

# KAIROS

GLOBAL

## STRAIGHTENING OUT THE 'PRIDE RAINBOW'

*BRO GEM JACOB GEORGE*

ALSO ↓

Gender Ideology:  
The Catholic  
Perspective

■ *BABU JOHN*

Parenting and  
Formation  
of Children's  
Sexuality

■ *ABIGAIL FOARD*





## PRAYER



Remember, O most sweet Jesus, that no one who has had recourse to thy Sacred Heart, implored its help, or sought its mercy was ever abandoned. Encouraged with confidence, O tenderest of hearts, we present ourselves before thee, crushed beneath the weight of our sins. In our misery, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, despise not our simple prayers, but mercifully grant our requests. Amen.

# EDITOR'S ROOM



DR CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

✕ @readkairos

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES THAT SEXUAL INTIMACY IS RESERVED FOR MARRIAGE BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN. THIS TEACHING IS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT MARRIAGE IS A SACRED UNION DESIGNED BY GOD FOR THE PROCREATION OF CHILDREN AND THE MUTUAL LOVE AND SUPPORT OF SPOUSES.

## Sexual Identity and LGBTQ Matters

In today's world, the topic of sexual identity and LGBTQ is one that often stirs up strong emotions and opinions. As Catholics, it's important for us to understand the Church's teachings on these matters and how to approach them with love and compassion.

First and foremost, it's essential to recognise that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. This includes individuals who identify as LGBTQ. As Catholics, we are called to love our neighbours as ourselves, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

At the same time, the Catholic Church teaches that sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. This teaching is based on the belief that marriage is a sacred union designed by God for the procreation of children and the mutual love and support of spouses.

This stance can sometimes be difficult to understand or accept, especially in a culture that promotes a wide range of sexual identities and relationships. However, it's important to remember that the Church's teachings are rooted in Scripture and tradition, and are intended to guide us toward holiness and fulfilment.

For those who experience same-sex attraction or struggle with their gender identity, the Church offers support and pastoral care. There are many resources available for individuals who seek guidance and assistance in living according to the teachings of the Church while navigating their own unique experiences.

It's also important for us, as Catholics, to engage in respectful dialogue with those who may have different viewpoints or experiences. We can listen with empathy and understanding, while also sharing the truths of our faith with love and compassion.

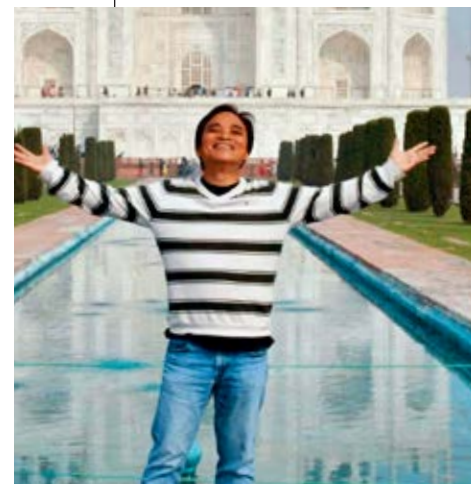
In our interactions with others, we are called to imitate the example of Jesus Christ, who welcomed sinners and outcasts with open arms. He showed us that love and mercy are the foundation of authentic discipleship, and that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

The members of Jesus Youth community, have a special opportunity to witness to the truth of the Gospel in our families, schools, workplaces, and communities. We can strive to create environments that are inclusive and welcoming to all, while also upholding the teachings of our faith with courage and conviction.

Ultimately, our goal as Catholics is to grow in holiness and to help others encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. By seeking to understand and live out the Church's teachings on sexual identity and LGBTQ matters with humility and compassion, we can be agents of healing and reconciliation in a world that is often divided and hurting.

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You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy  
*Leviticus 19:2*



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# ASK



FR. BITAJU

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

## ➤ As a Catholic, is it sinful to get tattooed or to pierce one's body?

The Catholic Church does not have a specific teaching regarding getting tattoos or body piercings. Therefore, it is not inherently sinful to get a tattoo or to pierce one's body according to Catholic doctrine.

However, the Church does teach that individuals should respect and care for their bodies, which are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Therefore, any decision regarding tattoos or body piercing should be made with prudence and in accordance with the principles of modesty, respect for one's body, and the overall well-being of oneself and others.

It is important to note that the cultural and societal norms may vary, and what may be acceptable in one context may not be in another. Therefore, individuals should consider the potential impact of their choices on themselves and others, particularly in terms of modesty, professional obligations, and the potential for causing scandal or offense.

Old Testament prohibitions regarding tattoos were ceremonial laws (Leviticus 19:28) and thus they are not binding on Christians. There is nothing inherently immoral about a Catholic having a tattoo or a piercing. It is the content, message and purpose that would make those things immoral. Therefore, it would be important to ask questions such as, 'what message am I trying to send through this action?' and 'what is my motivation?'

In summary, while the Catholic Church does not explicitly declare tattoos or body piercings as sinful, individuals are encouraged to consider principles such as respect for the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and the virtue of modesty when making decisions about these practices. It is recommended that individuals seek guidance from a trusted spiritual advisor or a priest who can provide personalised guidance based on the specific circumstances and intentions involved.



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## HOW SHOULD WE TREAT OUR BODY?

**The Fifth Commandment forbids also the use of violence against one's own body. Jesus expressly demands that we accept and love ourselves: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' [Matthew 22:39].**

Self-destructive acts against one's own body ('body piercings', cutting and so on) are in most cases psychological reactions to experiences of abandonment and a lack of love; hence they call first and foremost for our sincere and loving response. Within the context of organ donation, it must be made clear, however, that there is no human right to destroy one's own God-given body.

✉ Please send your questions to [askfrbitaju@jykairosmedia.org](mailto:askfrbitaju@jykairosmedia.org) and they will be answered here.



DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

## Prayer Intentions June

### For migrants fleeing their homes

We pray that migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys full of danger and violence, find welcome and new opportunities in the countries that receive them.



# Pope talk



*Christian pilgrimage, as a synodal journey, is rooted in hope and aimed toward discovering God's love.*

*We need to welcome God into our daily lives and pray for real peace.*

*Every vocation is a 'diamond in the rough' that needs to be polished, worked, shaped on every side.*

**Faith is the act by which the human being freely commits himself to God.**



*Theological virtues like faith, hope, and charity are the fundamental attributes and form the key pillars of Christian life.*

*The Lord wants to tell us with the image of the Good Shepherd not only that he is the guide, the head of the flock, but above all that he thinks of each of us as the love of his life*

*The gift of the temperate person is balance, a quality as precious as it is rare. When everything in our world pushes to excess, temperance combines well with gospel values such as smallness, discretion, modesty and meekness.*

*A Christian without courage is a useless Christian who does not turn his own strength to good and also who does not bother anyone.*

# JESUS YOUTH



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

## How 'Subsidiarity' sets the tone of Jesus Youth culture

→ I often look back to the little discussion of Fr Fio's letter in May 1978. In the small library hall of Alwaye Loyola, Fr Paul Lantha, Fr Joe Kizhakedom and I sat and read the National Chairman's letter to the newly formed Kerala Service Team of the charismatic renewal. 'Bringing together young people could be your first task,' he suggested. Next week the coordinating team met with the Advisory Council at Thrissur and in it the initial steps were taken for bringing together young people.

A good charismatic youth convention had already been held in Mumbai. In Bangalore and Chennai youth groups were flourishing. It was in that context that Fr Fio suggested the idea of a youth convention for Kerala. But now, 46 years after the incredible journey that began with the letter, it is interesting to ask, how this journey has been distinct from other similar journeys.

One comment I heard from Manuel, who came from Chennai for that year's conference summed up the uniqueness of the journey we took. 'City youth and rural workers, English and Malayalam styles, students and professionals, even families, come together and work hand in hand. I don't know how they can do it. You don't see this variety and

close connectedness anywhere else!'

Yes, a Spirit-inspired inclusive approach did miracles and that built Jesus Youth movement. But I think underneath all this there was an important Catholic principle that the Lord guided, to 'take flesh' in the movement: subsidiarity.

### WHAT IS SUBSIDIARITY?

Last month, in our class here, we discussed Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Charity in Truth. It talks about the need for new socio-economic approaches, especially to meet the needs of the poor and the suffering. I wanted my students to see how his proposals are closely linked to the very important set of principles known as Catholic Social Teachings. We had a good discussion on that.

After the class during dinner, Alvin still had questions about some of the points. 'I have heard of these principles, especially subsidiarity. But today I see its importance for Jesus Youth.' Usually, we discuss subsidiarity in connection with socio-economic matters. International bodies sitting in Vienna or New York discuss and take decisions for all countries, but these decisions can be far removed from the local realities of Sri Lanka, Africa, and South America. The principle of

subsidiarity says that decisions and actions should be taken at the most local or immediate level possible, rather than by a higher authority or centralised power. There can be much wisdom in central coordination, but it must be well-balanced with understanding and encouraging local life and initiatives.

Alvin's question had to do with how in Jesus Youth and in the Church the eagerness for coordination and centralised planning can go against this principle of subsidiarity. Over planning and eagerness for uniformity are the big sins against subsidiarity. Usually, one person or a small group takes up the whole responsibility and tells all others that obedience is the most important virtue. Such strong leadership will slowly kill variety, local creativity and finally the whole organisation or even a country.

In most places, Communism did just that. China's Mao said if everyone used similar dress, and same pattern for men, women, and children, with one colour, there will be equality, unity, and easier life. As against this, the Church always taught a Catholic or universal approach; Jews, Greeks, Romans, men, women, children – all are children of God, capable of living together in Christ, keeping their God





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endowed differences. This is the beauty of the true Catholic spirit, and this also becomes the inclusive approach of Jesus Youth.

### GRASSROOTS DYNAMICS

When we started bringing together youth from different parts of the state, many of us leaders were from one prayer group that met in a college, using English songs. But the lifestyle and meetings of mostly farm labourers who gathered in Idukki and Thalasseri were different. Young fishermen in Cherthala gathered late at night on beaches for prayer. We learned to accept variety. In songs, meeting styles, teaching content we allowed varied local ways to sprout and grow.

When we gathered for planning and discussion there was a wide spectrum of ideas and approaches. There would be fights, quoting of supporting Bible passages, heated discussions, and one section blaming the other for killing true spirituality. But there was eventual acceptance of differences, resulting in a common journey together. This is the great miracle of Christian unity founded in Catholicity. But how did it happen? The work of God's spirit rooted in the awareness of the poverty of the leaders.

Pope Benedict, though briefly, discusses in *Caritas in Veritate* (#57) why this approach of subsidiarity is important for every person, group, and the world:

**An expression of human freedom,** which is God given and inalienable. When we allow each small group and community to decide and do things well, everyone grows in that freedom.

**Respecting personal dignity,** knowing each person has much capacity to do good and give something to others.

**Autonomy of small groups:** Every group has surprising capacity to grow and bear abundant fruit. Trusting them

is the best help for it.

**Antidote to authoritarian styles:** Blind zeal of leaders with narrow vision is what kills God's work. Acceptance and encouragement of grassroots life will remedy it.

**Best approach for wider growth:** Globalisation is the need of the hour, but a stratified approach is the sure path to ensure wider growth with firm rootedness.

Jesus Youth learned this beautiful style of subsidiarity in a practical way. In the movement we just call it informality, or friendly style, which results in a spirituality of communion and participative leadership. This approach is what led us to an emphasis on small groups and varied evangelistic ministries. May the Holy Spirit challenge us ever more to embrace this genuine Catholic spirit of love and solidarity. ■■

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

# MISSION TALK

DR. SUNNICHAN V. GEORGE

Dr Sunnichan V George shares his experience of a mission trip that broke language and cultural barriers and helped forge bonds of brotherhood.

### Embracing Faith and Community: A Mission Experience in Assam's Tribal Villages

In the realm of mission life, grasping the essence of the Catholic Church's purpose is synonymous with understanding its singular mission. This mission is unequivocally centred on heralding, both through action and proclamation, the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, the Divine Son. Specifically, it entails acknowledging his incarnation as a mortal, his teachings elucidating the route to genuine existence and liberation in God, and his enduring the rejection of individuals, not unlike ourselves, whose hearts recoiled from the piercing truth he illuminated.

The words of Pope St John Paul II in the encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, indeed echo with profound wisdom and insight into the essence of missionary work and its connection to the vitality of faith. Throughout the history

of the Church, the missionary impulse has served as a vibrant expression of the living faith of believers.

Missionary endeavours reflect the dynamism of a faith that seeks to spread its message of love, hope, and salvation to all corners of the world. The willingness to reach out beyond one's own community, to encounter and embrace diverse cultures and peoples, is a testament to the enduring strength and relevance of the gospel message. It is to be remembered that all the baptised are called to mission. All Christians are given marching orders from Christ himself, *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19). This could be fulfilled through one's state of life and/or call. St Therese, once in Carmel, perceived her missionary vocation from a contemplative point of view. She writes, 'I had declared at the feet of Jesus-Victim, in the examination preceding my Profession, what I had come to Carmel for: I came to save souls and especially to pray for priests.' However, the patron of missionaries - St Francis Xavier was called to become a missionary priest, and he obediently went to restore Christianity among the Portuguese settlers. He devoted his entire life to missions in Asia, and was the most prominent figure to propagate Christianity in India.

Conversely, a decline in missionary fervour can signal a crisis of faith—a turning inward, a stagnation, or a loss of the evangelical zeal that animates the Church. When missionary efforts wane, it may indicate a need for renewal, recommitment, and a deeper engagement with the core teachings of Christianity.

Pope John Paul II's words serve as a reminder of the vital role that missionary activity plays in the life of the Church, not only as a means of spreading the faith but also as





a barometer of its spiritual health and vitality. They inspire believers to remain steadfast in their commitment to sharing the Good News with the world, embodying the spirit of love and service exemplified by Christ himself.

In September 2023, I embarked on a transformative mission experience to the tribal villages of Assam with 45 other people belonging to the 'We Trust' family of missionaries, who are serious in the Catholic faith and her role in the world. After two sessions of missionary training on weekends and much preparation through prayers, pilgrimages and acts of spiritual as well as corporal works of mercy, we set out on the journey to Dhimra in Assam. The lush green landscapes and vibrant culture of Assam provided the backdrop for an immersive journey that would forever leave an indelible mark on my heart.

Our journey began with a gathering in the parish, where we eagerly absorbed insights into the rich tapestry of culture that awaited us. We learned about the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the families we would soon encounter, laying the groundwork for meaningful interactions to come.

