Church with my entire being. It means standing up for the teachings of the Church and the Pope, keeping aside individualism, divisive ideologies and being one spirit, mind, and soul in Christ, loving and serving one another. Let us pray unceasingly for the healing of all the wounds in the body, to refresh and renew the Spirit constantly, to be armed against assaults of the evil one and share in the glory of God till eternity.

BLESSY VARGHESE, MONTREAL, CANADA

THE PROMISE OF HEAVEN

It is not easy to love the Catholic Church! Well, at least that was what I thought growing up. As years passed by and I progressed in my turtle-paced growth in spirituality, I learnt to unravel the beauty of the mighty Church I was part of and I could not stop thinking about the countless reasons I encountered, that magnified the love I felt towards our Church.

While my list could go endless, I'm going to ponder on one aspect that has been a pivotal reason for my gradually increasing love – the promise of heaven. I remember as a child, how our catechism teachers painted pictures of a castle set amidst the cotton clouds, with a golden door and cute little angels dressed in white, flying around. My concept of heaven was such a beautiful painting!

Growing into my teenage

years, I came to realise that heaven was probably not what I'd pictured it to be but a place where I would find happiness. Probably a meeting place of everyone I knew, who had passed away after having lived good lives on earth. Took quite a while for me to then grow into an understanding that being in heaven is a state of ourselves. A state which fulfils the innermost longings of my heart, as I live to be united in perfect harmony with the most Holy Trinity. Simply put, to be one in Christ. To be perpetually reminded that whatever I experience on earth is just fleeting and what awaits me after my brief tenure here, fills me with hope and a renewed spirit to live my life in accordance with the teachings of the Church.

What would man be, if not for principles to follow and certainty of destination? And while the Church does its best to explain in layman terms what heaven



would feel like, reinstating the tangibility of our faith and the Lord in our lives, the Church also maintains the depth of the unfathomable mystery reiterating the Lord's transcendence. The Church also speaks about how blessed, glorious, honoured and joyful one must be, to be granted

an experience of the same. And I for certain, would want to experience that. If that doesn't inspire me to lead a better life, I'm going to try and think what will. I'm pretty sure I will never get an answer to that.

ANGELA THOMAS, DUBAI, UAE



HOUSE OF JOY

I still remember the days I went to church holding the hands of my grandfather. A beautiful tradition passed on from generation to generation, the Church today. But I lost this grace when I grew up. Being part of a government residential school, I lost this treasure. Later I had a great encounter with my creator which brought me back to life. I now enjoy life being part of this big family.

Pope Francis says, 'Church is not the refuge for sad people. The church is a house of joy'. The energy and enthusiasm of the Catholic Church is what I love. The privilege of being part of a great family, called to live the sainthood. No matter what persecution, no matter what criticism, together the Church stands for truth, following Christ the Saviour. There are many joyful young hearts that beat for Jesus, who lived the life of love.

The joy I receive after participating in Holy Mass is immense, the comfort I receive after every confession is great. There's nothing that leaves you in bondage, everything has a solution in the Church. Sins are nothing compared to the graces you receive from the Church. As Saint Catherine of Siena says, what a marvellous thing. That even while we are in darkness we should know light, that in finite things, we should know infinite. That even while we exist in death, we should know life. What else should stop you from being a joyful Catholic?

MALU JONES, NEW ZEALAND

RICH IN TRADITION

When we have a question, we normally tend to search the internet. But there is a lot of fake news, a lot of lies and a lot of deception. We want to know the truth, and so we look for reputable websites, those which carry a sense of authority. The same applies with our faith. The Catholic Church has three sources of authority. Scripture, the Word of God; the Magisterium, teaching authority of the Pope and bishops of the Church and Apostolic Tradition, the teachings of Christ handed down through his apostles and their successors. These sources are inter-dependent and cannot be separated. But this is exactly what our modern world is knowingly or unknowingly trying to do.

In a time of cancel culture, it seems very naïve for young people to cling to their Catholic culture and say that their tradition is part of their identity and a source of authority. But why is it that there are growing numbers of young people all over the world who are choosing to return to the Catholic Church, when the generation before them chose to reject it? Why is it that young people today know their Catechism and the Bible better than the generation before them? Why is it that many young people are choosing to study the Tradition of the Church at University and get degrees in theology, philosophy and Scripture? It is a search for the truth and authority. We see that the Scriptures, the Word of God are the truth. We can see that the teachings of the Church help us to live out this truth, and that its tradition helps us to hold onto the truth and persevere in the truth.

The Catholic Church has a very rich tradition which spans 2000 years and has grown in



almost every country in the world. What makes the tradition of the Church different from others is that it is ALIVE. It is alive since it is rooted in the living Word of God. Because it is alive, it grows and it moves as it is guided by the Holy Spirit. Because of this the Church's tradition is new for each successive generation, while remaining faithful to its past. It is like the growth cycle of a seed which sprouts, matures and bears new seeds which must die before they can sprout again.

At the core of the tradition of the Church is the liturgy. The word liturgy originally meant 'work done on behalf of the people.' The Catechism describes liturgy as 'a participation in Christ's own prayer' and 'the work of Christ.' Our tradition also tells us that through liturgy, the people themselves can participate in the work of God. This is why it is important to have good liturgy which is beautiful

and well prepared. Some of the preparation is done for us by the Church, the order of readings in the lectionary and the order of prayers in the missal. But each parish works hard to have a beautifully decorated church, and choirs spend hours practicing the hymns for Mass, that it may help the parishioners encounter Christ.

Our tradition doesn't just have these big themes, we also have many small things to help us participate in this liturgy. Each time we bless ourselves with holy water or genuflect to our Lord in the tabernacle, we express our faith externally. This small act of cooperation with the grace of God, invites the Holy Spirit to teach us through the liturgical tradition handed down to us. All these small acts of faith act like small paths which lead us to the top of the mountain. And at the summit, we have the Eucharist. This is most apparent at the Sunday Mass, which is at the

heart of every parish community. It is when they gather as a community, to be led by the priest in the prayer of Christ.

So the next time that you go to Mass on a Sunday, prepare yourself, so you can be elevated by the tradition of the Church. Read the readings of the day in preparation, go to church early and pray so that when Mass begins, you are able to be taught by the Holy Spirit. Pay attention to the prayers said by the priest, or follow them in your personal missal. Think about why you bow to the altar and bend your knee to the tabernacle. All these traditions are what prepare us for the heavenly liturgy where we will be with all the saints. This is why I love the liturgy and the traditions of the Catholic Church.

FR. BENEDICT D'SOUZA SM,
CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

BUILT AND BLESSED

My name is Karuhanga Martin a Jesus Youth in Uganda, from a small district in the western region called Ntungamo. I'm the last born of nine children. I am married to my beautiful wife, Sheila and we have a daughter, Ariana. My life has been blessed ever since I took a decision to follow Jesus Christ with the formation of the Jesus Youth community.

I was introduced to the movement in my second year at college, by a joyful and vibrant gentleman, Moses, who was partaking a three-year full-time mission with his family in Uganda. His warm smile, cheerful singing and a spirit of togetherness drew me, wanting to know more about his passion for Christ. I attending a Discipleship Training Programme in 2014, which urged me to take serious decisions about my faith: volunteer actively in the movement, pray the Rosary daily, join a cell group and plan to get married. The

volunteer time I spent formed and moulded me to trust and selflessly open my hand to all the needy. I learnt to willingly offer my time, whenever called for formation.

