

KAIROS

GLOBAL



ALSO ↓

Beginning
with 'the
Beginning'

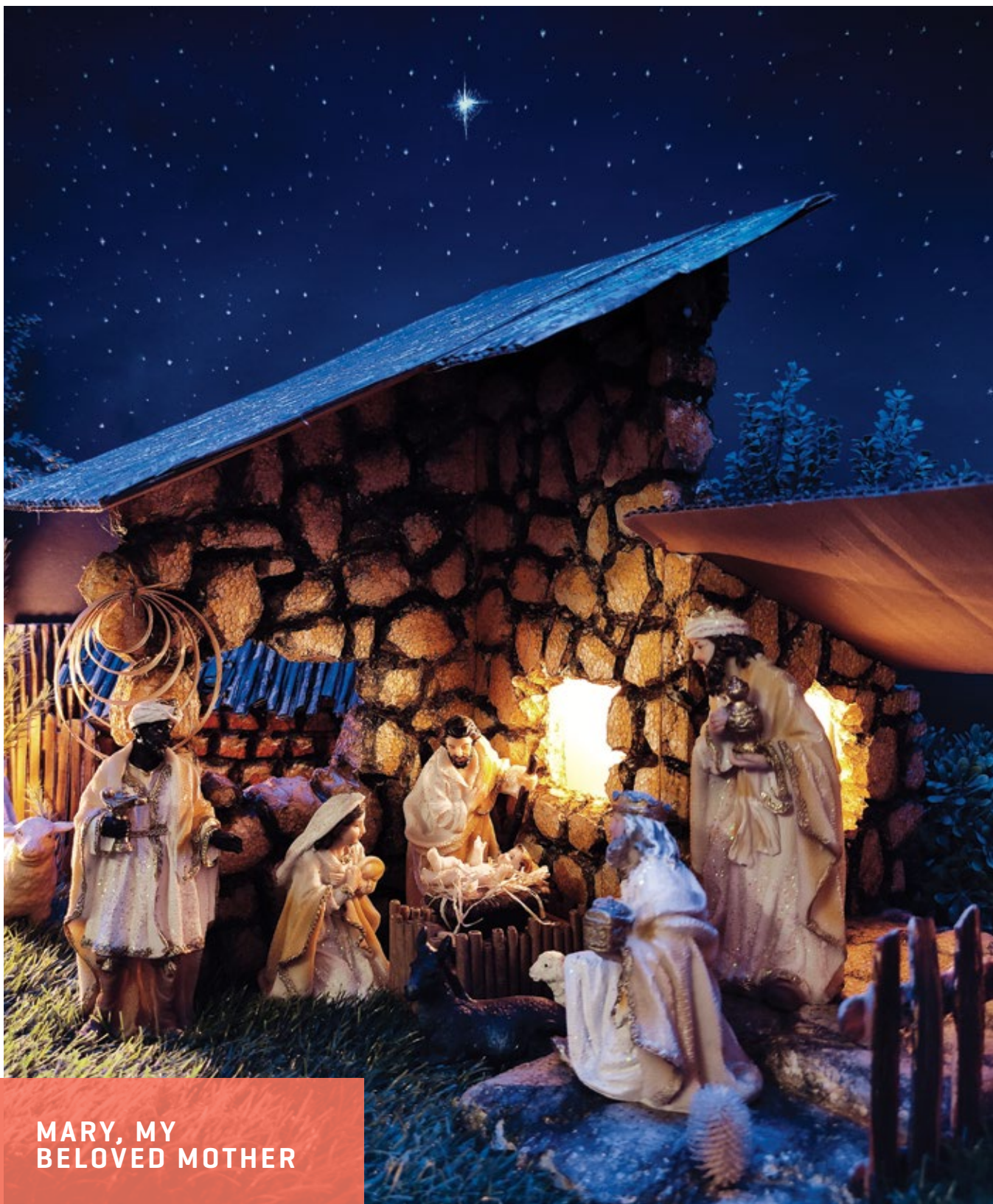
■ NICHOLAS KOEPPPEL

WE ARE
SHEPHERDS

■ FR SHIJU PAUL SVD

HEAVEN, IN MY OPINION

VARIOUS AUTHORS



MARY, MY BELOVED MOTHER



O Lady of the Epiphany, through your power, glory and love, show us your salvation – Jesus Christ. As the shepherds of Bethlehem came to you long ago, we now come before you. With Jesus Christ reigning in your arms, we also bow in awe. O Queen and intimate friend, remember our poverty. We beg you O tender Mother to hold our hands and listen closely to the desires and needs of our hearts.

EDITOR'S ROOM



DR. CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL



AS ADULTS, MAJORITY OF OUR MIND SPACE IS PREOCCUPIED WITH WORLDLY MATTERS, OUR CAREER, JOBS, FINANCES, FAMILY, EDUCATION AND POSSESSIONS THAT WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO SPARE FOR HEAVEN. DOES THIS LEAVE US MORE HAPPY AND CONTENTED? SEEMS NOT.

DESTINATION HEAVEN

It seems like we stop thinking and talking about heaven when we grow up. When we were children, very often heaven was part of our thinking imagination and discussion. It used to guide our behaviour, especially if somebody were to say, 'If you do this, Jesus may not like it and you may not be able to go to heaven.' Or the encouragement, 'If you do this sacrifice, it will make sure your presence in heaven.' In short, somewhere in the journey we lost our heaven focus.

As adults, majority of our mind space is preoccupied with worldly matters, our career, jobs, finances, family, education and possessions that we don't have any time to spare for heaven. Does this leave us more happy and contented? Seems not.

How can we bring back a heaven-centredness in our lives? This issue of *Kairos Global* is an attempt in that direction. We firmly believe that it will help in making our lives more meaningful and satisfying.

Let's have a look at these words from people who had foretaste of things to come.

Heaven is 'neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our meeting with the Father which takes place in the Risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit.' **Pope John Paul II**

Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. **St Thomas More**

He who carries God in his heart bears heaven with him wherever he goes. **St Ignatius of Loyola**

The gate of heaven is very low, only the humble can enter it. **St Elizabeth Ann Seton**