Embarking on a missionary journey is akin to stepping into a world of unknowns, where every encounter holds the promise of discovery and growth. My own missionary experience, set against the backdrop of a vibrant parish community, was a testament to the transformative power of faith and cultural exchange.

The next day, armed with newfound knowledge and anticipation, we set out to visit the families in their homes. Recognising the importance of communication in building bridges, we enlisted the help of a translator from within their own community. This simple yet crucial decision would prove instrumental in breaking down language barriers and



**We prayed with them, sang and danced with them, and at times after witnessing their hard realities and suffering in every present moment, we also cried with them.**

fostering genuine connections.

As our mission team ventured into the rural heartlands, we were welcomed by breathtaking scenery and warm smiles from the local villagers. Despite the natural beauty surrounding them, it was evident that life in these remote communities was marked by economic hardship. Poverty cast its shadow over the villages, yet amidst the struggles, there was a palpable sense of resilience and strength.

As we entered each home, we were greeted with warmth and hospitality that transcended language. We sat with families, sharing stories and laughter, and delving into the depths of their backgrounds and faith lives. Through these conversations, we gained insights into their joys and struggles, their hopes and dreams.

The Catholic families we encountered stood out for their unwavering faith and sense of community. Despite facing adversity on a daily basis, they found solace and strength in their spiritual beliefs. Their homes, though humble, radiated with a sense of warmth and hospitality that was truly humbling.

Our days were spent immersed in the rhythms of village life, visiting families, and sharing in their joys and sorrows. Through these interactions, we gained a deeper understanding of the challenges they faced and the courage with which they confronted them. We prayed with them, sang and danced with them, and at times after witnessing their hard realities and suffering in every present moment, we also cried with them.

One of the most powerful aspects of our mission was the opportunity to participate in the religious rituals and traditions of the community. We joined them in prayer and worship, experiencing first-hand the depth of their faith and devotion. It was a humbling reminder of the universal language of spirituality that transcends cultural boundaries.

The presence of the Salesian fathers, who had long been serving these communities, was instrumental in our mission. It was the Salesian missionaries, who first sowed the seeds of faith in the Northeast Indian states, all way back in 1922. Their dedication and compassion served as a guiding light, bridging the gap between cultures and fostering deeper connections. Through their guidance, we were able to navigate the intricacies of village life with respect and humility.

As our time in Assam drew to a close, we reflected on the profound impact of our mission experience. We had witnessed first-hand the power of faith to unite communities and provide hope in the face of adversity. The resilience and strength of the Catholic families we encountered served as a powerful testament to the transformative power of belief. The last three days were devoted to a retreat in their home parish, A little over a thousand people, whom we visited and shared



the gospel, came for the spiritual feast. Many made their confessions after a long period and received Jesus in the Eucharist. Many were liberated from their bondages. Peace restored in the hearts of many. Some of them recalled that they were experiencing Jesus' love for the first time in their lives.

Leaving the tribal villages of Assam, we carried with us not only memories of breathtaking landscapes but also the enduring spirit of faith and community that had touched our hearts. Our mission experience had reaffirmed our commitment to serving others and inspired us to continue spreading love and compassion wherever our journey may lead.

But our mission was not merely about gathering information; it was about forging bonds of solidarity and companionship. We

prayed with the families, offering words of encouragement and solace in times of need. Together, we sang hymns of praise, our voices merging in harmonious unity, bridging the gap between cultures and languages.

One of the most memorable aspects of our mission was the opportunity to participate in the cultural traditions of the families we visited. We danced alongside them, immersing ourselves in the rhythms of their music and movement. In these moments of shared celebration, we experienced the universal language of joy that transcends cultural boundaries.

Amidst the laughter and fellowship, we also shared in moments of quiet reflection and gratitude. Sitting around the table, we broke bread together, sharing meals that nourished not only our bodies but also our souls. In the simple act of eating together, we found communion and connection, a tangible expression of the bonds that unite us as members of the human family. ■■

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Dr Sunnichan V George is professor of food technology at Amal Jyothi College of Engineering, Kanjirapally. He is married to Dr Mini Mathew and they have four children.



EXPERIENCE

# FROM ATHEISM TO CHRIST

Circumstances and experiences pushed **Dr Ancy Joseph** towards atheism and a life of turmoil. But an encounter of serenity amidst unrest paved the road to Christ.

Praise God! This is the story of my encounter with Christ.

I was born to social-Christian parents for whom faith was not important. The only person who provided me with some faith input was my grandmother. She taught me about heaven, hell, and purgatory. Apart from this, I lacked exposure to other aspects of faith. Moreover, most of the people I encountered claimed to be religious but didn't exhibit qualities consistent with their belief—or perhaps that's what stood out to me the most. These experiences led me to entertain thoughts such as doubting the existence of God, dismissing it all as mere amusement. My brother became an atheist, firmly entrenched in the ideology. Slowly circumstances pushed me too towards it.

When my dad's business failed during my high school years, my family began to face financial hardships and surmounting debts. I endured relentless bullying, especially from my inner circle, faced derogatory remarks about my appearance and self-worth. Consequently, I struggled to love myself, grappling with introversion and social isolation. Amidst these challenges, family conflicts compounded our difficulties. While my parents loved me, I felt deprived of



experiencing love in its entirety. Through myriad struggles—introversion, inferiority complex, lack of affection, and financial woes—I grew convinced of the absence of God. This belief evolved gradually, fuelled by a perceived absence of positivity in my life. Academic success became my sole source of happiness and I dedicated myself to academic pursuits, craving validation and recognition, as it was the only aspect of my life where I found solace.

Even though I harboured doubts about the existence of God, certain questions lingered in my mind:

1. How was this intricate world created?
2. What sustains my existence on Earth, and what is the purpose of my life?
3. If I were to pass away in my sleep, what lies beyond?

The enigma of death haunted me relentlessly, as I grappled with the concept of a higher power.

Upon admission to pursue my MBBS degree, family issues escalated. However,

After that pivotal moment of realisation, I spent about a week grappling with newfound awareness and understanding. It dawned on me that there existed a dimension of life that I had yet to explore—one illuminated by the teachings of Jesus. I vividly recall experiencing a profound conversion, a mental awakening as I made the conscious decision to redirect my path towards Jesus.

just before commencing college, my brother imparted invaluable advice: 'Please refrain from entering into relationships prematurely. Focus on your studies, make informed life decisions, and let romantic endeavours follow in due time.' This pragmatic counsel resonated deeply with me, serving as a guiding principle throughout my studies.

Amidst the romantic pursuits of my peers, I abstained, heeding my brother's

words. Yet, despite my dedication to academia, a profound yearning for love, albeit non-romantic, persisted within me. Doubts regarding my worthiness of love surfaced, hindering my ability to enjoy life fully amidst ongoing familial and financial turmoil.

Amidst this tumult, I received an invitation from senior peers to attend a Jesus Youth programme. Initially reluctant, I acquiesced out of respect

for their insistence, harbouring little enthusiasm for the event. However, I gradually distanced myself as I failed to connect with the religious practices. To me, it all seemed like hypocrisy—mere acts of Bible sharing and prayers, with no one truly embodying those lofty standards. Why not simply strive to be good human beings instead of feigning piety? This notion consumed my thoughts, leading me to disengage from the group. Despite their attempts to reach out, I reiterated my disinterest, disillusioned by what I perceived as insincerity in religious rituals and Sunday Mass.

Despite the presence of friends, I felt profoundly misunderstood and unloved, exacerbating my sense of isolation. As tensions escalated between my batch and the seniors over a competition, discord permeated our hostel. Accusations flew, communication ceased, and the once-harmonious environment devolved into chaos. Caught in the crossfire, I found no refuge—neither in the hostel nor at home. Exhausted by the relentless turmoil, I yearned for peace, weary of the ceaseless struggles that defined my existence.

Amidst my unrest, I encountered a group of individuals who stood apart from the chaos, quietly praying in a corner. These were my friends from the Jesus Youth, my own batch mates, who seemed unaffected by the hostilities around them. Intrigued by their serenity, I felt drawn to explore what set them apart. Initiating conversations with my closest friend among them, I delved into discussions about their faith and convictions. She generously shared her non-Catholic American Bible with me, a gesture I deeply appreciated and still cherish to this day. As I earnestly engaged with the scriptures, initially perplexing passages began to unravel, offering insights that resonated with my own experiences. Each reading brought newfound clarity, and I found myself identifying with the narratives on a personal level.

Gradually, a sense of peace enveloped me, accompanied by a growing curiosity to delve deeper into this newfound understanding of faith. It was as though a veil had been lifted, revealing a path toward clarity and spiritual fulfilment that I had previously overlooked.

After that pivotal moment of realisation, I spent about a week grappling with newfound awareness and understanding. It dawned on me that there existed a dimension of life that I had yet to explore—one illuminated by the teachings of Jesus. I vividly recall experiencing a profound conversion, a mental awakening as I made the conscious decision to redirect my path towards Jesus. Although I had never been one to attend retreats or read religious texts, I was captivated by the radiance and inner peace exuded by those who embraced Jesus wholeheartedly.

Witnessing the transformative power of faith in others inspired me to embark on my own spiritual journey. I relinquished my former beliefs and resolved to follow the teachings of Jesus, embracing a newfound sense of purpose and fulfilment. Despite initial doubts and uncertainties, I found my faith growing stronger with each passing day. Embracing Jesus on 14 February 2007, marked a profound turning point in my life—a moment of spiritual rebirth that coincided with Ash Wednesday. As I partook in the sacraments and embraced fasting, I felt an overwhelming sense of connection with the divine, recognising Jesus as the lover of my soul and the guiding force in my life.

Discovering my purpose aligned with Jesus's teachings brought meaning and joy. I began to appreciate the beauty and majesty of God reflected in the world around me, undergoing a profound internal transformation that was visible to those I knew. My newfound zeal for Jesus prompted me to share my faith with others, albeit sometimes fervently, which led to moments of friction, particularly concerning contentious issues like pro-life advocacy.

Reflecting on my past attitudes towards disability and life's complexities, I came to understand that every individual, regardless of physical limitations, possessed inherent value and purpose. Through ongoing spiritual enlightenment, I delved deeper into the mysteries of Jesus's love, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, the Virgin Mary's purity, and the concept of the Holy Trinity. Immersing myself in spiritual literature, including the Bible, further

nurtured my evolving faith, leading to profound personal growth and a deepening relationship with Jesus.

Encountering Jesus through retreats and spiritual guidance from Jesus Youth elders solidified my commitment to living a life guided by faith and love. Engaging in various ministries, particularly pro-life advocacy, allowed me to extend Jesus's love and compassion to those around me.

Though my journey has had moments of wavering faith and challenges, Jesus has remained a constant source of strength and comfort. While the intensity of my love for Jesus may ebb and flow, it is my steadfast belief that Jesus is the cornerstone of my existence. Despite obstacles, Jesus continually renews my faith, reignites my passion for serving others and spreading his love.

This is the story of my encounter with Jesus. While my faith may not have been unwavering, it possesses a profound depth within my psyche. I was resolute in my rejection of mere social Christianity, eschewing the lukewarm existence of those who attend church without genuine commitment. My aspiration was sincerity; a sincere approach to every aspect of life.

I firmly believe that it is not our talents but the grace of God that shapes our identities. When I encounter atheists, I hope that they get to possess the opportunity for enlightenment. I recognise that God scrutinises the heart, not mere outward practices. It is my continual prayer that the Lord fortifies my resolve against judgement, to foster introspection, and to enable me to lead a life wholly devoted to him.

Throughout life's trials, including the challenges of marriage, I have found solace in the enduring love of Jesus. Though I cannot claim to be a true believer, I aspire to live a life worthy of that title, guided by my faith and devotion to Jesus. ■■

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Dr Ancy Joseph is a medical doctor with the Kerala Health Services. She is married to Sujimon and they have four children.

ENGAGE

# ARE WE LUKEWARM CHR

Are we truly grateful for being saved by Jesus? **Basil DCunha** asks us to introspect.





# CHRISTIANS?

*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth (Revelation 3:15-16).*

Strong words. But look at it this way: If a man saves you from drowning, won't he be surprised/shocked if you just turned away, without thanking him for saving your life? Jesus has already saved us by his crucifixion, death & resurrection. Have we expressed our gratitude to HIM?

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

Jesus also gave us a choice.

Two major evils plague us these days. Greed and sex. Corruption has reached astronomical levels. It virtually covers every level of human endeavour. We Christians have also become party to it. As far as sexual crimes, we have reached the pits. Even little kids are sexually abused and murdered.

Naturally the good Lord is not happy. What's our choice? The lop-sided world or the road to salvation? Should we ignore the one who has saved us from eternal damnation?

Let's recall the life of Lazarus the beggar and the wealthy man in Luke 16. The wealthy man didn't bother about the beggar even though he was sitting outside his palatial home. Verse 22 onwards tells us, *The time came when the beggar died, and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away,*

*with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'* In a manner of speaking, we are aware of the consequences of living a life of indulgence.

We are made aware of hell. However, we are human. The world's ways are enticing. Social media is overpowering. Cutting corners seems to be our speciality. The Lord's ways are sombre. In our hearts, we know what we should choose but the evil one is always playing the 'tomorrow card'. So, we say yes let's have fun today, we will choose tomorrow. We permit desire to creep in. As James puts it in 1:15, *When desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* And 1 Timothy 6:10 says: *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*

Many of us have taken our religion for granted. We perform our spiritual exercises mechanically, like going for Sunday Mass, receiving Holy Communion, once a year confession, etc. We have kept our spiritual life on the back seat. We have become lukewarm. Each enjoying life's thrills, with little or no concern for others, or bribing our way to things we must have. So, when the Lord tells us that he will spit us out of his mouth, his reasons are understandable. We are ignoring the one who is saving us from drowning.

At the same time Jesus loves us, and he keeps sending us SOS messages. He seeks to even visit us as he tells us in Revelation 3:20, *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*

Will we open the door? If we do,

he doesn't come empty-handed. He brings with him four beautiful gifts: 1. Forgiveness, 2. His own Body and Blood, 3. The Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) and 4. His own Mother to help us as all mothers do and here, it is his own Mother. In other words if you accept him, he will heal your sinful nature with its passions and desires.

If we pray in deep faith, we will have the courage to open the door of our heart to welcome Jesus. James puts it succinctly: *Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7, 8).*

Consider for a moment, Blessed Carlo Acutis – a 13-year-old, spending time, visiting many countries, during his holidays, exploring the actual miracles that took place from early centuries to the present day. He was totally convinced about the actual presence of JESUS in the species of Holy Communion. Blessed Acutis didn't stop there; he was so excited about his discovery that he created a website so all could share his joy ([www.miracolieucaistici.org](http://www.miracolieucaistici.org)). Jesus has given us a gift of momentous value. Young Carlo valued it – is it any surprise that he is well on his way to sainthood.