I met Sheila during my final year in 2015, dated for four years and got married in December 2018, during which we also attended formation programmes organised by the Jesus Youth Uganda. One formation programme we attended was the cell retreat in 2018 that broadened our understanding of family ministry. A family is nothing without God in the midst. We learnt about family morals, dangers of abortion; choosing a life partner is a decision we make with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The three days we spent in the retreat helped me love and cherish Sheila more with a focus on her good qualities that even today is thank God for.

The guidance and constant communication with my cellmates, animators also assisted me take a decision to get married in 2018. Together with Sheila, we also met a joyful

family, Wilma and Anthony from the UAE during a gathering of the GCC countries, who shared their family testimony that sparked the love of the Catholic faith in Sheila. This was her join home to the Catholic faith and she was welcomed to the Church in November 2018. We have been blessed ever since, i.e. beautiful baby girl, Ariana added to the family, stable employment, focused life, joy and peace. I'm currently volunteering as a member of the JY National Team Uganda, a role I carry out selflessly with much love to serve my brothers and sisters. This has helped to practice the six pillars in my life, such as attend daily evening Mass on Radio Maria Uganda, recite a daily morning Rosary, have a confession once in a month, appreciate the good in others and strive for holiness each day. I'm forever grateful to God for opportunity to serve the Catholic Church that I love and am proudly a part of.

KARUHANGA MARTIN, UGANDA

WHAT NOT TO LOVE ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

That's right, you heard it; I am talking about why I love the Catholic Church! This may come as a big surprise since the world has a lot of negative things to say about the Church and what it stands for. Despite what you hear, there are innumerable reasons to love the Church and below are just to name a few.

It is the True Church founded by Christ himself

There are many Christian denominations and hardly any of them can trace their origins to Christ and his apostles except for the Roman Catholic Church and some of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Catholic Church proudly professes its foundation in Christ according to its tradition and so its origin is divine from God himself. Hence, I am convinced it is the True Church and there are no substitutes to look for beside it. So if you find yourself in the Catholic Church, you're on board the right ship.

It is a visible and tangible sign of an invisible God

For those of you familiar with your catechism, you know what I am going to say. Yes, it is the sacraments which provide those visible and tangible signs of an invisible God. The Church through the sacraments is where we can meet and experience our Lord Jesus Christ, namely in the Eucharist where we consume and unite ourselves to his body, as well as the sacrament of reconciliation where we can experience his love and mercy. Equally important are the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, holy orders and anointing of the sick. After truly partaking in the sacraments in the manner intended, I hardly doubt anyone can say they have not encountered and experienced God.

Its massive impact in the history of mankind

While a lot of people find history boring, I am fascinated about it. I believe history provides valuable lessons and helps us understand how mankind got to where we are today. Throughout its 2000-year history, the Catholic Church has left its mark on almost every century since its founding till today, outlasting kingdoms & empires (some of which wanted to destroy it) and influencing philosophy, culture, art, music, and science.

In the area of science, in 1927 a Catholic priest named Georges Lemaître propounded the Big Bang theory. In art, Michelangelo, a devout Catholic whose works endure in the Vatican City, like St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel have inspired thousands of artists. These to just name a few of the amazing contributions the Catholic Church has made through its members in society in history.

A place where saints are made

The Church is a place where saints are born and made. The saints have provided me and countless people around the world, role models in our journey in imitating Christ and knowing him in a more intimate manner. Their life stories, teachings and insights have impacted many who are seeking the beautiful relationship God desires with every human being. Saints like Sr. Faustina, John Bosco & John Paul II to name a few are some of the saints I consider role models in my life.

The list is not exhaustive and hopefully each of you will have your own points to add to it. I am sure you will because the Catholic Church is just too awesome!

MELDON AGUSTO AZAVEDO, SHARJAH, UAE

FAMILIA

A MIRACLE
CALLED
Ezek



Christin and Aza share the miracle of how their baby was born.

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him (Psalm 127:3)

We are Christin John and Aza Mathew, a normal couple who love to treasure every moment spent together. We hail from Wayanad, a beautiful district in Kerala, India. Christin works as a Quality Engineering assistant and I work as a UX/UI Designer. We are currently based in Singapore and our marriage journey began on 27 April 2019. I have known Christin for the past eleven years and ours was an arranged-love-marriage. Mr. C was 26 and I was 23-years-old when we got married. That's a little about us, now let me take you through our miracle journey with God.

I suffer from PCOS (Polycystic ovary syndrome), an endocrine disorder that affects five to twenty percent of women worldwide. I also have a subseptate uterus – a uterine abnormality where a wall of tissue runs vertically up and down the middle of the uterus, separating it into two cavities. One percent of all women have this uterine malformation. I had consulted a doctor in Kerala before marriage to know if I had to take any medication beforehand. The doctor told me that though conception was possible with PCOS, I would have to wait at least for four years. But as I also had a subseptate uterus, I was likely to have difficulties conceiving. And that women with this condition would go through a series of miscarriages; first, when the mother is two months pregnant, second at four months, third at six months. By then the size of the uterus would be big enough for the fourth baby to survive. There was an increased risk of preterm birth as well. The baby would lie in an awkward position as there would not be enough space inside the uterus to rotate and bring his/her head down for a natural birth. As the baby would be in breech position, the mother would have to go through a Caesarean section.

Six months after our marriage, we were blessed to be able to attend the Christmas Mass by Pope Francis at the Vatican. God had planned it that way for us. We also could go to Mr. C's favourite saint, St. Antony's

shrine at Padua. We placed our hands on my stomach and asked God to bless us with a healthy baby. Back in Singapore in January 2020, we attended an annual retreat by Fr. Daniel Poovannathil. We told Father about my health issues; he blessed us and asked us not to worry.

We had not tried for a baby as yet as we weren't ready. After asking God and preparing ourselves through prayer we started hoping for a baby from January 2020. We told Jesus that we were waiting for a baby and asked God to prepare my womb. Even though medical science considered my conceiving difficult, we knew everything was possible with God. We started getting pregnancy detection kits in February. I would say that it was the most anxious time ever. No, we didn't get a positive result. I never got my periods in February because of which we never tested in March.

Maundy Thursday was approaching on April 9th – our first Maundy Thursday after marriage. I was busy with all the household chores. We were planning a celebration for Easter. I somehow felt that I had to take a test that day, but didn't have a test kit with me. When

I asked him, Christin suggested that we take it the next day. But I had an assured feeling so Christin got the test kit for me and I tested. I never did see the so-called two lines we had been waiting for, the past two months. We were a bit disappointed. A few minutes later, I took the same test kit to the window. There, I saw a very faint line. I couldn't believe my eyes! I screamed out and Christin came running to see. Tears rolled out of our eyes. We believed that God had placed our baby in our womb. We couldn't thank God enough.

We walked up to Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Joseph gave thanks and asked them to take care of us three. Something very difficult had just happened!

We went to a clinic nearby and the doctor told us that the baby was implanted to the left uterine wall, which was a happy thing for us. He explained that usually in similar cases, chances of the baby getting implanted to the wall in the middle of the uterus were high. Unable to get enough nutrients from the wall, the baby would not be able to survive. But in our case things were positive. We were one month pregnant then.