If love, even human love, gives so much consolation here, what will love not be in heaven? **St. Josemaria Escriva**

There, good shall be so ordered in us that we shall have no other desire than to remain there eternally. **St Augustine**

If we only got to heaven, what a sweet and easy thing it will be, to be always saying with the angels and the saints: *sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*. **St Phillip Neri**

I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth. **St Therese of Lisieux**

What does it matter to you whether Jesus wishes to guide you to heaven by way of the desert or by the meadow, so long as he is always with you and you arrive at the possession of a blessed eternity? **St Pio of Pietrelcina**

In this world we are all in a valley of tears. Our consolation is not here, we shall have it eternally in paradise, if we suffer tribulations on earth. **St Benedict Joseph Labre**

Heaven is a city on a hill, hence we cannot cast into it: we have to climb. **Ven Fulton Sheen**

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We are no longer slaves to sin.
Romans 6:6

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ASK



FR. BITAJU

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➤ **If the sole purpose of sex is procreation, and anything outside that scope sinful, then why would God create us with an overabundance of nerve endings in our reproductive organs making sex extremely pleasurable?**

The sexual act is extremely pleasurable, yet pleasure is not its ultimate purpose just as pleasure is not the ultimate purpose of eating. Eating is pleasurable, but it is not merely for pleasure. In other words, pleasure is subordinate to the intrinsic purpose of eating, namely nourishment of the human body. In the same line of reasoning, we see that sexual pleasure is subordinate to the goal of human sexual act, namely bonding in love (unitive purpose) and procreation (CCC 2366). The Sacred Scripture makes clear the purpose of the sexual act when it says, *Man shall leave his father and mother and shall be united to his wife and they shall become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5). Therefore, the primary purpose of a sexual act according to God is 'union' of the spouses. Again, Genesis continues to state that, *God blessed them and said to them be fruitful and multiply* (1:28) – the 'procreative' significance of the sexual act. So, the purpose of sex is both union and procreation, in other words, bonding and babies.