Compare this to social media where we are dragged into believing that religion is opium, and only meant for old maids. We are encouraged to justify our lust for money irrespective of the means. Porn, adultery, living together before marriage, drugs, prostitution, same-sex marriages, etc. Desire makes us easy victims to the devils' ploys. We are further indoctrinated to believe that corruption is not a sin. Everybody is doing it, even our elected leaders.

Should we use the lifesaving jacket offered to us and enjoy eternity forever? Or read \$ signs to cheat, enjoy pleasure for a few years then suffer in Hell forever. The choice is ours – but we cannot say, 'I didn't know.'

Jesus says: *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? (Matthew 16:26)* ■

IN FOCUS



# GENDER IDEOL

THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Digging into the wisdom of the popes, **Babu John** emphasises the Church's teaching on biological sex and gender.



# OGY

**G**ender ideology has gained acceptance in our culture over the past decade. This ideology asserts that a person's biological sex and personal identity may not necessarily be interconnected. As a result, 'human identity' is considered a matter of personal choice. This has led to an increase in people claiming gender identities that differ from their biological sex. Such claims have already caused disruptions in legal, social, and medical systems. I want to bring your attention to the teachings of the Church fathers regarding gender ideology.

## CULTURE OF LIFE VS CULTURE OF DEATH

**St John Paul II** critiqued secular culture's reduction of the human body and sexuality to mere biological terms, emphasising their theological dimensions instead. In the theology of the body, he taught that sexual differences tell a divine story and underscored the theological concept of 'complementarity,' where men and women are designed to uniquely complement each other, reflecting different aspects of the divine and contributing to human wholeness. He expressed concerns about the modern gender ideology that minimises biological sex differences while emphasising cultural constructs of gender, which he saw as undermining the natural family structure and promoting moral relativism.

St John Paul II often spoke against moral relativism, linking it to societal and moral chaos in his writings such as *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*. He advocated for a 'culture of life' to counter the prevailing 'culture of death,' which he believed was exacerbated by these ideological shifts. His teachings strive to maintain a balance between understanding human sexuality and identity within a framework that respects both biological and theological truths, aiming to preserve the integrity of the family and societal values.

## A THREAT TO FAMILIES

**Pope Benedict XVI** expressed his concerns about gender theory in various speeches and documents, arguing that the idea of gender as a purely social construct separate from biological sex leads to confusion about human nature and poses

a threat to the foundation of the family.

In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the Pontifical Council for the Family about the challenges posed by contemporary views on sexuality, including the legal recognition of unions other than traditional marriage. He underscored the importance of biological sex in defining identities and warned against ideologies that deny the differences and complementarity between men and women. His teachings reflect his commitment to upholding the traditional views on human sexuality and the family, which he believed were crucial for the well-being of individuals and society.

Pope Benedict spoke to the Roman Curia on December 21, 2012, about 'gender ideology.' He argued that it ignores the essential aspect of God's creation of male and female duality in human nature. The idea of gender as a social construct is false and calls into question the family unit based on this duality.

## IDEOLOGICAL COLONISATION

**Pope Francis**, continuing the concerns of his predecessors, has frequently addressed the issue of gender theory, particularly its disconnection from biological sex. In his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), he dedicates a section to caution against what he terms 'ideological colonization' through gender theory, emphasizing the role of the family in education and the need for schools to respect this without imposing specific ideologies.

Pope Francis has voiced the need for dialogue and understanding while maintaining the Church's stance on biological sex and gender. He views the promotion of gender subjectivity through international aid and educational policies as a dangerous form of ideological colonisation that confuses and misguides. In various statements, including a 2019 address to the Pontifical Academy for Life, he highlighted the dangers of believing in absolute control over our bodies, reflecting an individualistic and utilitarian perspective that he considers strips dignity and overlooks the relational nature of human beings.

In response to these concerns, the Congregation for Catholic Education

published *Male and Female He Created Them: A Pathway for Dialogue on Gender Theory in Education* in June 2019. This document aims to provide Catholic educational institutions with guidance on navigating the complexities of gender theory. It advocates for an educational approach that respects students' biological and psychological nature, promoting a binary, complementary view of gender. It fosters a 'No' to the gender ideology and a 'Yes' to dialogue and empathetic listening to understand different human conditions, underlining the necessity of respectful and understanding dialogues in addressing gender issues.

Moreover, Pope Francis stresses the family's primary role in educating children, particularly regarding sexual morality. He urges schools to support and respect family involvement, aligning with his broader vision of nurturing respectful and understanding dialogues within educational settings to address gender issues carefully and sensitively.

On 10 March 2024, Pope Francis expressed his disapproval of transgender ideology in an interview. He spoke out against gender theory and referred to it as one of the most dangerous ideological colonisation of today. In his conversation, the Pope stated that humanity is made up of the tension of differences and that growing through these differences is essential. He added that the question of gender dilutes the differences, making the world the same and that this goes against the human vocation. He warned that this is extremely dangerous because it eliminates differences, erases humanity, and eliminates the richness of humanity, both personally, culturally, and socially, including diversities and tensions between differences.

### NO MULTIPLE GENDERS

According to the Catholic Church, there are no multiple genders or fluid, changeable, or self-determined genders. As the Church holds, one is either male or female at birth; this also applies to hermaphrodites who, although they present both male and female anatomical features at birth, are either biological girls or boys. However, the Church admits that

St John Paul II often spoke against moral relativism, linking it to societal and moral chaos in his writings such as *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*. He advocated for a 'culture of life' to counter the prevailing 'culture of death,' which he believed was exacerbated by these ideological shifts.

many men and women suffer from deep-seated gender identity crises.

'They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.'<sup>1</sup> People should be encouraged to discover their true identities as children of God, not to reject their undeniable biological identities. 'Everyone, man, and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual differences and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.'<sup>2</sup>

### AUTHENTIC ACCOMPANIMENT AND CARE

It is essential to take special care when interacting with children who are experiencing a gender identity crisis. Authentic accompaniment means remaining steadfast in the truth of the human person while empathetically guiding children to that truth. When discussing such sensitive topics with a child, parents should always be present and involved immediately. Church pastoral care extends primarily to parents whose children suffer from gender dysphoria or experiencing distress over their gender identity. Parents are encouraged to seek pastoral support in their parish or diocese and to find strength and wisdom through the sacraments of Communion and confession.

Our role as catechists, parents, and

teachers is often helpless and unequipped to rectify the distorted and erroneous perceptions of bodies and sexuality. We must be clear about gender, sexuality, and truth in a world of opinion. It takes passion and competence to answer the next generation's questions in a loving, intelligent, and God-honouring way. If we don't understand the 'Whats and Whys,' we will be tempted to remain silent. We can expose our children to enormous risks if we do not provide them with solid foundations.

### REDEMPTION OF THE BODY

Christ came to redeem our bodies. We can reclaim our liberation with Christ. As St Paul explains, we hope for the redemption of our bodies. According to St John Paul, in a sense, this hope was implanted in man's heart after the first sin. *We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we await... the redemption of our body* (Romans 8:23). In his Letter to the Romans, St Paul sees this redemption of the body as both an anthropological and a cosmic dimension. *Creation was subjected to futility* (Romans 8:20). All visible creation, all the universe, bears the effects of man's sin. *The whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now* (Romans 8:22). At the same time, the whole *creation awaits with eager longing the revelation of the sons of God and nourishes the hope of also being freed from the slavery of corruption, to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God* (Romans 8:19, 20-21). ■■

### References

- 1 Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) ,no.2358
- 2 Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) ,no.2333

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Babu John is the President of TOB FOR LIFE and an internationally renowned speaker on the Theology of the Body.



# LOVE IN MY UNLOVABLE PARTS

In this interview with Aleena Joy, **Benjamin B Cruz** shares about his broken childhood, homosexual inclinations and how the Lord brought him to living waters of healing.

## Could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

I'm Benjamin B Cruz, national director of Living Waters Philippines, an inner healing ministry for those seeking wholeness in their relationships and sexuality. Before becoming a Christian missionary, I was a newspaperman and broadcast journalist. On the personal front, I am married to Hazel Cruz and father to 17-year old Ezekiel. I love to climb mountains, trek hills, and explore new places.

That's what I do. But my real identity is a beloved son of our Heavenly Father whose love is not shaped by my performance.



**During the LW training, you said that your childhood experiences had a great impact on your struggles. Could you tell us more about your childhood?**

I was eight-years-old when my parents left the care of my three younger siblings and the managing of our household to me. They worked in the city and we were all left alone in the province. We would only see them on Sundays. I grew up not knowing what it was like to eat a hot meal cooked by my mother; to have a parent accompanying me to school; and the most profound impact of all – to be a kid playing with other boys. My childhood was stolen from me.

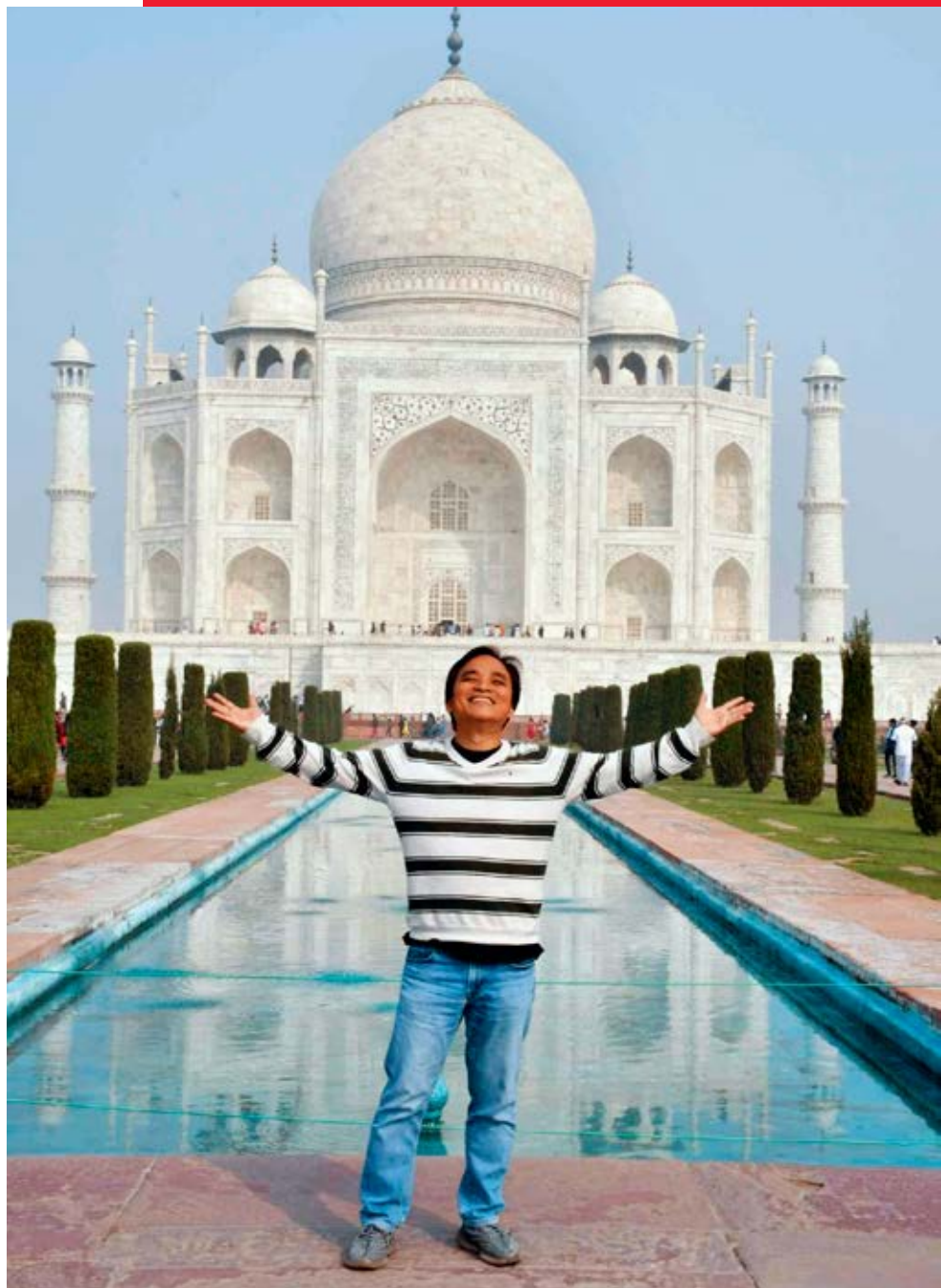
I grew up angry, lonely and in pain with the neglect and lack of care but my eight-year-old brain couldn't process the deep wound. Uncovered and unprotected, I was molested at 11 and my sexuality prematurely awakened (I learned later my siblings were also sexually abused by our neighbours). I found 'solace' in pornography, sexual fantasy, watching erotic movies and homosexual experimentation.

Beginning with my puberty, I learned to live a double life – active in the Church creating a pious image by doing religious work while living a hidden, gay life.

**At what point did you realise that the homosexual tendencies were wrong? Did these tendencies affect your marriage?**

Nobody told me homosexuality was wrong. Growing up in a conservative and devout Catholic family (in a predominantly Catholic nation), I knew at heart my same-sex attraction was wrong. But I didn't know how to be free of it. All I was getting was condemnation and shaming words, so I hid. But the more I was repressing it, the stronger it got.

As a son who became a substitute for his mother, I was bearing the brunt of my mother's anger for not managing the household well. She was a perfectionist who expected our house to be squeaky clean; my siblings well-fed and nourished; and no-debt finances. Of course, I failed. Any eight-year old boy would.



**Come to God with all your brokenness, addictions, compulsions – all that has brought you shame – and let him heal you. You don't need to clean up before going to him. Just come. He will do the cleaning.**

Just recently, I felt an attraction towards a caring man. The Lord revealed to me my need for care and the lack of intimate male friendships in my life. I brought that need to the Cross and worshipped him. It was not a religious exercise. It was like a little child going to his father for help. He brought me to his arms and imparted his affection afresh. And I was ok... more than ok.

I was supposed to be the one angry at my mother for making me do her job but as a child I didn't know that. Instead, she made me a trash bin for her rage and I sucked it all in.

So after I got married, when my wife Hazel (who wanted to be heard because she grew up with a despotic father who didn't allow her to speak up) would shout at me or get angry at me, it was not Hazel I heard but my mother lashing out at me. And thus, my angry reaction to Hazel wasn't really directed at her, but a projection of my anger at my mother.