On April 28th I observed very light bleeding and we approached the doctor. He gave me hormone tablets and asked me to rest. Days passed by. I was working from home then and Christin was at work. On May 13th, while I was cooking I felt fluid gushing out of my body. It was blood. Being alone at home I rang Christin and asked him to come immediately



but as the bleeding was heavy, I decided to walk to the hospital nearby. Suddenly I felt something sizable passing out of my body. I started bleeding even more. Blood was falling through my legs and onto the floor. I couldn't manage and turned back home to check what was happening. I saw a very large piece of flesh. I held it in my hand and cried loudly. I knew it was my baby and I was heartbroken. Christin reached home by then and when I saw him I hugged and told him that our baby was no more. He was shocked to see me bleeding heavily. He had seen blood stains on the way while coming home and tried to console me as we rushed to the hospital. The time spent waiting to meet the doctor was the most heart-wrenching time. When we showed him the photo of the piece that had come out, he was almost sure that the baby was no more. But he insisted that we do a scan. With racing hearts, we consented. As he scanned, he said, 'I can hear the heartbeat. The baby is fine.' That moment was priceless!

We were two months pregnant by then. The doctor didn't know what went wrong. It was a miracle we witnessed that day. I still had light bleeding for a few days and was on medication. But we prayed a lot and our family Rosary was very special. We always prayed the Joyful Mysteries and offered each decade for a healthy baby, safe delivery and full-term pregnancy. We prayed for pregnant mothers everywhere and for our baby's baptism. We offered his organs to God and asked him to purify them. We knew that everything we did would affect our baby too and were very mindful about that. We were so much in love and we prayed that the same love would fill our baby as well. Our expected date of delivery, if the baby survived till full-term, was December 16. But we began to pray and ask God to give us our baby on December 8th, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. We prayed the Angel's Army's 'leaflet for mother' prayer every day. We also prayed St. Gerard Majella's novena everyday as he is the patron of expectant mothers.

At three months, the doctor asked us to take the test for Down syndrome. We never took the test as we believed that if God had given us a baby that baby was going to be healthy. If there were any issues we had seven months left to ask for healing. We kept praying as the baby grew. This was the time when miscarriages could happen. Both of us clung to the Rosary and we became closer to God during those days.

At five months, it was time for our anomaly scan. By then we could feel very gentle kicks. The happiness we feel when we experience the baby moving is immense. We always used to play the song, *Mary did you know* for the baby. Whenever we played the song the baby would move. I started learning Bible verses for the baby and started reciting it over and over again. One of my friends asked me to keep reciting Isaiah 66:9. *Shall I open the womb and not bring to birth? says Yahweh. Shall I, who bring to birth, close the womb? says*



your God. When we went for each check-up we sought prayer support from our Jesus Youth family. That was when we understood how precious each prayer was. When we knew somebody was praying for us, we were more confident too. Seeing our anomaly scan report, the doctor insisted we go for a Down syndrome test. He said that there was a dilation of the baby's kidney, a sign of Down syndrome. Also a small cyst was found in the right portion of my uterus. He told us that the baby would have to be delivered prematurely through C-section at six months and we were to be prepared for that. He also said that a portion of the placenta was sticking to the wall dividing the uterus, which could cause heavy bleeding when the placenta was removed. We were upset hearing all this. But we offered this to God. We thought that if God could place a baby in a uterus like mine, he would take care of the rest. But we were adamant that we would not take the Down syndrome test.

We prayed and asked God to help us make a decision. We were not comfortable with this doctor and his lack of confidence to handle our case. So we decided to seek a second opinion but here too we faced a hurdle – no doctor would attend a patient who had crossed five months. A friend of mine suggested we meet the doctor she was consulting in another hospital and we managed to get an appointment. But for some reason we still don't know, we never met that doctor. We came to know of another doctor who specialised in complicated cases and even though we were doubtful if he would see us so late in the pregnancy, we decided to try. Through a nurse friend there, we were able to get an appointment and meet the doctor. We still believe

*We say to all the beautiful couples
who are waiting for their miracle, God
needs no time to perform wonders.
You just need his grace. When couples
stay together in prayer, love and
difficulties, nothing can let you down.*

.....



this was all God's plan.

Our new doctor was very positive and straightforward. He gave me vaginal suppositories to strengthen my uterus and to prevent preterm delivery. We offered him in prayer as well so that God would help him to make the right decision at the right time.

The contract of our house was also coming to a close. We had been planning to move to a house closer to Christin's workplace, so that he could reach home soon in an emergency. We started our house hunt and finally God gifted us with a house which had everything we needed. It was just ten minutes away from Christin's office. The most important thing was that we had a church nearby.

Around this time, with the Covid situation and thinking that it would be difficult for us to manage alone, our family began to ask me to travel home. The best decision I took was to stay with Christin. I still cherish the happy times we had together when we were pregnant. Had I gone home, I would have missed all his pampering, our precious prayer time, the food he cooked for me and our outings. I have not gone for a single check-up without him. That was when we understood how important the presence of a father is for a baby in the womb. We knew that things were going to be expensive here in Singapore but decided to stay together and asked God to take control. We realised the meaning of the phrase, 'We are pregnant'. Both of us went through all the difficult and happy moments together. All praise to God!

We were seven months pregnant, had our scan and the baby was surviving. The doctor asked me not to walk for more than ten minutes a day as my uterus was weak. I had been working from home then but had



To all our friends who are scared to have children thinking about their financial stability. From experience I can say that God will provide.

begun to experience work pressure all of a sudden. My boss was not happy with my pregnancy. They knew about my complications and asked if I could move to a part-time arrangement with half the salary. When we thought it over, we felt that I would still be doing a full-time employee's job as we had people in our team working in different time zones. But they would pay me less. We prayed and made a decision. We knew how important our baby was for us and we didn't want this stress to affect our baby. We were sure that God who took care of us so far would provide me a job later. And I resigned from my job in October.

We are so blessed to have friends in JY who are

more than family to us. When I dreamt of having something they would bring it for me. Back home in Kerala, there is a custom where, at the seventh month of pregnancy, the lady's family brings her a host of sweets and savouries. We had friends in JY who brought them for us, wishing us not to miss all that. We know for sure that nobody would do all this so selflessly, expecting nothing in return.

We were eight months pregnant and the baby was surviving in my uterus without any issues. The doctor said that the baby was not moving around as there was not enough space and if the baby did not turn head down, I would have to have a C-section. From



the day I resigned my job we would go for Mass every day and get blessings from the priest. We believed that when I received Holy Communion the baby was also receiving it. Everyone at church would notice me with this big belly and they would bless me. One evening after Mass, I met a lady I had never seen before. She told me that she felt Mother Mary prompting her to say this to me. She asked me to pray 'Hail Mary' while I'm inhaling and exhaling during delivery and hold on to the Rosary. She also asked me to pray for the baby to move its head down. She said that God might be ready to give a blessing and that I shouldn't miss it because I didn't ask for it. This moved us so much. We prayed for it and kept what she told us in mind. She also gave me holy water from Naju, Korea. We applied that on my stomach and prayed to Mother Mary for healing.