Taste is a reward and an encouragement, so that we sufficiently nourish our bodies and sustain our lives. If one chooses to eat anything and everything because it is pleasurable, he/she will easily become unhealthy and fall sick. Healthy eating requires moderation and strict adherence to the rule of healthy eating habits. If it is so, how much more we should discern, moderate and adhere to the rules to ensure our capacity for sex achieves its original (inherent

purpose? These rules and laws are there not to deprive us of pleasure but to liberate us to experience the pleasure in its fullness. The pleasure in conjugal union is meant to give us a tiny peak into the ecstasy that awaits us in heaven.

Who gives these rules and how do we know them? God gives his children the rules and we know them from the Scriptures and from the teachings of the Church. Just as a company that manufactures a product includes an instruction manual that warns us if we do not adhere to the rules, the product will stop functioning.

Yes, an overabundance of nerve endings in our reproductive organs makes sex extremely pleasurable. God, the Creator, designed our human body in such a way that the inherent purpose of sexual act (union and procreation) will be upheld by his children at all times. Realising this truth St Thomas Aquinas wrote: 'As often as husband and wife enter into the sexual embrace in a state of grace, they are growing in grace and in glory.' Remember that we are created with the capacity for reason and will, whereby we are able to make intelligent free choices in accordance with God's commands, so that we can continue to enjoy life (Deuteronomy 30: 19). This would mean that the sexual act must be between a man and a woman, within the sacramental confines of marriage and the couple shall not intentionally contracept the possibility of life but be totally open to it all the time.



YOUCAT 417

WHAT SIGNIFICANCE DOES THE SEXUAL ENCOUNTER HAVE WITHIN MARRIAGE?

According to God's will, husband and wife should encounter each other in bodily union so as to be united ever more deeply with one another in love and to allow children to proceed from their love. [2362-2367]

In Christianity, the body, pleasure, and erotic joy enjoy a high status: 'Christianity . . . believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body; that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty and our energy. Christianity has glorified marriage more than any other religion: and nearly all the greatest love poetry in the world has been produced by Christians. If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts him at once' [C. S. Lewis]. Pleasure, of course, is not an end in itself. When the pleasure of a couple becomes self-enclosed and is not open to the new life that could result from it, it no longer corresponds to the nature of love.

DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions January

For Educators

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.



Pope talk



We must be awake, alert, and vigilant as Jesus warns us that there is the danger of not realising his coming and being unprepared for his visit.

The poverty that sets us free is one that results from a responsible decision to cast off all dead weight and concentrate on what is essential.

A daily examination of conscience helps to avoid repeating mistakes.



Prayer is not an escape from one's responsibilities, but it is an aid in realising the good we are required to do, here and now.

Let us bear this in mind that God is hidden in our life, he is always there and is concealed in the commonest and most ordinary situations in our life as he comes in everyday things.

Spiritual consolation is a profound experience of interior joy, consisting in seeing God's presence in everything; it strengthens faith and hope, and even the ability of doing well.

Today, Jesus our King looks at us from the cross and it is up to us to choose whether we will be onlookers or involved.

Many of our prayers are also somewhat requests for favours addressed to the Lord, without any real interest in him and it does a great deal of good to learn to be with him, without ulterior motives.

JESUS YOUTH



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

Beauty of Family Space in the Movement



'How can this be? Why are so many families attending this youth meet?' My friend asked me in amazement, seeing the unusual mix of the audience gathered there. Jesus Youth of a city had gathered for a day conference. This friend came to meet me learning that I was also there. She was expecting a youth-only meeting, but the participants were of all age groups. The day's programmes also fascinated her. First there was time for interaction and then joyful singing and prayer. Later they were divided into streams and sent to specific halls. Youth, teenagers, children, and couples met in designated places. There were also some priests and sisters and they moved into a smaller room. 'You call it "Jesus Youth," but all ages are here!' She found it so curious.