I also, not realising it, demanded she cook meals for me and take good care of my needs the way my mother didn't. I wanted her to be a loving and caring woman whom my mother failed to be. But in the same way that I couldn't meet the unreal demands of my mother, there was no way my wife could be the mother I never had.

And so, we clashed – and clashed hard that we almost ended up at the doorstep of divorce a number of times.

But God in his mercy intervened. But that's another story.

### **How did your journey out of these tendencies look like?**

It was a long, painful process but freeing and surprisingly joyful. The Lord Jesus Christ became real to me, not just a religious figure I had to please and perform good deeds to. A friend invited me to a conference of Living Waters in

Thailand and I met Him there in a new way. He whispered to my ears that he was more interested in what was breaking my heart – the shame of homosexual compulsion – and said, 'You are more important to me than your service. I want your heart.' I felt love in my unlovable parts for the very first time. That had a radical effect in me, who had till then been used to working my way to be loved. That began a journey of being more authentic in the Church, no longer hiding but confessing my sins to trusted few. And the more I was being honest and humble, the more God would heal me. Indeed, he's closer to the contrite and broken-hearted. As I was getting closer to him (and still getting closer), the more homosexuality was losing its domination in me. As a husband, father and leader of a national ministry, homosexuality was no longer an identity I held on. I'm now, and always will be, a beloved son of our Heavenly Father who relentlessly rescued me from slavery and fought for my freedom to live the beautiful life of being his son.

### **What is your present state and what do you have to say to those people who struggle with homosexual tendencies?**

I enjoy practising the presence of God. I feel his presence and have an ongoing conversation with him, not (just) in churches or religious gatherings but even more so when I'm sexually tempted.

That's when I need him the most. And he always comes!

Just recently, I felt an attraction towards a caring man. The Lord revealed to me my need for care and the lack of intimate male friendships in my life. I brought that need to the Cross and worshipped him. It was not a religious exercise. It was like a little child going to his father for help. He brought me to his arms and imparted his affection afresh. And I was ok... more than ok.

The temptation even became a vessel of the Father's deeper healing.

My counsel to those struggling with same-sex attraction is to begin where you're at. Come to God with all your brokenness, addictions, compulsions – all that has brought you shame – and let him heal you. You don't need to clean up before going to him. Just come. He will do the cleaning.

Begin a journey of going into the roots of your homosexual struggle and you may discover there's sexual abuse, molestation, bullying, neglect, rejection and other painful, traumatic memories that shaped your thoughts and emotions. But you won't go to those hurting places alone; the Lord will go with you. Let him go with you. And when he does – and he will surely do – healing happens! For wherever he goes, there is freedom and healing!





# Parenting and Formation of Children's Sexuality

**Abigail Foard** shows parents how they can affirm their children's sexuality and gender identity.

**S**t Pope John Paul II writes: 'Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to... something commonplace...the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that... [leads] the person to the gift of self in love.'<sup>1</sup>

Parents must take seriously the task of securing children in their sexuality and gender identity.

Three key considerations for parents:

## 1. BEING CLEAR

In a confusing cultural landscape, parents must help children make sense of the goodness of his/her gender and sexuality. The good news is we have much good information at our disposal!

Theologically, *Theology of the Body* is a great help. St John Paul II helps make sense of God's vision for our masculine/feminine sexuality and is a helpful resource for parents seeking to guide their children well.<sup>2</sup>

Psychologically, parents need a developmental framework for sexual and relational maturity. Understanding the needs and goals of the four stages of child development can help parents lead appropriately in different life stages.

**0-2 years old:** In this stage, a child is totally dependent on a caregiver. Mothers secure the child in meaningful existence. Babies internalise: 'I'm seen, known and loved, and it's good that I exist!' We learn trust and security as we are fed, held, soothed and protected. Mother's eye





contact and affectionate presence imparts connection and well-being. This security is foundational to a child's ability to feel 'at home' in his or her body.

But what of a mother who is depressed, abused, stressed, or absent? Struggling mothers may have difficulty meeting the needs of their children. In these cases, children can experience a chronic sense of emptiness/deprivation. They may feel anxious, fearful, 'out of place,' alone, and live grasping (often through relational, sexual, or substance addictions) in an

attempt to fill their primal hunger/need.

**3-5 years old:** The father becomes more important now. His presence supports the mother but begins to reveal to a child that (s)he is 'other' than her. The father uses his voice to affirm and bless the identity of the child, helping set boundaries that protect the child as (s)he begins to explore the world. Children with good-enough fathers learn confidence and feel secure in their goodness as a boy or girl.

When fathers are absent, addicted,

unsafe or abusive, children do not experience man as a strong and tender presence, but can develop a fear of/resistance to the masculine. For girls, this can provoke a hunger for the masculine, but perhaps an inability to recognise good men. For boys, poor fathering can create feelings of fear or ambivalence towards the 'masculine,' or a detachment from their same-gender parent. In either case, the lack of a good masculine presence will disrupt a child's sense that they are 'good' in their gender gift.

**6-11 years old:** School age children discover the importance of same-gender friendships. Children learn that they are good enough boys and girls through the feedback from their same-gender peers. When included/chosen/wanted in school or play, children develop a confidence that 'I belong' with the boys or girls.

Lies about how we were 'named' by our peers ('you're ugly, fat, un-athletic, stupid, you don't belong,' etc.) can wound us and impact our self-definition. Exposure to pornography, childhood sex play, or sexual abuse is also common. All these experiences may have distorted or shamed us, and can create a 'template' for future self-definition, addictions, and/or unwanted behaviours.

For some, confusion about same-sex relationships or gender insecurity begins in these years, a sense of feeling 'other than' or 'different.' This can create an eroticisation of those who we feel 'different from' even if they are the same gender. Parents should help their children navigate the impact of particular wounding or insecurities.

**12-17 years old:** As children move into puberty/teenage years, successful same-gender friendships help launch them as a good gift to the 'other' gender. Youth begin to notice the opposite gender, and need guidance in the best ways to engage with them! The father's voice becomes important again. As girls navigate interactions with interested boys and boys begin to 'see' girls as desirable, the father



encourages and gives vision for healthy sexual/relational engagement with limits. This can mean helping kids overcome the draw to pornography and masturbation or affirming the value of their bodies and sexuality. Young women need reminders that their dignity is to be cherished and young men need to learn the gift of self-control.

Parents who are clear on the framework for ‘becoming’ a healthy man/woman can affirm the goodness of their children’s gender gift and help make sense of needs at each stage of sexual and relational development.

## 2. BEING FREE

Many of us had little sexual/relational instruction. Most learn about sex through curiosity and exploration: I found pornography at my grandparent’s house, read through books written during the 1970s’ sexual revolution, and a young girl invited me into sex ‘play.’ All were poor representations of God’s best and left me ashamed and confused.

My sexual brokenness magnetised shame and self-hatred. It was essential that I faced my own wounds before attempting to lead others. I joined a local Living Waters group and brought my sin and shame to Jesus. After attending a Desert Stream Ministries training, I grew in grace to help others struggling with sin/brokenness.<sup>3</sup>

To instruct children well, we must confront our own brokenness. We must acknowledge shame and wounding from promiscuity, adultery, pornography, abuse, same sex attraction, or gender insecurity.

Healing is not easy, but ignoring our wounds runs the risk of being fearful, condemning or avoidant when we encounter our children’s sexual struggles. They can sense that! Having a community that knows our brokenness helps us walk free of shame and sin. For me, Living Waters has been a wonderful space for this healing.

Allowing Jesus into our sexual ‘mess’ enables us to walk with our children in theirs: it keeps us humble and compassionate and gives courage to calmly address their needs.

## 3. BEING WISE AND HOPEFUL

A friend told me a story about her six-year-old son, whose classroom peers gave him the ‘birthday gift’ of showing him their penises at recess. The son told the teacher. She was horrified but the mother was proud that he understood that the exposure was inappropriate.

A mother of three boys, my friend is no stranger to (at times) comical displays of body parts and bathroom talk. She was neither shocked nor horrified, but used the opportunity reinforce the goodness of her son’s body and clarified the appropriate times for exposing its sacredness. He was unscathed!

In a similar way, a father found pornography in his teenage son’s room. He didn’t panic or become angry. He understood the allure and devastation of porn and told his son how it diminished his own dignity and the dignity of others, especially women. Together they had a ‘burning party’, setting the offensive materials ablaze.

A mother’s post on ‘X’ shared that her son, watching her put on makeup, asked why she did that. When she answered ‘because...it makes me feel pretty,’ he said, ‘I want to wear makeup too.’

Some might ‘take his request as some kind of hint that he’s really a girl,’ but this mother sensed that ‘actually he just wanted to look nice too. So I helped him dress up in his nicest holiday suit...so he could feel handsome.’

She knew her son ‘wasn’t telling me [he] was a girl— All he wanted was to feel special with his mom.’<sup>4</sup> This mother understood her son’s needs and responded appropriately.

These parents have a perspective and wisdom that helped them parent well. Aware of the world’s brokenness, they knew their children would bump against it. They were not surprised by sin or normal developments of sexuality/gender. With a clear perspective, they took normal bumps and questions in stride and maintained a hopeful vision that guided them well.

We parent best when confirmed in our own dignity as God’s sons and daughters. In the Living Waters Guidebook, Andrew Comiskey offers a blessing from our Heavenly Father over our gendered selves.<sup>5</sup> May this be a prayer for parents

and children alike.

*From the beginning of time, I have called you my own. I called You to reveal me in your manhood, your womanhood. I never lost sight of the real you, even when the darkness sought to cover you. My sight remained true. Through the blood of my Son, I made a way for you to be united with the good gift of your gender, your body, the way that I have called you to reveal me in your unique personality. Let me Father you. Look neither to the left nor to the right in times of doubt about your adequacy as a man or woman. Look to me. Hear the truth of my favour upon your personhood. As I have called you into that favour, turn quickly from self-rejection and hatred. You displease me in your childish reliance upon your feelings as opposed to my unflinching acceptance.*

*Give quickly to Me the shame you still struggle with in regards to your gender and body. Allow My love to be yours. Abide and become strong in My favour with which I uphold you, My son and daughter whom I made and redeemed to represent Me. You do so beautifully and powerfully. I am proud of you.* ■■

### References:

- 1 *Familiaris Consortio* (November 22, 1981): John Paul II, 37, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html#\\_ftn99](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html#_ftn99)
- 2 Also see resources by Christopher West, like *Theology of the Body for Beginners: Rediscovering the Meaning of Life, Love, Sex, and Gender*.
- 3 <https://www.desertstream.org/find-a-group>
- 4 Coco, @CoClarified, ‘X’, April 20, 2024. <https://twitter.com/CoClarified/status/1781886844608893062>
- 5 Comiskey, A. (2000). *Living Waters Guidebook: Restoring Relational Integrity through the Broken Body of Christ* (3rd ed.), p. 136. Desert Stream Press.

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Abigail (Abbey) Foard is the associate director of Desert Stream ministries, equipping the Church to offer healing to persons with sexual and relational brokenness. She lives in the US. Abbey has been associated with the ministry since 2008. She is a psychologist by profession.

# Living Waters:

## Restoring Sexuality and Relationships

**Dino Raj Paul** shares the backstory to the Living Waters training that took place in Bangalore in March 2024.



It was January 2023 when the Jesus Youth India National Pro-Life ministry sat for a consultation with Manoj Sunny, Formation Director, JY International, regarding the future vision for the ministry. It was there that Manoj raised one of the challenging areas that needed focus – LGBTQ. He mentioned how important it was to have a pastoral approach to people struggling with these issues, as well as to help and guide them in a Catholic way. He mentioned Desert Streams, a healing ministry in the US, who are quite effective as well as established in this area. He had visited their office in Kansas City and requested them to come to India to train the Jesus Youth movement. Around that time, the pro-life ministry had also been contemplating something similar and this was an opportunity opened for us to improve our way of approach in dealing with various aspects of LGBTQ.

(The pro-life ministry has always been able to empower and convince people from logical, scientific as well as theological dimensions on how various anti-life agendas are ruining our lives and our need to embrace a holy and chaste life according to God's will. Only by leading a life according to God's will can we enjoy true freedom and peace. However we were struggling to help people with easy and simple techniques that could provide them healing and deliverance from these issues. That's where we embraced Unbound and Living Waters' teachings and began promoting them across JY circles for implementation.)

In a few weeks, by mid-February 2023, Manoj informed us about an upcoming Living Waters training (Desert Stream ministries' initiative to help heal people from sexual and relationship brokenness) in Thailand. So three of us from the JY National Pro-life team, Esmin Thayana

Phils, Dr Mammen P Cheria and myself travelled to Thailand to attend this. Our goal was to see what we could learn for our ministry and to help others; however Esmin came for a deep healing from some of her childhood traumas which were still impacting her.

The training was held in a forest resort near the Cambodia border, called Ubon Ratchathani. Surprisingly for us this was an ecumenical group where many participants and leaders were from non-Catholic denominations. The training, worship, every bit of it was just mind blowing and we were in awe of what we were seeing and experiencing during those five intense days. All three of us received healing in different hidden areas of our past, especially Esmin. She experienced such amazing deep healing from the Lord and the conviction that her life was restored in Christ.

During the training we got the



opportunity to interact with the founder and head of Desert Streams Ministries, Andrew Comiskey as well as his deputy Abigail Foard. Based on our request they agreed to come down to India to train Jesus Youth during March 2024. We were so amazed to learn that Andrew had been leading an active homosexual lifestyle during his adolescence and was later healed and restored by Jesus. He is now a very powerful instrument of God helping heal people struggling in areas related to LGBTQ as well as sexual and relationship brokenness. A converted Catholic, Andrew is today married and leads a peaceful life with his grandchildren in the US. Being in the pro-life ministry for many years, I was so amazed at Andrew's approach to



L-R: Manoj Sunny, Dino Raj Paul, Andrew Comiskey, Abigail Foard

help people who are broken, with so much conviction yet in a non-judgemental attitude, full of love and compassion for the person.

It was the result of the effort and prayers of many people that, finally, in March 2024 Jesus Youth organised its first ever Living Waters training in Bangalore, India. We had 63 participants from across India, Australia, Sri Lanka and Qatar. We had 25 Living Waters leaders who came from different parts of the world to Bangalore to make this dream come true for us.