We were nine months pregnant and our baby was surviving in my uterus without any issues. The head was still up. The Covid restrictions were tightening and nobody could travel down to Singapore. My mother was ready to come over to help me out but the government was not providing visas to foreigners. We prayed and asked for prayer support from whomever we knew. Family, friends and JY family prayed hard for us. Miraculously my mother got her visa approved. We were overjoyed and thanked God for the next miracle he took us through. She arrived here on November 13th and had to be in hotel quarantine for 14 days. We were so excited and we took her to all the places here in Singapore. I walked more during my pregnancy than before. We were so excited that Christmas was also coming up. We never knew when the baby was going to arrive so we finished the Christmas shopping early and set our house to welcome Baby Jesus and our baby. We set up the crib and Christmas tree together. I was super active during those days.

My due date was approaching and I went for my scan by November end. There our next miracle was waiting. The doctor told us that the baby's head was still up and we would have to go through a C-section. He asked us if we were okay to have the C-section on December 8, 2020. We were shocked. This was what we prayed for. That was when we knew God answers every prayer however small it was. We said yes.

One evening, Christin came home after work with a surprise for me. He handed me a letter. I was shocked. Covid had hit most of the companies very badly and many employees were going through salary cuts. Some of them lost their jobs too. That was when Christin got a bonus from his company – the exact amount we had to pay at the hospital. *To all our friends who are scared to have children thinking about their financial stability. From experience I can say that God will provide.* We say to all the beautiful couples who are waiting for their miracle, God needs no time to perform wonders. You just need his grace. When couples stay together in

prayer, love and difficulties, nothing can let you down.

It was December 7th. We attended Holy Mass together and the best part is that we could attend confession as well. We understood how important it is to attend confession and purify our mind. We got special blessings from the priest that evening. Father told us that he had not blessed anybody like this before. We were so happy that we were going to meet our miracle the next day. My mom was so shocked to see our energy the day before delivery. I was super excited. I was going to miss my pregnancy belly. I wanted to take more and more photographs to show our little one. It was 3 am in the morning when we finished taking photos. I couldn't sleep at all out of excitement. It was already the 8th of December and we had been asked to be at the hospital by 6:45 am.

We reached the hospital by 6:30. Due to Covid restrictions my mom had to wait outside. We got blessings from my Mom, family and we went in. I had a wrist Rosary with me. We were so excited and you won't believe it, we just forgot about the delivery complications. I got dressed up for the C-section. They checked one last time if the baby had turned his head down. Baby's head was still up. Christin was waiting outside and I went in to meet the anaesthetist for counselling. They then took me to the operation theatre. I held on to my rosary and started praying Hail Mary continuously as they gave me an epidural. They made me lie down and prepared for the C-section. Doctor came in and was getting ready. Finally it was time and Christin was allowed to come in. I held tight to his arms. Both of us started praying Hail Mary together. When the doctor started the C-section, I could feel the cut and I could also see what they were doing through the reflection on the lights above. Suddenly after many pushes and pulls our Doc lifted up the baby. He said, 'Aza, it's a boy'. Then we heard him cry. Tears were rolling out of our eyes. They put the baby on my chest and we kissed him. We whispered prayers to his ears. The doctor then came to us and told us that both of us were safe. He told us that we had survived a serious situation as there were chances for heavy bleeding, and that he didn't let us know, not wanting us to panic. Our pregnancy journey ended there. All praise to the highest.

We named him Ezek Christin. He weighed 3.3 kg. He was supposed to be born at six months and was supposed to be in the NICU for three. In a country where hospitals usually charge \$2000 (approx Rupees 1 lakh) per day for a premature baby's NICU stay – an expense that would've been difficult for us – God took us through 38 weeks, 9.5 months. God blessed us with a healthy baby, safe delivery and full-term pregnancy.

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).

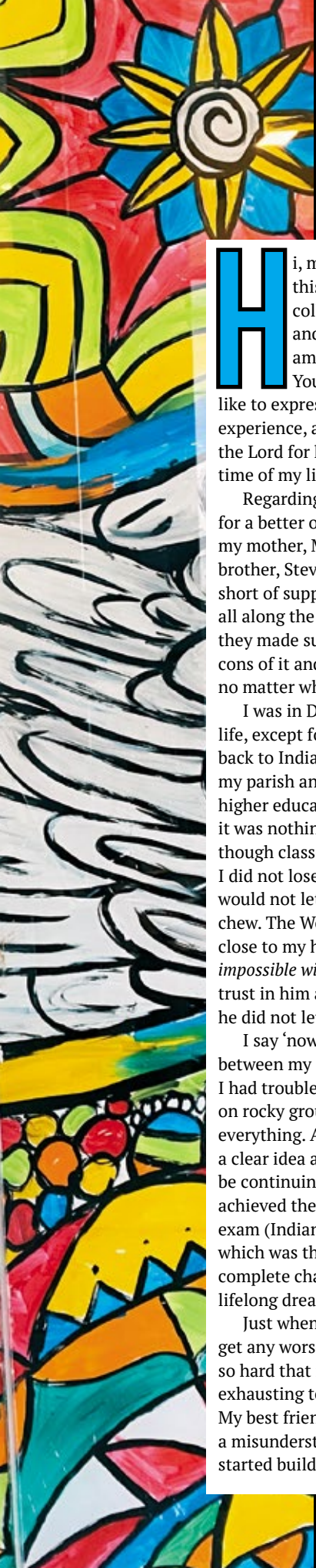


TEEN TALK

TRUSTING IN BETTER PLANS

Dubai teenager, **Tanya Densil** talks about events in her life that led her down a dark void and how her regained faith helped her emerge.





Hi, my name is Tanya Densil and this is my testimony. I am now a college student at RAK Medical and Health Sciences University. I am 18 years old and I joined Jesus Youth when I was 13. First, I would like to express how grateful I am to share my experience, and to express my gratitude to the Lord for helping me during this testing time of my life.

Regarding my family, I could never ask for a better one. My father, Densil Vincent, my mother, Mini Densil, and my older brother, Steve Densil have been nothing short of supportive and they have helped me all along the way. Whatever decision I made, they made sure I was aware of the pros and cons of it and they made sure to support me no matter what.

I was in Dubai for the majority of my life, except for the few years when I went back to India. I was also an altar server in my parish and would attend Mass daily. My higher education was done in Dubai and it was nothing short of a challenge. Even though classes were challenging at the time, I did not lose faith and knew that the Lord would not let me bite off more than I could chew. The Word of God which I always held close to my heart was Luke 1:37 *nothing is impossible with God*, which made me put my trust in him and I can say proudly now that he did not let me down.

I say 'now' because there was a time – between my 12th grade and college – when I had trouble with my faith. My faith was on rocky ground and I kept questioning everything. Additionally, I did not have a clear idea as to what or where I would be continuing my education. Having not achieved the expected result in the NEET exam (Indian medical entrance exams) which was the last nail in the coffin, it was complete chaos after, as it had been my lifelong dream to be a paediatrician.

Just when I thought that things could not get any worse, what happened next hit me so hard that it was physically and mentally exhausting to just get through the days. My best friend of six years and I got into a misunderstanding and a lot of tension started building up between us. Nothing

prepared me for what was coming next – she made the decision to cut me off from her life, this was the last straw.