I sat down to explain to her the core character of the movement. JY has the focus of reaching out to children and youth and helping them grow as vibrant missionaries, but families, priests, religious and youth join hands on this platform. Over the years it has grown into a large joyful community with a mission of evangelising today's young generation. Perhaps this is what makes Jesus Youth quite different from all sorts of other similar groups.

WAS IT ALWAYS LIKE THIS?

'What was the original plan? Did you work like this from the start?' To answer, I had to tell her some history. The preparatory work started in 1978. There were already many youth active in charismatic renewal in our state and the coordinating team gave me the task of going around and gathering them, with plans for a big conference. Fortunately, we adopted a style of a large team, meeting, interacting, and planning for each step. One good turn was the whole thing did not end with the '78 youth convention.

Within a couple of years, a sizable community of active leaders started meeting regularly to gather and grow together, continuing to carry out the mission of building youth in their respective areas. This group, known as the 'First Line Leaders' was a sending-forth-communion made up of elders and youth. The focus was not on the age or state of life of the participants, but on an exciting mission of changing the youth world. That spread everywhere and continues even today.

So, when people ask, why do you have families in Jesus Youth or is it not a change from the original intention, my answer is, nothing has changed but rather the seeds have grown, branched out and borne fruit. We are a variety of people joining hands for a mission

towards the youth.

During the long journey of the movement there have been questions from here and there, 'Why are you not like other youth organisations?' suggesting that Jesus Youth follow the pattern and working mode of others. Somehow, reflections and discussions at different levels helped the community to remain on its special path.

And today, looking around the world we see different, what the Church calls, Ecclesial Movements with similar mixing. Finally in 2016, when the Vatican officially approved Jesus Youth as an international movement this speciality of its hybrid character with mission-to-youth focus was recognised and highlighted by the Church. Thanks be to God!

FAMILIES AND YOUTH TOGETHER IN NEW MISSION

'Wow, Great! Whose idea was this? Who would have given you this excellent orientation?' By now my friend was getting a clarity on the nature of the movement and was curious to see how it emerged. 'In one word, the Holy Spirit.' From the beginning we gathered as an intimate community and there was a process of finding the way and growing together. These days the Church talks about a process



So, when people ask, why do you have families in Jesus Youth or is it not a change from the original intention, my answer is, nothing has changed but rather the seeds have grown, branched out and borne fruit. We are a variety of people joining hands for a mission towards the youth.

called 'synodality' or a community walking together in mission. Perhaps, from the beginning the Holy Spirit had been quietly inspiring and guiding the leaders to gather and work in such a synodal manner and the result has been this beautiful way of being and ministering.

Jesus Youth journey of growth has been quite special. When some other groups focused on a lot of teachings and study, or on prayer and pious exercises, or still others on many activities and projects, we gathered to talk, reflect, and move ahead following the inspirations emerging from the community. Maybe this made the big difference.

FAMILIES HAVE A SPECIAL ROLE

'I am curious,' she said. 'What can families do in a big way? Especially in these modern times when they are so challenged and burdened?' I made a quick listing of ideas, with examples of JY families from different countries.

Small groups: We, four families belong to this joyful little cluster. All are so different, but we talk a lot, support in every way possible and back up everyone in their mission.

Accompanying guides: Either one of the couples or both extend accompaniment of other families or youth. In many countries JY is active and continues only because of these foundational people. What can replace the prayer support that these senior friends offer!

Open homes: Here youth, alone or in groups, come to chat, eat, and grow in Jesus.

Animating families: There are so many activities, teams, and initiatives in JY in each place. Smiling and attentive presence of families keep the teams alive and growing.

Mission trips: We have Project Child Support and families visit those homes. Some go to care homes and

poor colonies regularly. Some go on a 'One Month Mission' to faraway places.

Parish and neighbourhood presence: Many JY families find their rich mission in parish life or socio-political groups. In JY fellowship they receive inspiration to make a difference there.