The training from Day 1 was amazing and people started experiencing deep healing and deliverance from many of their past as well as current issues,

#### DAUGHTER OF A LIVING, LOVING GOD

I lived my life believing the lie that I was a victim and my identity was that of a victim until I attended Living Waters. Despite attending multiple healing retreats and being active in JY for years, I struggled in my marital sexuality due to the wounds from my past abuses. Finally it was in the Living Waters training that I received profound healing from my wounds when Jesus poured out his Precious Blood into my heart. This restored the physical intimacy with my spouse in my married life. Today I have come to understand that I have a Father who fights in heaven and I am a daughter of a living God. I would like to tell you all that **your wound is not your fault, but healing is your responsibility.**

-Author wishes to remain anonymous

#### FROM CONFUSION ABOUT TO LOVING MY FEMININITY

I was brought up in a family where women were treated without respect and dignity and I grew up witnessing and experiencing domestic violence. I was exposed to sexual abuse and this created deep fear in me, being a woman and I could not understand the role of a woman or myself in this world. All this created serious hatred towards men and women. I started to fantasise about romantic relationships with women, where I found myself in a much safer space. As these fantasies grew and with exposure to the LGBTQ community, I was more confused about my identity as a woman.

Encounter with Jesus Youth and growing in faith started my healing process. However my homosexual fantasies kept growing and I found myself leading a divided life internally. A spiritual counselling session helped me to identify my wounds. After three months of fasting and prayer I ended up in the Living Waters training. Through Living Waters I received complete healing from hatred towards men, women and myself; healing from the confusion of my identity and role in this world and also from my homosexual fantasies. Living Waters helped me have a deeper relationship with the Lord; today I love being a woman and I see my purpose in this world.

-Author wishes to remain anonymous

especially in the areas of sexual and relationship brokenness. We bought around 40 boxes of tissue which we used to wipe tears of people pouring out during the sharing and healing services. Every participant was placed in a same gender small group of around 5 people with a trained Living Waters leader, and based on the sessions of that day, a very deep and intimate sharing took place in every group with prayers of healing. Many received deep healing from years of brokenness in different areas they had been struggling with. The teaching concepts and dynamics of Living Waters training are quite unique and powerful. This is probably the best training I have attended in my life thus far and I am so inspired to embrace this as a personal mission. The beauty is, once you experience this deep healing, the method and dynamics are so simple and effective

and can be shared to help others also.

Personally, I recommend that should an opportunity to attend a Living Waters training present itself, nobody should miss it. It will be a game changer for your life, which will directly impact in a very positive way your spiritual life, family life and ministry life.

For further details or to attend a Living Waters training, please feel free to contact me ([jjdinopaul@gmail.com](mailto:jjdinopaul@gmail.com) or +91 9886042540) or Esmin Thayana Phils ([esmin.thayana95@gmail.com](mailto:esmin.thayana95@gmail.com) or +91 6361004926).

Ave Maria!




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

# STRAIGHTENING OUT THE 'PRIDE RAINBOW'

Bro Gem Jacob George breaks down the LGBTQ and gender ideology together with what the Church holds as truth in this regard.

## Introduction

Today we live in a culture bombarded with confusions. You and I are fed with the lie that we can discover our own truth about everything and that nothing is absolute. Being the bulwark of truth and the conscience of the world, the Catholic Church has a very tough time in this era of the dictatorship of relativism. The teachings of the Church are very often presented in a twisted manner by the mainstream media creating an illusion of truth. In recent years, this is explicit in the issues concerning homosexuality and transgenderism. Consequently, people have a very foggy understanding about LGBTQ ideology, and the teachings and approach of the Catholic Church regarding it. Hence, clarity with charity is the dire need of the hour. This article

attempts to foster a fundamental but lucid understanding of homosexuality and transgenderism in the light of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

## Viewing the Rainbow Distinctly

LGBTQ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,

and Queer (or Questioning). Here's a breakdown of each term:

**Lesbian:** A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.

**Gay:** A term often used to describe men who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other men. It can also be used more broadly to refer to anyone attracted to the same gender.

**Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to people of both their own sex and the opposite sex. Do not confuse this category with people having biological anomalies for their genitals – having traits of both male and female reproductive organs.

**Transgender:** A term used to describe individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman, or vice versa. This is totally based on a person's self-perception and has got nothing to do with the biological reality



of the person.

**Queer (or Questioning):** 'Queer' is an umbrella term that can encompass a range of identities that don't fit within traditional categories of sexual orientation or gender identity. It can also be used as a political statement of inclusivity and resistance to heteronormativity. 'Questioning' refers to individuals who are exploring or questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Very often, the acronym LGBTQ could be seen followed by a '+'. This simply indicates that the list of inclinations and identifications is not fixed and may lengthen unceasingly.

What about Intersex? It is a common misconception that intersex people fall under the umbrella of transgender. An intersex is totally different from a transgender as the former is founded on the biological reality of the person while the latter on what one feels about oneself. An intersex is born with an ambiguous genital and doctors may be uncertain about whether the baby is a little boy or a little girl. Here, we must remember that when problems arise in sexual development, it does not make for a new 'third form,' or worse, for an infinite spectrum of different sexual forms. Intersex does not violate the binary nature of sex.

Now let us delve deeply into the two key terms viz., sexual orientation and gender identity which could be of great help in order to gain a lucid understanding of LGBTQ, each of which presents unique challenges and considerations.

### **Sexual Orientation: 'I am Attracted, Therefore I am'**

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to individuals of the same gender, opposite gender, or both. Here, we vividly find the reductionist tendency to limit a person to his sexual inclination. It is very well known that sexual attraction is a natural phenomenon that every person experiences. Moreover, it is quite natural for a married individual to be attracted to someone other than their spouse. But, this never serves as a justification for

legalising polygamy or for concluding that man has an innate inclination for polygamy. Undoubtedly, there has been an excessive and obsessive fixation on sexuality in the past few decades deeming it to be something without which man cannot survive, going even to the extent of defining a person based on it. Where does this hyper-sexualised culture originate from?

The latter half of the twentieth century saw the intrusion of expressive individualism into the domain of human sexuality. We call the phenomenon the sexual revolution. The sexual revolution rests on the idea that fulfilment is a matter of personal, psychological happiness and anything which obstructs that, specifically traditional sexual moral codes, is by definition oppressive and prevents us from self-expression. Unleashing promiscuity, the sexual revolution separated sexual activity from the context of a lifelong indissoluble monogamous relationship. It ultimately made sexual desire the foundational element of human identity. The debates about sex were no longer about how we acted but about our being and identity. Consequently, it brought about profound shifts in attitudes toward women's sexuality, homosexuality, pre-marital sexuality, modesty and the freedom of sexual expression.

In the post sexual revolution epoch, chastity has become a forgotten virtue and people hold on to false notions on human sexuality. This includes considering the divinely established sacred institution of marriage as a mere license for free sex, the youthful period of singlehood as a season for sexual experimentation, and celibacy as unnatural. If viewed through the same lens of the pornographic culture, anything and everything including bestiality, paedophilia and no wonder homosexuality could be justified as morally upright, ultimately leading to a chaotic sexual anarchy.

There have even been attempts to present homosexuality and other paraphilia as something very natural. There are gay advocates who justify this behaviour pointing out the fact that such practices exist in the animal kingdom. A

behaviour existent among animals is no reason for it to be morally acceptable to humans. Some animals kill their young ones. Others cannibalise their mates. These behaviours are more frequent in the animal kingdom than homosexuality. Yet, we do not give blanket approval to those practices.

Science assures that there is not one gay gene that determines a person's sexual orientation. But, there are studies which show that genetics along with environment play a part in shaping one's sexuality. Are not all sinful inclinations in man to a great extent influenced by genetics and environment? This finding is in perfect congruence with the Christian doctrine of the fall and original sin. Nobody is born gay. But, all human beings are born with the original sin – a proclivity to sin. Not even a vast majority of LGBTQ communities subscribe to the 'born that way' argument these days.

The Catholic teachings on sexual morality are irreconcilable with homosexual acts. In the light of natural law, the Church firmly exhorts that sexual act should never be separated from its end of procreation. Whenever the purpose and ends of sex is evaded, the act degenerates into merely the using of another person, reducing him/her as a sexual object of pleasure, which undermines the dignity of the human person. As the Church upholds the truth that a human person is of infinite dignity created in the image and likeness of God, she never tolerates any act that depreciates human dignity.

Does the Church have a discriminatory approach towards homosexuals? Is it that homosexuals alone have to tread the burdensome and narrow path of self-denial when it comes to chastity? From the secular perspective, the teachings of the Church may appear discriminatory to homosexuals because they analyse them solely with reference to homosexual acts. They do not have a comprehensive overview about what the Church teaches about chastity, especially in the married state, and do not realise the great difficulty involved in living it out. The Church solidly teaches contraception is a grave sin and that each and every sexual act should be open to a new life. Living out chastity for a married couple





is equally difficult or sometimes more difficult than for a person having same-sex attraction. So, the thought that the Church is being unfair and tough to homosexuals needs urgent revision.

The Church is misunderstood and hated since she is neither zealously announcing her teachings to the world with clarity, nor do her children put them into practice with fidelity. Hence, more than ever before, it is the pressing need of the time to proclaim and declare the profoundly beautiful teachings of the Church on chastity and sexual morality, especially those pertaining to the wedlock as it is the most overlooked. A clarion call must be sounded to proclaim the vicious nature of masturbation, pornography, contraception, etc. with a greater vigour and re-establish a culture rooted in chastity. The Church could capitalise on her sound and solid resources like 'Theology of the Body' to manifest to the world the grandeur and splendour of her doctrines in this area. A thorough study of such resources leaves no room for a second thought regarding the immorality of homosexual acts, impossibility of same-sex marriages and imbecility of gender theory.

Today, we know that there is a ubiquitous outcry to persuade and exert pressure on the Church to approve and legalise homosexual acts. People who

do this have the least idea on how the Church functions. The Church is driven by the Word of God, who is the revealed truth, Jesus Christ himself. Even if the whole world threatens the Church to endorse homosexual acts, she would remain intransigent, firmly and faithfully holding on to the truth passed on to her by her Lord, Master and Bridegroom. Even if a lion's share of the Catholics decide to quit the Church on this issue, she would remain calm and poised, maintaining her holy intransigence, because the Church is not a democracy and truth is not determined by the majority opinion.

Not only that the Church teaches us to accept, respect and be compassionate to men and women who have deep seated homosexual tendencies, but also she is always willing to offer pastoral care to them by listening and accompanying them in their journey to conversion and healing. Being fully aware of their difficulties and struggles, she is at their service to administer the sacraments which are the fount of grace for them to grow in self-mastery and holiness. But people who deliberately continue their sinful life and celebrate the vicious culture of immorality intentionally distance themselves from the loving embrace of the Church. The Church is the continuation of Christ who compassionately called sinners

to repentance and hence she cannot associate with the unrepentant pursuit of sin. Blessing or celebrating sin is contrary to her very nature. This is why the Church sternly discourages her children from participating in all sorts of celebrations related to the Pride month. During this month of the Sacred Heart, the Holy Mother Church invites us to grow in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and make reparations for the horrible acts of blasphemy done against him.

### **Gender Identity and Transgenderism: 'I Feel, Therefore I am'**

Transgender is an individual who believes that his/her gender is different from the biological sex he/she is assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned male at birth and having the biological characteristics of a male, but identifies himself as female, is a transgender woman. Here, solely one's subjective perception is emphasised more than one's biological reality as a man or woman: 'I feel therefore I am'. Consequently, when a biological male identifies as female, he then even goes to the extent of undergoing a sex reassignment surgery to conform his genitals to that of a female. (Same applies for the other sex as well)

Follow-up studies of those who undergo sex-change surgeries have shown that they experienced highly

elevated suicide rates, even many years post-surgery. Dr Paul McHugh, who served as psychiatrist-in-chief at the Johns Hopkins Hospital for more than two decades, was one of the first to raise concerns about transgender approaches that rely on hormones and surgeries. He noted that even though follow-up studies of sex-change patients may have indicated satisfaction with the outcome on the part of the patients, the numerous psychological problems they experienced prior to their surgeries including problems with emotions, relationships, work, and self-identity remained unchanged. Dr McHugh concluded that 'to provide a surgical alteration to the body of these unfortunate people was to collaborate with a mental disorder rather than to treat it.' Therefore, we must compassionately address their underlying mental health concerns through evidence-based therapies, including appropriate psychiatric and interpersonal outreach and counselling.

The repercussions that entail the promotion of transgenderism in society are not limited to this. The indoctrination of gender ideology into the hearts and minds of children at a very young age leading them to gender confusion must be prevented at all cost. Parents have a serious obligation to protect their children in this respect. It has been observed that young people with authentic support and encouragement outgrow their dysphoria and come to accept their birth sex once their turbulent adolescent years have passed. Another issue is the participation of trans women in women's sports. Even if a transgender 'woman' has taken testosterone inhibitors, he has already benefitted from increased bone density and muscle mass given to him through puberty. We cannot close our eyes to this stark injustice faced by female athletes in this regard. The list does not end here with the issues faced by women concerning privacy in restrooms and changing facilities.

Today, we live in a society that rebelliously rejects and denies God. This is at the very root of the transgender ideology. Hatred of God makes it intolerable for the modern mind to accept the truth that their nature as man or

## Does the Church have a discriminatory approach towards homosexuals? Is it that homosexuals alone have to tread the burdensome and narrow path of self-denial when it comes to chastity?

woman is received as a gift from God. In the words of the Guinean Catholic prelate Cardinal Robert Sarah: 'Gender ideology is a Luciferian refusal to receive a sexual nature as a gift from God.'

At the same time, let us not forget that gender dysphoria is a psychological reality which could cause severe physical and mental stress and hence, it needs to be dealt with sensitivity. We need to hold on to the individual with one hand and to the truth with the other. The Church always endeavours to speak the truth uncompromisingly in genuine and authentic charity.

### Family, Fatima and the Fierce Battle

Today, if we look around, it appears as if the whole culture is designed to attack and destroy family and marriage. The transgender propaganda engenders ideological colonisation which ultimately lays the axe at the root of marriage and family, totally sabotaging the gender roles and the order which God envisaged for families. As revealed by Sr Lucy, the visionary of Fatima: 'The final battle between the Lord and the kingdom of Satan will be about marriage and the family.' No apparition in the history of the Church has been as prophetic as the Fatima apparition. In the subtle world war against family revealed in the apparition, the LGBTQ propaganda holds a prominent place in the arsenal of Satan along with the other powerful weapons of abortion, contraception, pornography, feminism, artificial reproductive technologies, etc. But, there is nothing to panic about or to be afraid of. Our Lady goes on to affirm later in her revelation that she has already crushed the head of Satan and that the battle has already been won. We

just have to remain fearless and faithful in the battlefield, taking the weapons of prayer and penance, hoping to see the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Our Blessed Mother against all evils. Praying the Rosary demands special mention here as our Blessed Mother revealed herself as Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima and emphasised the daily recitation of Rosary. Recall what Fr Reginald Garrigou LaGrange, OP, the great Dominican theologian of the twentieth century, said with reference to the Church's triumph over Albigensian heresy: 'What the words of the preacher were unable to do, the sweet prayer of the Hail Mary did for hearts.'