Losing my best friend was one of the most traumatic things to have ever happened to me. It caused me an unbelievable amount of emotional stress and my mental and physical health started deteriorating to a great extent. With all that was taking place in my life the pandemic did not help, to say the least. Though I am grateful that the Lord shielded my family from the virus, the lockdowns and the constant isolation pushed me into a dark hole that I was not ready for.

During my time in India I made a new friend, she was not Christian but believed in Jesus Christ; seeing her being so faithful despite not being Christian inspired me to regain my faith. Once I came back to Dubai we started attending Mass regularly, this helped me practice my faith and it was therapeutic at the same time.

Although I was questioning everything at one point, my family and friends never gave up on me. They still believed I had what it took to get into a medical college, and not just any college – a college of my choosing. They never made me question myself and always made sure I knew that they were still behind me, ready to support me at every step.

Through all the difficult times in my life, my family constantly reminded me that everything happens for a reason and God has a plan for me. My parents were continuously on their knees praying for me without losing their hope and trust in the Lord. It was so much easier for me to go through what I went through knowing that I had that prayer support with me. While going through the rocky road with my faith, it was very difficult to believe in what my family was trying to tell me. After writing NEET I came back to Dubai as I decided to take a year off to figure out what I had to do next. Once I started regaining my trust in God, I was finally able to see the path he had laid out for me. I got my driver's license on my first try (which is a difficult task in Dubai) and was also able to get a high score for my entrance exam which for me at the time was an impossible thought but God has bigger plans. It took me a while to realise that this was his plan all along, for me to study in the UAE.

When I started putting my trust back in God I was able to calmly think about my future because until then I was crying almost every day. Trusting the Lord, putting my life in his hands, believing that he has a plan and that everything happens for a reason really put me at ease and also led to where I am today. And that is what I have to tell anyone who is struggling with life decisions, just give it all up to him and he will do what's best for you.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).



SPECIAL



THE FULLNESS OF WOMANHOOD

Cradle Catholic **Sheena Andrews** writes about how, much later in life, she came to love and cherish the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Although I grew up in a traditional Catholic family and recited the Rosary everyday at family prayer, my relationship with the Blessed Virgin was that of a teenage girl's relationship with her mother. I was never close to her, never appreciated her love towards me, always had an indifference when I was told to pray to her, and was never convinced how capable she was.

In our society across the cultures, women are considered 'second grade citizens', despite having made so much progress through the past decades. While men love to be seen as powerful and to view women as powerless, women often feel more comfortable admitting men are superior. Devotion to Mother Mary gets complicated for men and women equally partly because of the gender factor. This is without regarding all the voices against devotion to the Blessed Virgin and only considering people born and raised knowing Mary as part of their faith.

Although I learned of Mary's role in salvation in catechism, I was never able to personalise it. Even when I personally encountered Jesus Christ and grew deeper in that relationship, Mary was not more than the daily Rosary that was boring and repetitive. But I never gave up the habit of saying Rosaries daily, sometimes even more than one depending on the urgency of the favour I was seeking. I knew Mary was the best intercessor, so I prayed Rosaries for various intentions.

It all started changing when I got a small rosary as a gift made by the kids of a Jesus Youth in India. The rosary was small and beautiful and made of clear beads, I loved those rosaries so much I started saying Rosaries with a new found interest. It felt as though the kids made the rosary with so much love and prayer that it touched me in a very special way. Around that time I heard about Marian consecration and I decided to consecrate myself to Mother Mary with 33 days of preparatory prayers. Although I did not experience anything extraordinary after the consecration I felt more love towards Mary. In the meantime my husband was also doing the Marian consecration and I noticed how he had been moved by great love towards the Blessed Virgin. His enthusiasm to recite multiple Rosaries especially on the Blessed Virgin's feast days was almost puzzling to me. I was curious why I did not have that kind of intense love for Mother Mary.

Then it was time to renew our consecration the following year. We decided to do it together. We started on November 29 to end on January 1st. I was in for discovering the greatest treasure in my life, the intimate bond with my mother. On December 8th, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, to my surprise, the reflection in the book I used (*33 days to Morning Glory*) was on Immaculate Conception. As I read through the lines, I felt the Holy Spirit stirring in me, in a gentle but very powerful way. I was in awe of the perfection and uniqueness of Mary in the great work of salvation. I came into a great understanding of how the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary are deeply united and continue the work of salvation to this day. I understood how I had such a hard time praying for in-filling of the Holy Spirit because I left out the easy but essential route through Mother Mary. The rest of the days of consecration was a life changing time for me. I was expecting my seventh child at that time. We decided to name her Maria in honor of the Virgin Mother, and since the child was inside me as I consecrated myself, she too was consecrated to the Blessed Mother even before birth. I ended up delivering her seven weeks early and my heavenly mother's presence was there during delivery and the NICU stay afterwards.

I started experiencing my heavenly mother's real presence in my daily life. I started reciting every

I came into a great understanding of how the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary are deeply united and continue the work of salvation to this day. I understood how I had such a hard time praying for in-filling of the Holy Spirit because I left out the easy but essential route through Mother Mary.

Hail Mary with so much love. I felt like I was adopted into the family of the Father Son and Holy Spirit and my Mother. When I look back at my spiritual rebirth and growth which started once I got involved with Jesus Youth movement, I see how I fell in love with the Son. He introduced me to his mother and how she guided me to the true experience of my loving Father and the ever present Spirit, her holy spouse.

Now I always run to her, whenever I stumble, on the days I feel like my life is falling apart and see how she puts it all back in place with her loving intercession. The miracle at the Wedding at Cana is where I get reassurance even in the lowest moments of my life. When my wine is about to run out, when I am about to

get ridiculed, when the dreams and desires of my heart seem to fade away, I know she steps in and asks her Son to intervene. The lively relationship I have with her makes my relationship with her Son stronger. We together adore and worship him, the Saviour God. She who perfectly understands the will of the Father God helps me discern the will of God in my life by simply seeking her intercession. She helps me receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit because she is espoused to him eternally.

She is the strongest woman ever created, she is the perfection of creation. If any woman wants to empower herself, she only has to learn from the Mother, who in her gentle most feminine way achieved what no other man or woman could ever achieve, the salvation of mankind, by saying yes to the will of God. She is the one who made a difference in the world, an everlasting impact by delivering a child in the manger and by standing at the foot of the cross. Any woman can connect with her and learn from her because she is so simple and approachable. She can bear all your burdens and take it to her Son, who always has ears for her. She will take you to the most personal and deeper understanding of the Holy Trinity because she is the one human who is deeply connected to all three. ■■



A neonatal nurse practitioner at Texas Children's Hospital, **Sheena Andrews** and her husband Sebastian Andrews have seven children.

They live in Houston, USA. Sheena enjoys spending time with her family and friends, listening to podcasts and writing.



Living Stones

We are called to be living stones, to put our God-given talents and charisms for God's glory. **Anil Israel** reflects with Scripture.

It is good to learn that the word Christian is already mentioned in the Bible. *In Antioch, the disciples were for the first time called Christians* (Acts 11:26). Christians are those who consider themselves to be a *follower of the Way* (Acts 24:14) of Christ.

Just like Muslims go to mosques, Hindus visit temples and Jews gather in synagogues, we say the 'place of worship' for the Christians is the church. The English word 'church' is derived from the Greek *Kryiakon* meaning 'The Lord's House'. The Greek word *ecclesia* refers to the 'people of God'.