IF WE HAD NO FAMILIES IN JY!

By now my friend Sanjana was so excited. 'This is so good for families and also for youth. Everywhere youth ministry is in such poor shape, but you have hit upon a marvellous treasure. Surely others should follow this beautiful Jesus Youth model.' My joy was that she made a decision to be active in Jesus Youth and wanted to grow as part of a family group. ■■

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

MISSION

TALK

WE ARE SHEPHERDS

Fr Shiju Paul SVD shares what life is like serving among refugees in a conflict zone.

With Falata children, a cattle-herding nomadic tribe. They come around December to May after the rainy season in search of grass for their cattle. These children had come to fetch water from a waterhole when we met them.

On 31 March 2022, I participated in an evacuation drill around midnight organised by the security officer. When the emergency siren goes off all the resident staff must rush into our safe room within two minutes with a carry bag. A safe room is built with reinforced concrete with a heavy, sealed window and a steel vault-like door that can protect those inside from bullets and grenades. The carry bag must contain all travel documents, ID card, a water bottle, first aid kit, emergency snacks and an extra pair of clothes before being driven or walked to the UN compound or to the airstrip for emergency evacuation accompanied by UN peacekeeping soldiers. Welcome to life among refugees in a conflict zone!

I have been living with refugees for two years now in Maban County, Upper Nile State in South Sudan. It borders the Blue Nile State of Sudan, the epicenter of decades-long civil war and killings. In 2020, I voluntarily consented to a call by our Generalate for serving with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in conflict zones. There are no members of my religious order here. SVDs left South Sudan on 29 July 2016 after a militia group entered the mission compound and shot two youth who were staying in the youth centre. Prior to that, our *tukuls* (a round hut made of mud and grass) were burnt down and one of our sisters, a Slovakian nun who was a medical doctor, died from gunshot wounds inflicted in an attack by three soldiers on 20 May



2016. Subsequently the SVDs too were flown out to safety in Nairobi, Kenya. They have moved to the Bidi-Bidi Refugee Settlement in Uganda, considered to be the largest refugee settlement in the world today for ministering with the refugees from South Sudan and other places.

The Beatitudes is a Geography. The more accurate expression of the Beatitudes is, 'You are in the right place if you are merciful. You are in fact in the right place if they persecute you, or insult you.' It's about social location. It's about where we choose to stand. The Beatitudes is not a spirituality, it's a geography (Fr. Greg Boyle SJ). It tells us where to stand. The Blue Nile State in Sudan is rich with fertile soil and minerals. It is into this state that the River Blue Nile enters Sudan. As elsewhere in the continent and in many parts of our world, everyone wanted a share of the Blue Nile's rich agricultural and grazing fields, mineral resources such as gold and chrome, various natural resources such as forestry and the Nile's water. Frequent conflicts and competition to access control of these resources between indigenous tribes of Blue Nile and Arab-dominated North can be traced back well before 1956 when Sudan became an independent country. After independence these resources fed the political elites of the north in revenues, hydroelectric power and industrial scale gold mining to compensate for the lost oil fields to South Sudan in secession. Resistance to political exclusion and economic exploitation has killed more than 250,000 people to date in this area since 1955. And Africa's longest-running civil war rages on.

Living in Tents. Refugees live in UNHCR-provided tents. Tents, though temporary, are not just shelters for those escaping life-threatening violence. It is more than the unknowns of wandering and uncertain searching for a new destination to belong. It is



Above: Boiled Pumpkin: Lunch after a Sunday Mass during a trip to a distant outstation. **Top:** Mass in a village chapel

a home that gives people a sense of normalcy and regained dignity. God tented with the Israelites in the wilderness. In Jesus, God pitched God's tent with us up close in person. There are currently four major refugee camps or tented settlements in Maban County. They host over 141,548 refugees from Sudan's Blue Nile (BN) State. Though all hailing from Blue Nile State, they carry their bitter ethnic divisions among themselves. They outnumber the local Mabanese host community, who themselves are victims of long running conflicts. As a result, there have been sporadic violence between the refugees and the host community over competition for limited resources in cutting down trees for firewood, grazing land for livestock, and land for farming and access to employment.