In high school physics, we learn that when white light passes through a glass prism, a rainbow is generated by a phenomenon called dispersion of light. The dispersed light, when further allowed to pass through an inverted glass prism, gives back the original white light nullifying the dispersion effect. The 'ideological prism' that formed the pride rainbow was perhaps the sexual revolution, individualism and relativistic thinking. Now, what could be that 'inverted prism' which has the potential to 'nullify the pride rainbow'? Is it a culture rooted in virtues especially that of purity and chastity ordered towards a civilisation of love and life? Is it a burning zeal, passion and commitment to truth and a firm decision to combat relativism? Think, figure out and act. ■■

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Brother Gem Jacob George is a Dominican in the making and belongs to the Indian province of the Order of Preachers.

## FISHING NETS

# COVENANT EYES

**Covenant Eyes is a website that helps people break free of porn addiction through transformative accountability relationships. This review has been written by a person who wishes to remain unnamed.**

Covenant Eyes has been an incredibly useful tool for me in managing my internet usage and overcoming pornography addiction. Before using the app, I struggled to maintain healthy online habits and often found myself spending hours on websites with inappropriate content.

Once I installed Covenant Eyes on my device and set up my accountability partner, I immediately noticed a difference in my behaviour. Knowing that someone was monitoring my online activity helped me stay accountable and think twice before visiting questionable websites. The regular accountability reports provided me with valuable insights into my browsing habits and motivated me to make positive changes.

The Screen Accountability feature was particularly impactful for me. The random screenshots of my device's screen served as a constant reminder of my commitment to breaking free from unhealthy internet habits. Over time, I noticed a significant reduction in the amount of time I spent on inappropriate

**Porn Is a Human Problem, We Provide a Human Solution**

Covenant Eyes helps you and the ones you love live porn-free through transformative accountability relationships.

**Read on** to learn how Covenant Eyes can work for you.

Relationships How It Works Features Platforms Pricing

BETTER. TOGETHER.

**It Starts With Relationships**

A lot of companies fighting porn start with technical solutions. They believe access is the only problem. **Our philosophy is different.**

FRIENDS COUPLES FAMILIES INDIVIDUALS

**Friends**

With Covenant Eyes, you choose someone you know and trust to walk with you as your ally and hold you accountable for your online behavior.

The **Covenant Eyes app** tracks activity on your devices. The **Victory app** shares your activity feed right to your ally's phone.

You'll celebrate victories together and have honest and caring conversations about your successes, setbacks, and triggers. **With the Victory app, your ally will always have your back**, and together, you'll discover the freedom of living porn-free.

*"I had to learn the hard way that marriage is not a fairy tale, but I have learned that it is worth it. It's been wonderful to watch my husband mature and grow into the man God wants him to be."*

websites, and I felt more in control of my online behaviour.

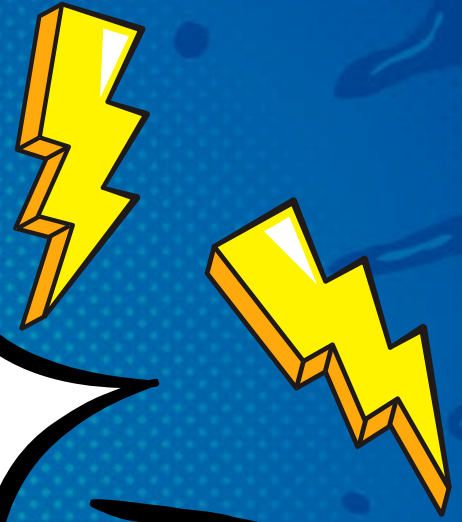
Overall, Covenant Eyes has been instrumental in helping me achieve my goal of managing my internet usage and

overcoming pornography addiction. I would highly recommend it to anyone looking to take control of their online habits and pursue a healthier digital lifestyle.

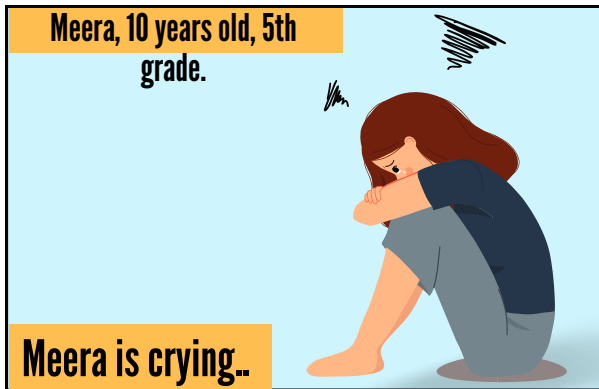


SPECIAL

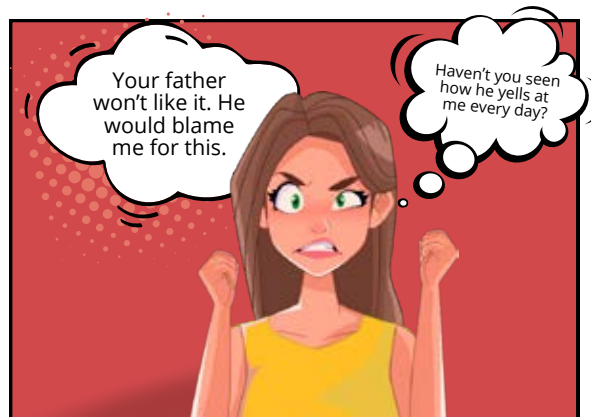
THE WOUND IS NOT MY FAULT. BUT HEALING IS MY RESPONSIBILITY



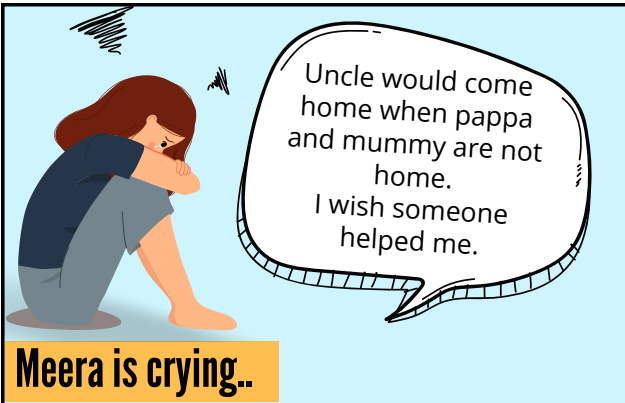
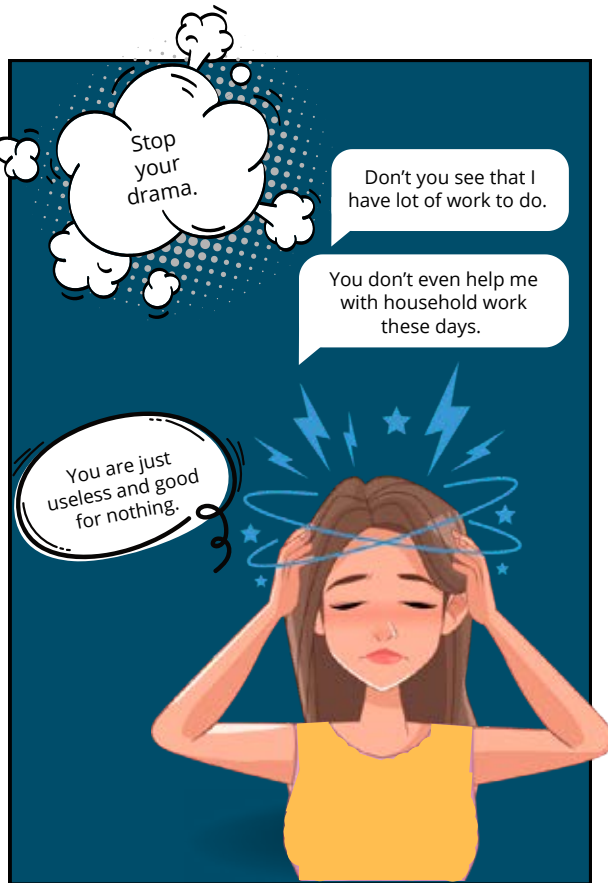
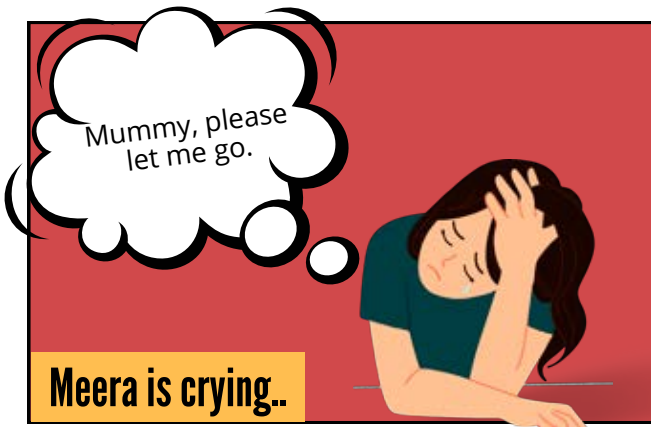
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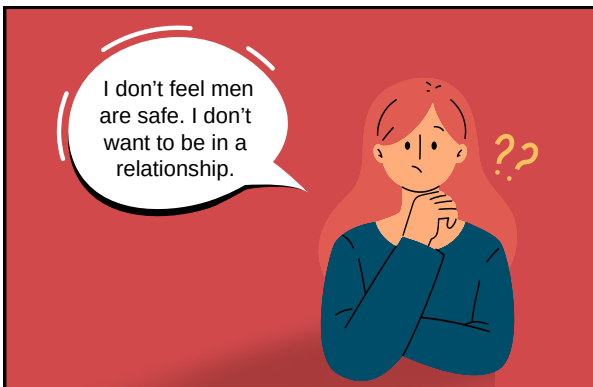
# MIND IT IS !



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### FEW YEARS LATER







There would be many among us struggling like Meera with homosexual inclination.



Like Meera we might have faced neglect and abuse from our parents and dear ones.



To be set free for real love, we must face our need for love, especially in historic areas of neglect, abuse and hurt.



We need to reconcile with our need for intimacy.

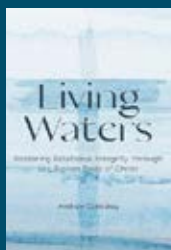
If you are struggling with homosexuality/ adultery/ pornography /masturbation/wounds of sexual abuse/ neglect /gender identity issues/emotional abuse/emotional dependency/marital problems/unforgiveness/ relationship issues/ premarital sex know that



Healing is Possible



Various ministries which can help you receive healing in these areas:



Living waters



Unbound Ministry

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## PATHFINDERS

# A Revolution Named Day

Kairos Global is happy to announce a new series on famous converts to Catholicism, written by **Neha Antony Akkara**. In this first article, she writes about Dorothy Day.

## Dorothy Day

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (Matthew 5:6).*

Dorothy Day was born on 8 November 1897. She did not belong to a religious household. Even though her father always carried a Bible and frequently quoted verses from it, he lacked faith. Her mother had little to no influence on her spiritual life. Her most meaningful spiritual encounter occurred when she visited a neighbour's home. She had gone to her friend Kaytlin's house to invite her out to play but when Dorothy entered the house, she noticed that the front porch was empty. She entered the house and noticed that the kitchen was clean and the dishes were done. Dorothy entered the front room after realising the house was empty. Mrs Barrett, Kaytlin's mother, was on her knees saying her prayers. When she saw Dorothy, she told her that the kids had gone to the store before turning to continue praying. Dorothy Day later describes in one of her books about the flood of gratitude and happiness she feels when she thinks of that family. She later realised that God had been pursuing her long before she herself was aware of it.

Years passed and at the age of 16, she enrolled at the University of Illinois and joined the university's socialist party. Even though the literary works she read helped her keep her faith in God, she rejected religion, believing it did nothing to alleviate the plight of the poor and desperate. Dorothy was imprisoned after accompanying a group of female suffragists to the White House

to protest the mistreatment of fellow suffragists in jail. She participated in a hunger strike and suffered from severe mental and emotional distress. 'What was right and wrong? I lay there in complete confusion and misery' (*Long Loneliness*, p. 78). Dorothy then turned to religion and requested for a Bible and read the book of Psalms. Despite receiving the much-needed comfort, she did not want to return to God in her defeated state. She abandoned religion following the hunger strike's success.

Dorothy lived a bohemian lifestyle during these years. The suicide of one of her close friends devastated her. She had relationships with several men and even had an abortion, fearing that the man she loved would abandon her. She writes in her books that she would occasionally visit churches, as she felt haunted by God.

### Natural Happiness

Soon she published her autobiographical novel, *The Eleventh Virgin*, which was a huge success. With her earnings from the book, she purchased a beach house where she could both study and write. Later, she married Forster Batterham, a man who shared her political views. Until then Dorothy believed that she was barren due to the trauma of her previous abortion. She was overjoyed when she discovered she was pregnant. Dorothy's spiritual awakening occurred during her pregnancy. She desired two things: to appreciate creation and to have a relationship with God. Her pregnancy made her feel clean and refreshed, allowing her to start all over. In the soil of her gratitude, the seed of her faith grew. However, Foster opposed bringing children into the world, which caused friction between them. During her pregnancy, she decided to baptise her child, Tamar Teresa. Dorothy felt compelled to pursue religion during this peaceful period. She kept a rosary in her pocket and even had a statue of Mother Mary with her. Forster became dismayed when she started attending Sunday Mass. According to Forster, religion was a form of morbid escapism.

One day, Dorothy happened to meet a nun, Sr Aloysia Mary Mulhern while walking down the street. Dorothy inquired about how she could be baptised. Sr

Aloysia taught Dorothy the catechism and gave her religious magazines to read. On 28 December 1927, Dorothy Day was baptised into the Catholic Church at the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians. Sister Aloysia was her godparent. Following Tamar and Dorothy's baptisms, the relationship between Forster and Dorothy grew more stressed. He would frequently leave them for extended periods of time. He remained silent whenever she mentioned religion. She describes it as a heartbreaking experience to leave her partner so that her child could grow in faith.

Dorothy writes in one of her books that she went to the national shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. 'There I offered up a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and with anguish, that some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor' (*Long Loneliness*, p. 166).