In 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul says that he had *persecuted the church of God* – the congregation of believers. In Acts Chapter 9 verse 4, we hear Jesus asking: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' Further in verse 5 we read Saul asking Jesus 'Who are you, Lord?' and Jesus replies: 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'. Although Saul was persecuting the Christians – who were followers of Christ, yet Jesus equates persecution of Christians to himself. How beautiful for us to be identified so close to our Lord and Saviour.

The church is not only a building made

with stones – a place where the faithful gather, but also a building made with living flesh. We believers are the *living stones* (1Peter 2:5) in God's temple. The Church is therefore the Mystical body of Christ. *He [Christ] is the head of the body, the Church* (Colossians 1:18). *All of you are Christ's body and each of you is a part of it* (1Corinthians 12:27). *We are members of his body* (Ephesians 5:30). *We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body* (Romans 12:4-5).

In the Nicene Creed, we profess: 'We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'. These are the four marks of the Church. The Church is 'one' for three reasons: first, because of its source, which

is the Holy Trinity, a perfect unity of three divine persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; second, because of its founder, Jesus Christ, who came to reconcile all mankind through the sacrifice on the cross; and third, because of its 'soul', the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the souls of the faithful, who unites all of the faithful into one communion of believers, and who guides the Church (CCC #813). The 'oneness' of the Church is also visible through the profession of one faith received from the apostles and common celebration of divine worship especially the sacraments.

The Church is holy because it is the Body of Christ with Jesus as the head. This does not mean that all members of the Church are sin free. It means that the Church and her sacraments help to make the faithful holy.



CHRIST AND INDIVIDUALLY MEMBERS OF IT › 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

The Church is a union of the faithful on earth (Church Militant), the saints in heaven (Church Jubilant) and the suffering souls in Purgatory (Church Suffering). This is what we believe to be the communion of saints.

The word 'catholic' means 'universal'. The Church exists for the whole of humanity. This universality embraces a multitude of liturgical expressions and traditions visible in the various rites within the Catholic Church.

The Church is apostolic. The Church's existence is rooted in the apostles, upon whom Jesus established his Church. *On this rock (Peter) I will build My church* (Matthew 16:18). Further the Church is apostolic in nature as she 'exists to evangelize' (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* #14) – responding to the 'great commission' to *make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19).

The Church is a union of the faithful on earth (Church Militant), the saints in heaven (Church Jubilant) and the suffering souls in Purgatory (Church Suffering). This is what we believe to be the communion of saints.

The call to Christianity is a call to be a living member of the mystical body of Christ. To be a living member, we need to respond to the call to love and the call to be holy. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbour as yourself* (Mark 12:30-31). *Be holy, for I am holy* (1 Peter 1:16). *Be merciful, as your Father is merciful* (Luke 6:36). *Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:48). In short, as part of the Body of Christ, we are all called to *imitate Christ* (cf. Ephesians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). Here, the Church is portrayed as the Bride of Christ. The mystical body of Christ is also the 'Bride of the Lamb' (cf. Revelation 19:7). In our pursuit of Christ-like perfection, we are also called to enter the narrow path of self-denial – letting go of our self-centeredness and embracing other-centeredness. For we *do not belong to ourselves* (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19), *we belong to the Lord* (Romans 14:8). Like St. Paul, let us also learn to say, *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Galatians 2:20).

In our imitation of Christ, we are called to put on the apron of humility. St. Benedict teaches us that the first step of humility is unhesitating obedience. Those who consecrate themselves to the religious way of life take the holy vow of obedience. Likewise, we too are encouraged to embrace willful obedience, not out of a sense of duty but out of love for Christ, just as Christ was *obedient unto death* (Philippians 2:8).

We are to obey not only the Ten Commandments, but also the precepts of the Church: to attend Holy Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, to confess our sins at least once a year, to receive Holy Communion at least during Easter season, to observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence, to provide for the needs of the Church, to observe the Laws of the Church concerning marriage and to participate in the Church's mission of evangelisation of souls.

To be a living stone, I must consciously choose to play my active part in any ministry, by putting to use my God given talents and charisms for his Glory. I can opt to offer my service as an altar server, a choir member, a lector, an Eucharistic minister, participating in various parish initiatives or by joining one of the active groups in my local parish. CH_CH is nothing if UR is not in it.

The Church is also a mother, because she gives birth to us in faith. May we fervently intercede to Mary, Mother of the Church, to help us to grow in the virtue of obedience. May she who was obedient to the Father's will, teach us to always say, 'Yes Lord!' (John 11:27) with an *obedient heart* (Luke 8:15).



Anil Israel lives in Mannheim, Germany, with his wife Sunitha and their 5 children. He is the current National Formation Coordinator of JY Germany.



FAITHOGRAPHIC

Papacy: On this rock I will build my Church



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

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

In a dramatic scene set at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus commissions the first Pope, telling the apostle who

acknowledged his divinity: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matthew 16:18-19). In all cultures, the key is a symbol of authority. So, Christ's words to Peter is a promise that he will confer on Peter supreme power to govern the Church. Peter is to be his Vicar on earth, to rule in his place and to extend Christ's forgiveness to all repentant sinners.

PAPAL INFALLIBILITY – FACTS & MYTHS

Jesus who is Truth Himself, grants St. Peter a share in His infallibility, to instil in us the confidence in the knowledge of the way to heaven. He tells Peter (and his successors), 'I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail... strengthen your brethren' (Luke 22:32). It is however a myth that anything the Pope says, from his opinions on football to off-the-cuff comments on an airplane interview is infallible. In fact the Catechism (CCC 891) says he is preserved from error only 'by virtue of his office (and when)

he proclaims... a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals'. In fact, it has only ever been invoked twice – the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (Pius XI, 1854) and the Assumption of Mary (Pius XII, 1950).

THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT

Through these words (Matthew 16:18) Jesus teaches us that it is through her union with Peter, that the Church will emerge victorious in her long battle with the evil one. True to the prophecy of Christ, we have today, from the time of St. Peter, an unbroken lineage of 266 Popes in the last two millennia. As we go through the lives of these scholars, princes, generals and ordinary men, we are

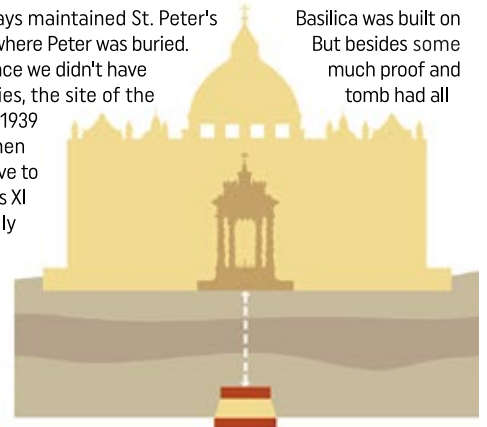
LONGEST STANDING INSTITUTION

The media or movies rarely get it right on Papacy on which Christ said He will build his Church. The fact that it is the longest standing institution in human history is in itself evidence of the supernatural protection the Papacy enjoys. It sailed triumphantly through unimaginable ups and downs of time over two millennia, while entire empires and civilizations perished. Its occupant – our Holy Father, the Pope carries a burden, unlike that borne by any leader – the spiritual care of over a billion people.