I live outside the camp in a guarded JRS compound that hosts some 30 staff, many of whom were refugees themselves or child soldiers at certain points in their lives. Among them a few are Catholics. It is both creative and challenging to live alongside under the same roof with women and men of different faiths or no faith. Last year we built a simple



The Charge' de' Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature of Vatican in Juba, H.E. Ionut Paul Strejac, and Bishop Daniel Adwok M. Kur of Kosti Pastoral area Khartoum Diocese paid us a visit recently.

tukul as our small chapel in the compound. This is our 'tent of meeting outside the camp' (Exodus 33:7). It is a powerful imagery of the presence of God in Hebrew Scripture where Moses regularly encountered the Divine in deep contemplation. Fr Richard Rohr, a great Franciscan mystic of our times would say the 'tent of meeting' is the initial image and metaphor that eventually became our much later notion of 'church'. Even though this tent is foldable, moveable, and disposable, it is still a meeting place for 'the holy,' which is always on the move and out in front of us.

'Canonball Moments.' The Jesuits celebrated Ignatian Year from May 22, 2021 to July 2022 marking 500 years of St Ignatius' conversion when a cannonball struck him on the battlefield. A cannonball moment is when specific experiences force us to stop how we live and invite us to live the trajectory of our lives in a new way where God becomes more present. 'Canonball Moments' is the appropriate word to describe my life in a refugee camp in South Sudan. I arrived at the camp by a United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flight as there were no



Throwing plastic sheets for roofing from tractor trolley after recent floods.

other safe means to get here. It lands on a gravel air strip guarded by UN Peacekeeping Forces as there is no wall fence, or offices around it. Insertion into this way of life has many challenges, such as dietary adjustments to simple local food, limited supply of solar/generator power, and slow and erratic internet connections. There are no tarred roads. Now it is summer with an average daily temperature of 43-46 degree Celsius with dust storms. We use shared common drop-hole toilets, fetch water from common taps to do laundry, living in small tin sheet-roofed rooms, and the only movement is for work from the base to the camps and back, following strict security protocols. In the long haul, all these limitations become a challenge. Every day one wakes up to the enormous scale of humanitarian needs with the sight of simple plastic roofed tents and mud huts stretching for miles and miles. In the past, the current JRS compound where I live used to be a military barrack for the Sudanese army. Therefore, the deminers have to sweep metal detectors over the ground always before we undertake anything on the ground. I saw G4S security teams painstakingly digging and scraping through loose soil with sharp tools to remove any undetonated explosives.

We are Shepherds (Genesis 47:3).

The shepherd is concerned with the actual physical needs of the flock such as seeking water, shade, and good fodder for animals.

Tents, though temporary, are not just shelters for those escaping life-threatening violence. It is more than the unknowns of wandering and uncertain searching for a new destination to belong.

They are constantly engaged with the real life issues of their flocks rather than living in ivory towers of entitlements and theological abstractions. Interestingly, the Region of Maban falls under the jurisdiction of the Khartoum Archdiocese in Sudan. This area has been without a parish priest for the past ten or more years because of the war. There are no other religious or priests here apart from my companion, a Kenyan Jesuit. Pastoral needs of the host community are provided by a team of catechists and a resident priest with JRS. There is a small church building still standing in Maban, and in other 50 or more grass thatched centers people gather on Sundays for prayers led by the catechists.

JRS serves the cause of refugees and other forcefully displaced people. Services offered

include education, psychosocial and pastoral programmes to help the refugees rebuild their lives. During the week I accompany the psychosocial team members to the camps to conduct various programmes for men, women and youth. In fact, all are Muslims in three camps and in one camp almost 90% are Christians of diverse ethnicities which is also a cause of inter-ethnic fights. The psychosocial programmes we conduct provide safe spaces where participants can share their trauma and pain. We provide an atmosphere in which participants can tell their stories of gender-based violence, loss and pain, trauma and struggles. Women go through it a lot as they flee through areas controlled by the rebels or by the military.