### Love is the Measure

Shortly after, Dorothy went to New York where she met Peter Maurin, a man who was inspired by St Francis of Assisi. They co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement, which aimed to help those suffering because of the Great Depression. Maurin also played a pivotal role in completing her Catholic education. Through the newspaper Dorothy found a medium to express the vision that they shared.

The Catholic Worker Newspaper was first published on 1 May 1933. Peter and Dorothy hoped that the newspaper would have an impact on the Catholic workers, who were chastised for their lack of morality and suffered from poverty. The newspaper's success was evident when donations of all kinds started to pour in. With the help of these donations, Peter and Dorothy soon established the movements' very first hospitality house. As time passed there were 33 Catholic Worker farms and houses throughout the country. These houses provided food and shelter to people suffering during the depression. Dorothy was very much inspired by Christ's Sermon on the Mount. She tried to live her life according to the Beatitudes. In one of her personal letters she mentions that everyone should try to

be peacemakers.

When the Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption was destroyed in a fire many were against spending so much money to rebuild the church. They felt that the church should spend its finances elsewhere. In response, Day said, 'The Church has an obligation to feed the poor, and we cannot spend all our money on buildings. However, there are many kinds of hunger. There is a hunger for bread, and we must give people food. But there is also a hunger for beauty – and there are very few beautiful places that the poor can get into. Here is a place of transcendent beauty, and it is as accessible to the homeless in the Tenderloin as it is to the mayor of San Francisco. The Cathedral in San Francisco is one of the few places where the poor can go and sit down and be with God in beauty.' Dorothy Day was a wonderful woman who was well aware of these hungers.

Keeping her weak health aside Dorothy went to India and met Mother Teresa. Her last speech was delivered at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. Deviating from the prepared text, she talked about her love for God. Following her speech, she had a heart attack and was confined to her bed. She died on 29 November 1980 at the age of 83, with her daughter Tamar at her side. Dorothy's funeral was held at The Nativity Church in New York and she was buried in the Resurrection Cemetery at New York. Her gravestone has a design of loaves and fishes engraved on them. The words *Deo Gratias* or 'Thanks be to God' has been written on her tomb. Due to her revolution of love the Church conferred upon her the title of 'Servant of God' in 2000.

'We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes from the community.' These are the words of Dorothy Day. Throughout her life Dorothy Day inspired ordinary people to love each other by following Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. ■■

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# Beloved Darling

As gender lines blur all around us and gender identity confusions on the rise, **Anil Israel** reminds us of our true identity - children of God.

The surge of Marian apparitions in the last two centuries can be attributed to counter the rising deception of the evil one. Sister Lucia dos Santos, one of the three children who witnessed the Marian apparitions at Fatima predicted that the final battle between Christ and Satan would be over marriage and the family. No wonder the alarming confusion created by the emergence of gender identity crisis is posing an incredible threat to the sanctity of marriage.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* names 'homosexual acts' as 'intrinsically immoral and contrary to the natural law' and names 'homosexual tendencies' as 'objectively disordered'. 'Such persons must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided' (CCC 2358). While the Catholic Church does not consider 'homosexual orientation' sinful in and of

itself, it does have a very negative attitude towards it. A 1986 letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons states, 'Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder.' The Catholic Church does not celebrate, recognise or approve same-sex marriages.

Something appears to have gone terribly wrong. *From the beginning it was not so* (Matthew 19:8). *God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them* (Genesis 1:27). The sexual distinction between man and woman is willed by God, as its purpose is to reproduce the human race. Every human person is loved into existence in the image and likeness of God. Every new born child comes with an assigned gender – male or female. No child is ever born otherwise.

We are a product of our good and bad experiences. As we grow, every experience influences and shapes our character and personality. A thrust of chaotic negative experiences could pave the way for one to disown one's gender assigned at birth and cause one to crave inclinations prominent for the opposite gender. With even the legal system favouring union between people with same sex attraction, morality as inscribed by the divine designer takes a back seat. The raging waves of polluting media further sets ablaze the flames of immorality, leaving ill-formed souls to accept evil as good.

Everything around us tends to deceive us that the only purpose of our earthly existence is to satisfy the desires of our flesh. My bodily craving needs to be met. My selfish longings need to be satisfied. I have only one life – only one body, and so all my thoughts and efforts converge to pleasing the decaying body – one day

We are a product of our good and bad experiences. As we grow, every experience influences and shapes our character and personality. A thrust of chaotic negative experiences could pave the way for one to disown one's gender assigned at birth and cause one to crave inclinations prominent for the opposite gender.



## IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM, MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM › GENESIS 1:27

destined to be food for worms. Excessive love of the desires of the body is a grave neglect of the desires of the soul. 'Inordinate love for the flesh is cruelty, because under the appearance of pleasing the body, we kill the soul' (St Bernard of Clairvaux).

All are called to embrace the universal call to holiness. All are called to live pure lives set apart for doing God's unique plan for our life. Homosexual persons are called to chastity (CCC 2359). *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God* (Matthew 5:8). After our earthly journey, aren't we all destined to be united with

our Creator in our heavenly home? It is when we tend to forget that we have an immortal soul, that we miss living here below with eternity in perspective.

Holy Scripture records the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with 'brimstone and fire' (Genesis 19:24) because of rampant homosexual behaviour. Even during New Testament times this wickedness is evident. *They exchanged natural relations for unnatural* (Romans 1:26). *They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator* (Romans 1:25). Whom am I serving – the

Creator or the creature? The Bible clearly states the destructive consequences of sexually immoral behaviour including same-sex relationships. *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals* (1 Corinthians 6:9).

*Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are not our own; we are bought with a price* (1 Corinthians 9-10). We are therefore accountable for acts of desecration – for immoral sexual behaviour. We need to remind ourselves of our true identity as 'children of God' (1 John 3:1). Just as the Father is holy, we his children too are called to be holy. *You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy* (Leviticus 19:2). Only when we live pure holy lives, do we truly reflect that we are children of God. Am I conscious that I ought to live like a child of God?

*You are my beloved* (Mark 1:11). We need to start looking at ourselves as God's beloved child. We are *the apple of his eye* (Deuteronomy 32:10). We are not an accident. God makes no junk. We are *chosen and precious* (1 Peter 2:6). I might find it difficult to attribute the value that God attributes to me. However, *with God all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26). He can forgive our sexual-immorality. He can cleanse our distorted evil inclinations. He can heal our damaged inner self. He can restore in us our true identity. Am I willing to be wholly repaired by him? Am I willing to embrace my identity as God's beloved darling? ■■

# SOUNDREPLY



MOVIE

## TOP GUN MAVERICK (2022)

*Top Gun Maverick* is a sequel to the original *Top Gun* movie released in 1986. Not being a huge fan of the original movie (though well aware of the cult following it has generated over the years), admittedly I was quite apprehensive about the sequel. But I must confess that after watching it, the sequel seems to trump the original – credit to director Joseph Kosinski for this amazing feat!

More than 30 years have passed since Pete ‘Maverick’ Mitchell graduated from *Top Gun*, though nothing much has changed about him. It seems the passing years has neither made Maverick any wiser, nor blunted his sharp edges – he is still his old-self – an extremely talented and distinguished pilot, though reckless, and insubordinate as ever to his superiors. His rival-turned-friend in the original movie, Admiral Tom ‘Iceman’ Kazansky is now the highly decorated commander of the US Pacific Fleet, and it is Iceman who usually gets Maverick off the hook from every trouble he gets into.

After he destroys the hypersonic ‘Darkstar’ fighter aircraft prototype by flying it beyond its limits (obviously contrary to orders from his superiors), at Iceman’s behest, Maverick is reassigned to *Top Gun Academy* for a unique mission. The navy has orders to destroy an unsanctioned uranium enrichment facility in enemy territory but the location of the facility makes it an extremely dangerous mission. The plant sits at an underground bunker at the end of a valley, surrounded on all sides by steep

With very little CGI and breathtaking manual stunts, the action sequences are well captured and do make the viewer feel part of the many flying sequences and manoeuvres. The story itself is quite simple and straight-forward, with no outlandish plots or twists, which is expected for a *Top Gun* sequel. But even the simplicity of the story works to its benefit, as the director is able to maintain a lively pace and flow.



**F**or freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* asserts ‘the right to the exercise of freedom as an inalienable requirement to the dignity of man’ (CCC 1743); a freedom that is rooted in man’s reason and will (CCC 1731). Hence in order for human beings to grow into and achieve more freedom, he/she has the duty and responsibility to form his/her conscience – i.e. to train his/her reason and will to choose good over evil; and hard as it may be, practise it often enough that when the hour comes calling for one to take that seemingly difficult moral decision, he/she can do that with a clear conscience, knowing, willing, and choosing the good without the clouds of uncertainty hanging over.

REVIEW BY  
Joseph Anthraper

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



mountains, and well defended and protected by surface-to-air missiles, fifth generation fighters, and with GPS jamming. Maverick comes up with a plan to bomb the facilities using four F-18s flying in pairs. However, instead of leading the mission, he is instructed to teach a group of former Top Gun graduates – the best of the best, so that they, instead of him, would be the ones flying this mission.

The group includes Bradley ‘Rooster’ Bradshaw, the son of ‘Goose’, who used to be Maverick’s friend and wingman, and who tragically died when Maverick and Goose got into an accident in the original movie. There is a lot of history between Maverick and Rooster that is still raw for both men – and with both not willing to let go of the past, it seems foolish to Maverick to take up the assignment as he is certain that it would further antagonise their already fragile relationship. As he is contemplating quitting, Maverick meets his old love interest, Penny, and both Penny and Iceman convince Maverick to stay and teach the graduates for the mission.

So begins Maverick’s unconventional teaching for this seemingly impossible mission in three weeks’ time – often having run-ins with his superiors as well as students over his methods, yet once he has bought into the idea, Maverick is clear about the goal: he wants his officers to come back from the mission, alive. So he pushes his students, often to the point of breakdown, both physical and psychological, yet he can’t get them to achieve the test missions within the



stipulated time window. And to complicate matters, Iceman, who had been battling cancer for a while now, passes away, which gives Maverick’s commanders enough and more freedom to take him off the mission and to rework the strategy that Maverick had made for the mission.

For once, it seems like time has finally caught up with him. With no help on the horizon, and with Iceman out of the picture, Maverick feels that it is curtains for him. It takes a lot of effort from Penny to motivate him back to take the situation into his own hands – as recklessly as he has so often done in the past and to save his career and reputation as well as the lives of his officers. Even the great Maverick needs the help of normal people around him in difficult times – whether it be Iceman or Penny. The rest of the movie is about how Maverick tries to achieve the impossible and, in the process, whether he is able to finally mend the broken relationship with Rooster?

With very little CGI and breathtaking manual stunts, the action sequences are well captured and do make the viewer feel part of the many flying sequences and manoeuvres.

The story itself is quite simple and straight-forward, with no outlandish plots or twists, which is expected for a Top Gun sequel. But even the simplicity of the story works to its benefit, as the director is able to maintain a lively pace and flow. *Don’t think, just act*, is a constant buzzword in the movie; in a normal scenario, that is very bad advice but when you have practised and perfected your art as the fighter pilots in the movie, it makes sense. For all the hours and hours of practising they have done, they ought to make those ‘right and proper’ decisions without thinking.

For us in our spiritual and moral life also this serves a good reminder, that only the practice of virtue can make it easier to choose right over wrong in those decisive moments, when there is little time nor any help to give pointers; yet choose we must! Though the past weighs heavily for many of us, as Christians, we also know that Jesus is the Lord of the past and our God is a God who can write straight even through crooked lines – such a relief for us who believe in the Lordship of Christ. All in all, *Top Gun Maverick* is a wonderful cinematic experience for the whole family!



# Chandeliers

## ✧ *St Andrew Kim Taegeon*

Benita Elissa Benny



**T**he declaration of the upcoming World Youth Day to be held in Seoul, South Korea, came to me as a surprise. I did not perceive South Korea as a country with a Catholic presence. But upon research, I took immense interest in its patron saint, St Andrew Kim Taegeon.

The first seeds of Christianity were sown in Korea with the Japanese invasion in 1592 and also with the Dutch traders who brought along Catholic priests. Christianity, however, remained dormant until 1777. Korea had trade relations with China, and they sneaked in Chinese translations of Catholic books, which were put into critical study by Korean scholars. One of them was Yi Byoek, who inspired the young man Yi Seung-hun, who got baptised in China and took the name Peter. He returned to Korea, baptised his fellows, and started prayer meetings with laymen serving as temporary clerics. Later, in 1795, Chinese priests arrived in Korea, where the Church had already grown to 4,000 people.

However, the Confucian kingdom believed in hierarchy and couldn't accept the values of love, peace, and equality

that Jesus upheld. They believed that Catholicism was a threat to social order; therefore, continuous persecution of Catholics ensued from 1801 until religious freedom was granted in 1884.

It was against this backdrop that Andrew Kim Taegeon was born on August 21, 1821, to a Confucian father and a Catholic mother. Eventually, his entire family, including his father, uncles, and grandfather converted to Christianity and was subsequently martyred. When he was a young boy, his mother was martyred for practicing Christianity (which was a grave offence in Confucian Korea), an incident that had a significant impact on his spiritual development.

At age 15, he was baptised and was selected as the first Korean seminarian. He, along with two friends, carried out a treacherous journey of 1,300 miles and, after about eight months, reached Macau and joined a seminary run by the Paris Foreign Missions Society. He became a priest nine years later, in Shanghai, ordained by the French bishop, Jean Joseph Jean-Baptiste Ferréol. His life outside Korea was not easy due to political tensions, and he had to shift time and again between China and the Philippines. He returned to Korea and spent his lifetime preaching the Word of God to those who didn't know Christ. He was the first Korean native priest who served both the Catholic people in Korea and the people caught in the bondage of the stifling Confucian philosophy – helping them realise the freedom that Christ offered. He did not waste any time in setting up proper Catholic communities and arranging for missionaries from countries like China. His fervent prayers and desire to be a Good Shepherd like Jesus gave him the courage to serve the people of God amid crises.

Now, this was the period of the Joseon dynasty, the longest-running Korean dynasty, famous for its economic and scientific contributions to Korea. But the rulers also inflicted strict Confucian rule

and persecuted Catholics. Christian faith had to be practiced in secrecy. In the midst of all this, Fr Andrew Kim remained calm and served the needs of Christians fearlessly. He travelled throughout the country, often in disguise, preaching and administering sacraments to the faithful. During his mission, he was imprisoned a few times, and the authorities set him free each time after instructing him to refrain from preaching. Yet he remained steadfast in his faith and responsibilities.

This is where things take a turn for the worse.