LITERAL FULFILMENT OF CHRIST'S PROPHECY

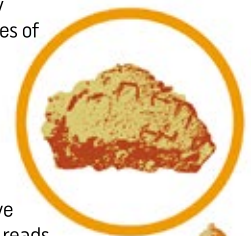
Tradition had always maintained St. Peter's the Vatican hills where Peter was buried. anecdotal evidence we didn't have over the centuries, the site of the been but lost. In 1939 however, workmen digging the grave to bury Pope Pius XI accidentally

Basilica was built on But besides some much proof and tomb had all



discovered parts of an ancient structure. The archaeological excavations which followed, yielded an astounding discovery: 33 feet exactly below the Papal high altar of the basilica, within the ancient marble chamber built by Constantine lay the bones of St. Peter. The Catholic Church's holiest shrine and seat of Papacy therefore stands

today, literally on 'Peter'. Graffiti (right) on an excavated fragment from the rear red wall of the tomb, dated to circa 70 AD. Believed to have been hand-carved by a first century pilgrim, it reads 'Petros Eni' (Peter is within – in Greek).



struck by how much opposition they had to endure through the centuries and sometimes how, their own misdeeds have rocked the Church so precariously. 'The Church has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave' (G. K. Chesterton).



An Integrated Creative Director by profession, **Tena Conil** has been a JY since 1987. He is a Catholic formator, author, pro-lifer, media expert, husband and father of three from Trivandrum, India.

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Chandeliers

CHURCH SAINTS

☼ *St. Peter Claver*

St. Peter Claver was a Spanish Jesuit missionary who became the patron saint of slaves, African missions and interracial justice. He spent his life serving African slaves who were brought to Columbia during the 17th century.

Peter Claver was born in Verdu, Spain in 1580 to an impoverished family of distinguished origin. He studied at the University of Barcelona and joined the Jesuits at the age of twenty. While studying philosophy at Majorca in 1605, Peter Claver developed a friendship with Jesuit Brother Alphonsus Rodriguez, who spent his days doing menial work as a doorkeeper. He encouraged Claver to become a missionary to the Spanish colonies in America.

In 1610, Peter Claver voyaged to Cartagena (modern Colombia), where after five years of further study, he was ordained a priest. Despite Pope Paul III's repeated condemnations of slavery during the previous century, European colonists continued importing African slaves to work on plantations and in mines. As a priest, Fr. Claver dedicated himself to the service of Negro slaves – a work that was to last for thirty-three years.

He laboured unceasingly for the salvation of the African slaves and the abolition of the Negro slave trade. Boarding the slave ships as they entered the harbour, he would hurry to the revolting inferno of the hold, and offer whatever poor refreshments he could afford; he would care for the sick and dying, and instruct the slaves through multilingual catechisms before administering the Sacraments. 'We must speak to them with our hands,' he

Feast: September 9



said, 'before we try to speak to them with our lips.' Whenever he came upon a baby born during a voyage or a dying slave, Fr. Claver would stop to baptise them immediately.

During his forty years of ministry, it is estimated that he personally catechised and baptised 300,000 slaves. He would follow up on them to ensure that they received their Christian and civil rights. Furthermore, he did not lose sight of his converts when they left the ships, but followed them to the plantations to which they were sent, encouraged them to live as Christians, and ensured that they were treated humanely.

Claver did not limit himself to the slaves alone but ministered to the souls of well-to-do members of society, traders and visitors to Cartagena (including Muslims and English Protestants) and condemned criminals, many of whom he spiritually prepared for death. He was also a frequent visitor to the city's hospitals. Years of toil and the force of his own unique personality enabled the slaves' situation to improve. In time he came to be known as the Apostle of Cartagena.

Towards the end of his life and sick with plague, Peter was too ill to leave his room. He lingered for four years, largely forgotten and neglected, ill-treated and starved by an ex-slave hired to care for him. He never complained, convinced that he deserved this treatment. Peter Claver died on 8 September 1654.

He was beatified by Pius IX on July 16, 1850, and canonised along with his friend St. Alphonsus Rodriguez on January 15, 1888, by Pope Leo XIII. ■

TruthMemes

BY JACOB JOSE



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS
THE MOST BACKWARD
FORCE IN HUMAN HISTORY

WHY?



THEY STIFLED SCIENTIFIC
PROGRESS AND TORTURED
SCIENTISTS



THE CHURCH WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN FOUNDING AND SUPPORTING THE FIRST WESTERN UNIVERSITIES AND HAS SUPPORTED SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS THROUGHOUT HER HISTORY, BEGINNING WITH THE EARLY FATHERS OF THE CHURCH THROUGH TO THE 21ST-CENTURY POPES BENEDICT XVI AND FRANCIS. IN THE 11TH CENTURY, POPE SYLVESTER II WAS SENT BY HIS ABBOT TO BARCELONA IN 967 TO STUDY MATHEMATICS. HE WROTE SEVERAL POPULAR MATHEMATICS TEXTBOOKS, BUT IT WAS HIS CALCULATING DEVICE, BASED ON ARABIC NUMERALS, THAT WOULD INTRODUCE THE DECIMAL SYSTEM TO EUROPE AND SET THE STAGE FOR MODERN MATHEMATICS.



BY THE WAY, WHERE DID
YOU GO TO COLLEGE?

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE



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Don't give me
that AD BC
nonsense! I use
CE and BCE.



What is the event that
divides CE and BCE?



The birth of
Christ!



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(SINGING) IMAGINE
THERE'S NO HEAVEN
IT'S EASY IF YOU TRY
NO HELL BELOW US
ABOVE US ONLY SKY
IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE
LIVING FOR TODAY

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN "IMAGINE"
AWAY THE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE AND
START "LIVING FOR TODAY"?



EH! I NEED TO GO
PREPARE FOR MY UPCOMING
JOB INTERVIEW



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NewsWatch



TOB ROCKS! LIVE WITH JASON EVERT

Who doesn't know Jason Evert from the Chastity project!

In this last session of the Set Free Summit, Jason brings to us pearls of wisdom from St John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* and along with it his amazing experience as husband, father and international Catholic speaker.

Save the date! 3rd October 2021!

You don't want to miss this because Jason is coming live and at the end of his talk, will answer all your queries!

(Please check out the zoom details and various time zones on the flyer above).

FEEDBACK



NOTHING WITHOUT CHRIST, ISSUE 40

This was a very inspiring article.
Thank you!

Tias Victor Palma, Bangladesh

BETTER WITH EVERY STEP, ISSUE 40

A very inspiring article and so apt for me at this moment. I'm in a confusion with regards to pursuing my passion in art and leaving my engineering career, not knowing what the first step is and what to learn. I thank God for this inspiring story.

Rose Mary Tom, Singapore

THE SILENT KILLER

You are not your own property, then; you have been bought at a price. So use your body for the glory of God [1Corinthians 6:20].
This was a great read and very practical. God Bless!

Anwin Mathai, Mumbai, India

Quiz Time



Mail your answers to quiztime@kairos.global before 25th September 2021.
The winner will be rewarded with 1 year subscription of Kairos Global

PART A

Who am I?

1. I was formed from the ribs/side of Adam. Who am I?
2. I am the mother of Jesus. Who am I?
3. I was the wife of Zechariah and the mother of John. Who am I?
4. I was turned into a pillar of salt. Who am I?
5. I had a son, Isaac in my old age. Who am I?
6. I found a Hebrew baby boy floating in a basket on the Nile. Who am I?
7. I was an 84-year-old woman who saw Baby Jesus when he was brought to the Temple for his circumcision. Who am I?
8. My voice was taken away until my son John was born. Who am I?
9. I baptized Jesus in the River Jordan. Who am I?
10. I was the disciple who denied knowing Jesus. Who am I?

PART B

The Greatest Commandment

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:30-31

The puzzle is based on Mark 12:28-34.

Find the below words in the grid:

Mind, Soul, Yourself, Answer, Neighbour, Important, Strength, Kingdom, Greatest, Love, Law, Heart

Q	R	D	V	H	Y	O	U	R	S	E	L	F
S	T	K	D	F	M	O	N	V	K	T	D	L
V	N	R	B	X	I	W	A	N	S	W	E	R
Y	A	T	S	J	N	D	Q	L	K	I	N	P
J	T	D	I	R	D	E	W	Q	B	M	G	I
M	R	I	G	R	E	A	T	E	S	T	Y	H
L	O	V	E	Q	X	Z	J	S	O	U	L	E
A	P	H	N	C	S	R	P	C	B	I	C	A
W	M	Q	E	V	H	U	I	H	D	J	K	R
Y	I	E	S	T	R	E	N	G	T	H	C	T
D	K	A	C	X	H	I	E	W	R	I	P	J
H	A	U	K	I	N	G	D	O	M	V	E	G
K	O	P	R	N	E	I	G	H	B	O	U	R



PART C

Match The Bible Character[S] With The Bible Story

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. He built a huge boat | Jonah |
| 2. He walked on water | Joseph |
| 3. He delivered the Ten | Noah |
| 4. Commandments from God | Noah |
| 5. He was swallowed by a great fish | Moses |
| 6. He is a king known for his wisdom | Jesus |
| 7. He was sold into slavery by his brothers | Solomon |

ANSWERS TO QUIZTIME ISSUE 41

Part A: Following clues have their answers as **3, 7, 12**.

3: Holy Trinity, Jesus' Resurrection, Betrayal of Peter, Jonah and the whale

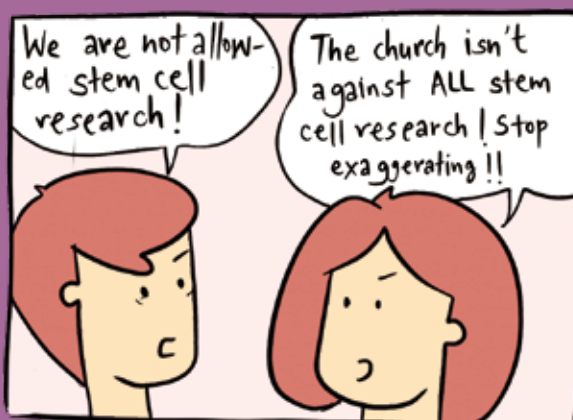
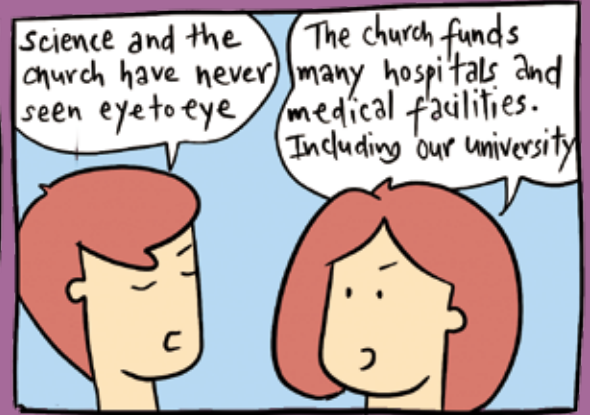
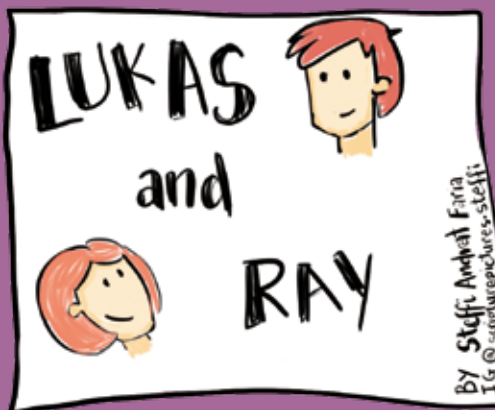
7: Sacraments, Naaman the leper (2Kings 5:9), God took rest, Gifts of Holy Spirit

12: Disciples, 5th Joyful mystery, Fruits of Holy spirit, Sons of Jacob, Gates and angels (Rev. 21:12)

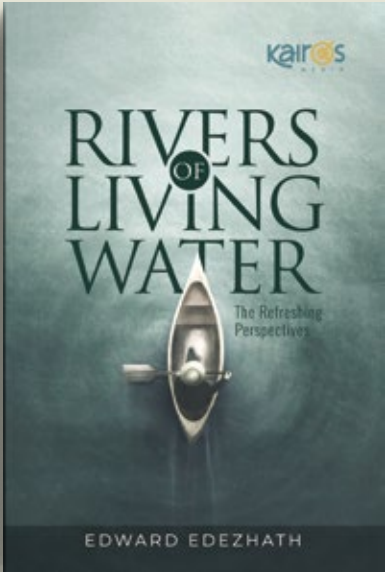
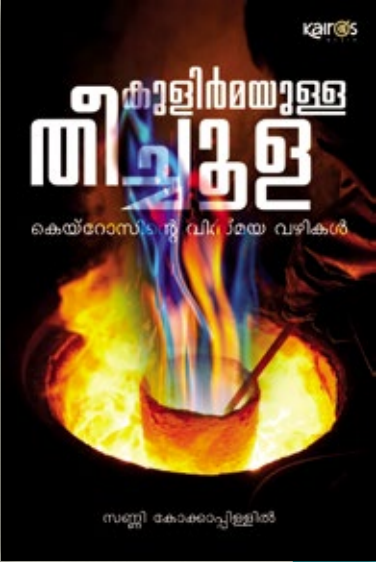
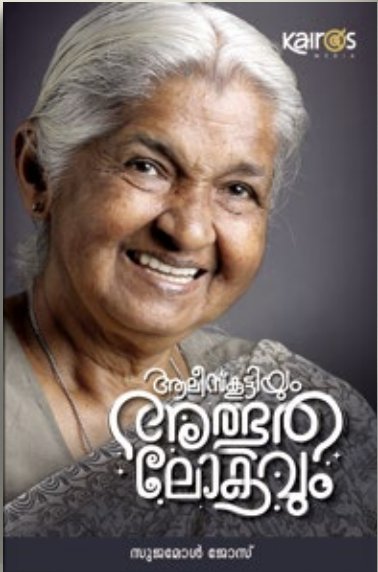
Part B: Crossword Puzzle

Across: 1. Adam, 5. Abraham, 7. Evil, 10. Eve

Down: 2. Dust, 3. Man, 4. Rebecca, 6. Heaven, 8. Life, 9. Joseph



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