Andrew was unfortunately discovered by the Korean authorities when he was trying to bring in missionaries from outside countries. He was attempting to arrange for more missionaries to enter by a water route that would elude the border patrol. He planned to achieve this by using the fishermen's assistance. But he failed and was caught by the authorities.

He was arrested for the last time in May 1846, just a few months after his ordination. He was tortured and beaten to get him to renounce Christianity. Finally, after all efforts were in vain, he was beheaded along with many other Christians in Seoul, near the Han River, at the age of 25.

Even in his final moments, he sought to tell others about Jesus. His last words were: 'This is my last hour of life, listen to me attentively: If I have held communication with foreigners, it has been for my religion and my God. It is for Him that I die. My immortal life is at the point of beginning. Become Christians if you wish to be happy after death because God has eternal chastisements in store for those who have refused to know Him.'

After religious freedom was granted in Korea, he was beatified by Pope Pius XI and canonised by Pope John Paul II in 1984, along with 103 other Korean martyrs, on his visit to South Korea. His feast day is celebrated on September 20th to commemorate his martyrdom and to honour his life and legacy. ■

## Thousands gather for Ireland's March for Life amidst a surge in abortion rates



Thousands of pro-life activists participated in the Ireland March for Life on 6 May 2024, marching from St Stephen's Green in central Dublin to the Irish Parliament. Video footage shared online depicts large gatherings of pro-life advocates, predominantly young

people from high school and college, holding balloons, banners, and signs promoting pro-life sentiments. The atmosphere appears jubilant, with many participants seen smiling and expressing enthusiasm through cheers. Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, alongside various other Catholic leaders, joined the march. He described the occasion as 'inspiring and optimistic'.

Ahead of Ireland's elections, speakers encouraged those participating in the march to consider a pro-life stance this year. This call to action comes shortly after Ireland approved a bill titled 'Safe Access Zones,' establishing designated areas of 100 metres (about 300 feet) around entrances and exits of abortion providers. Within these zones, specific behaviours aimed at obstructing access or influencing decisions regarding termination of pregnancy services will be prohibited.

Eilís Mulroy, one of the organisers and speakers at the march, urged Irish citizens to prioritise voting for candidates and political parties supportive of the pro-life movement. Mulroy emphasised the urgency of this action in light of escalating abortion rates, which he described as having a detrimental impact on Irish society. In 2018, Ireland legalised abortion, permitting it until the 12th week of pregnancy. Prior to this, under Ireland's eighth amendment, abortions were only allowed if the mother's life was at risk. A commission established to review legislation following the 2018 referendum is currently deliberating on several changes. These include the potential elimination of the three-day waiting period, the removal of criminal penalties for medical professionals conducting abortions, and revisions to the legal definition of fatal foetal anomalies.

As reported by the Irish news outlet *Offaly Independent*, Ireland witnessed a record high of 9,218 abortions in 2023. This marked an increase from 8,876 abortions in 2022 and an average of around 7,000 abortions annually from 2019 to 2021. Since the legalisation of abortion in 2018, approximately 38,018 pregnancies have been terminated in Ireland.



## COLOMBIANS MARCH ACROSS VARIOUS CITIES SIMULTANEOUSLY, CALLING FOR AN END TO ABORTION

**T**ens of thousands of Colombians participated in the 18th National March for Life across more than 110 cities and towns on 4 May 2024 under the theme 'Colombia, With Life There Is Hope,' as reported by the organising platform, United for Life. The marchers rallied for the annulment of Colombia's Constitutional Court rulings that decriminalised and subsequently liberalised abortion.

United for Life was joined by various pro-life organisations, including 40 Days for Life, the Men's Rosary, and Rachel's Vineyard, along with support from dioceses, nuns, priests, families, and numerous laypeople. Simultaneous pro-life demonstrations occurred in major cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Cúcuta, Montería, Pereira, Cumaral, and many others. Before a crowd adorned with light blue flags and wearing blue neckerchiefs, emblematic

of the pro-life movement, Jesús Magaña, the president of United for Life, delivered a manifesto. In it, he lamented the 'nearly 20,000 abortions occurring solely in the city of Bogotá,' which he asserted surpasses 'other causes of violent deaths by a factor of 20.'

Magaña also cautioned against the intentions of the Constitutional Court, alleging that it seeks to declare abortion a 'fundamental right,' contrary to the principles enshrined in Colombia's constitution, the sentiments of its people, and international treaties to which Colombia is a signatory. The manifesto by United for Life called for the annulment of the Constitutional Court's pro-abortion rulings, specifically citing C-355 of 2006 and C-055 of 2022, which it described as contributing to a 'terrible holocaust.' Additionally, the organisation urged the Legislature to set aside 'euthanasia bills' and instead enact legislation safeguarding life, pregnancy, motherhood, and the institution of the family. It also demanded the Legislature 'defeat bill 270 of 2024 that prohibits parents from choosing the best psychological treatment for their children according to their convictions, values, and principles' and for forceful action against child sexual exploitation and support for 'women with crisis or unexpected pregnancies through well-funded public policies.'

Father Laureano Barón, a priest from the Archdiocese of Bogotá, was among the speakers who addressed the attendees. He underscored that 'God is the sole master of life, from its natural beginning to its natural end.' He urged everyone to recognise Colombia as a pro-life nation and encouraged prayers for the conversion of individuals.

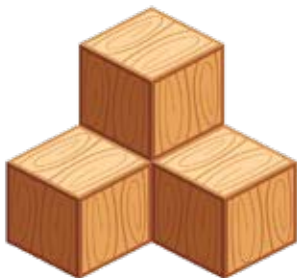


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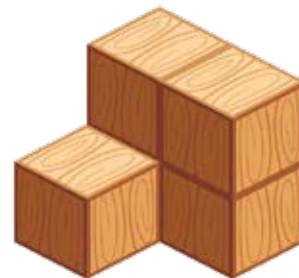


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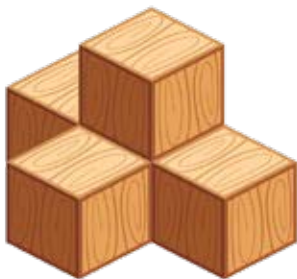
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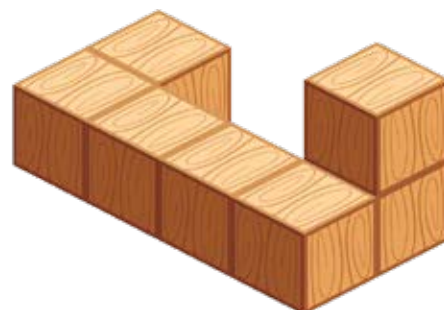
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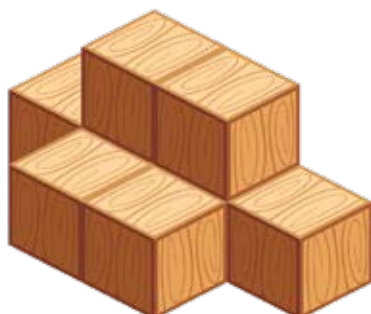
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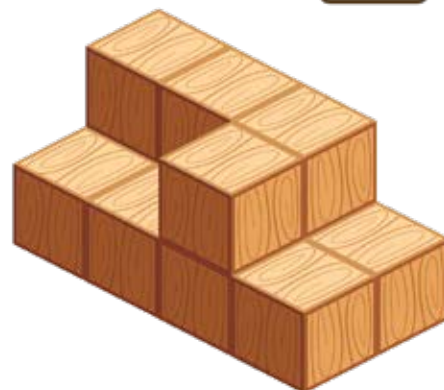
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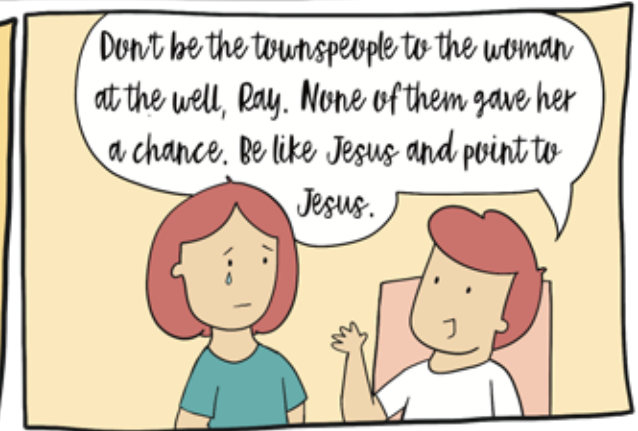
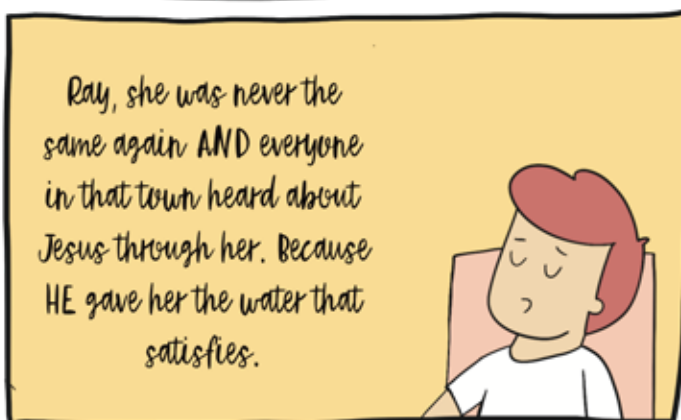
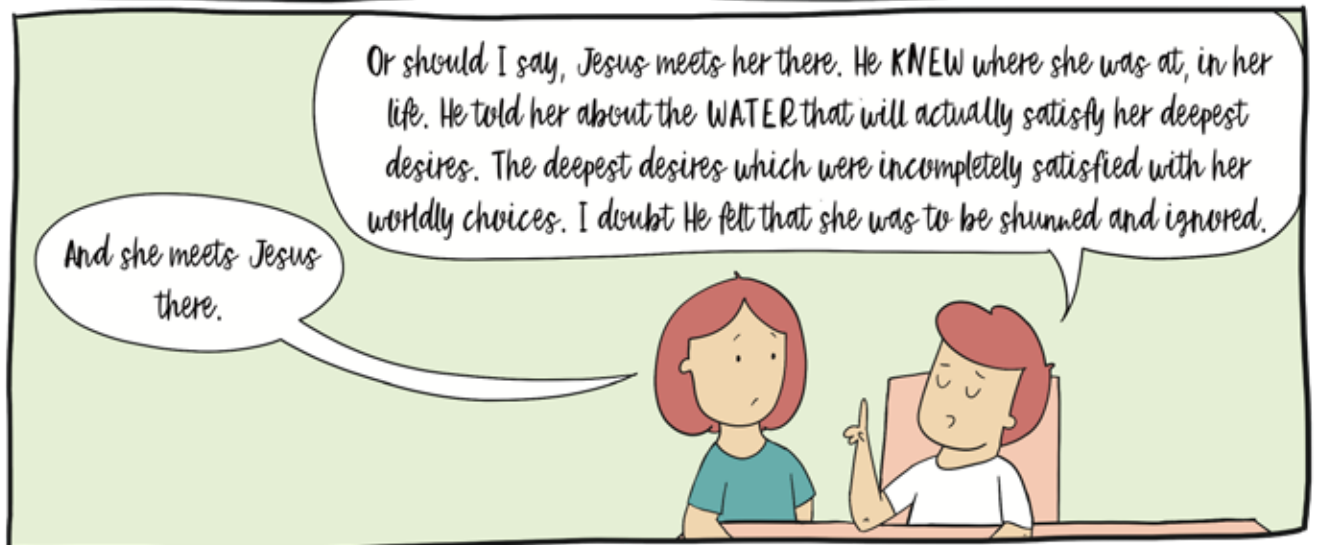
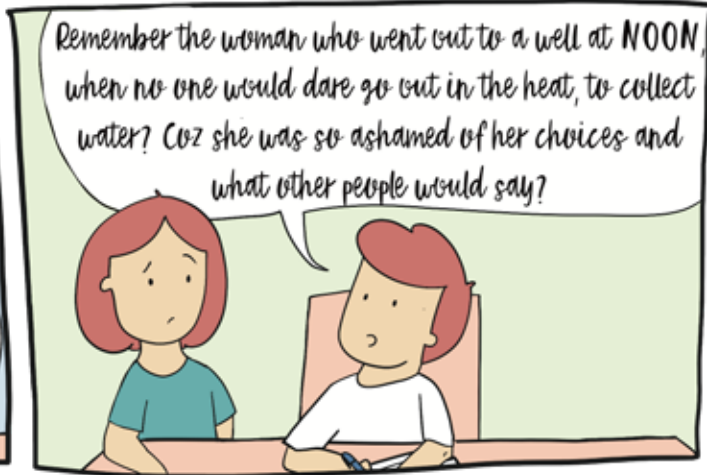
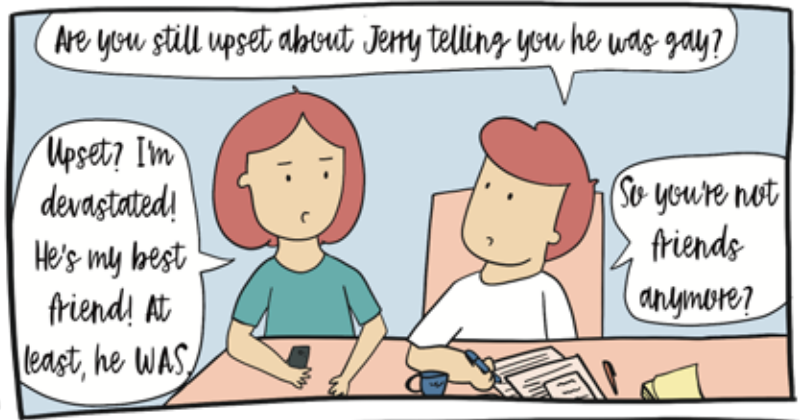
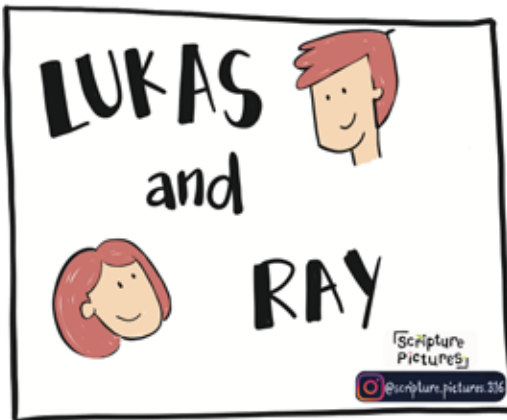
**D** Number of cubes



**E** Number of cubes



**F** Number of cubes





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