Strangers in the Land. *You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt* (Exodus 23:9). Biblical persons explicitly or implicitly identified with the status of strangers for various reasons often the same as today: war, famine, political persecution, seeking better life, etc. In fact, the Bible is a book of migration! I conclude with the words of Gregory Boyle SJ, 'No daylight to separate us. Only kinship. Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognise it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased. We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. We locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless. At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We stand with the demonised so that the demonising will stop. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away.' ■■

Fr Shiju Paul SVD was ordained in 1997. This year, 2022, he completes 25 years in ordained ministry together with his elder brother, a CMI priest and his younger sister, 25 years in vows. He has worked in Zambia, Botswana, Ghana, and the USA. He currently works in South Sudan with the Jesuit Refugee Services in a refugee camp.

YES TO LIFE

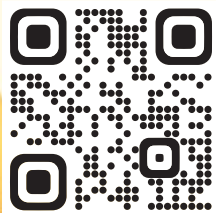
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Jesus Youth
PROLIFE MINISTRY



EXPERIENCE



Tremendous and
Indescribable

Power

Pushpaja Joseph relates her experiences
of the Holy Eucharist's power.

I have wanted so much to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer (Luke 22: 15).

So powerful and indescribable is this tremendous love where God eagerly wants to share his body and blood with me, a poor and unworthy soul.

Thunder rumbled outside as the dark grey clouds coloured the sky. Despite the tornado warning that kept popping up on her phone, Anna continued to get ready for Mass. When her family attempted to stop her from going out during such severe weather conditions, she simply responded, 'If I was having a medical emergency, I would go to the ER regardless of this weather. My need for attending Mass is no less than that because I am unworthily invited for a heavenly banquet.'

I too am like Anna, the power and attraction to this living Eucharist cannot be expressed in words. This is a true love story of a Lord who passionately loved and is still loving us through the Eucharist. I consider being with Eucharist/attending Mass as the most blessed and valuable time in my life. The mere thought of attending Holy Mass itself brings a great joy to my heart. The burning love which comes from the Eucharist has so much power in it; it greatly improves my days, it helps me to deal with stress, it helps me to deal with any agony that comes across my daily life. Even if I leave the house early to reach Mass on time, I will still take toll roads to be in my Lord's presence for a few extra minutes. That is how powerful and magnetic he is. The opportunity to kneel down in front of him is such a profound and beautiful moment. Most of the time I lack the words to communicate and instead just want to see him and to simply be in his mighty presence. This is somewhat analogous to meeting with a loved one after a lot of time, we may not have any words to exchange as our heart is overflowing with joy.

I love to share my thoughts with him, my struggles, worries, dreams, and love towards him. After talking to him, I feel relief and peace. It's as if I've shared with someone who understands me. I often find that I don't need to share my issues

Even though he knows my shortcomings, he has never compromised his compassion for me despite the many occasions I have been unfaithful to him. He has continued giving me opportunities to live as God's child. He takes all my injustices and in his wounds I get healed.

with others to find some relief if I have already shared them with the Lord.

Even though he knows my shortcomings, he has never compromised his compassion for me despite the many occasions I have been unfaithful to him. He has continued giving me opportunities to live as God's child. He takes all my injustices and in his wounds I get healed. On many occasions, I would come to Holy Mass with severe back pain (I suffer from chronic back pain) and a heavy heart, and as soon as I received Holy Communion, I would experience instant healing and peace. Not necessarily because I asked him to heal me, but because I believe the pain goes away once he comes into me.

I do believe that he is living in the Eucharist and he is the same Lord who was living in Nazareth and Jerusalem, just in a more glorified form.

A couple of years ago when I was doing my BSN degree, my last assignment for a course was marked 4/100. I was shocked and anxious as this grade meant I failed the class and would have to retake the course! I went to the Lord, saw him in the Eucharist, and sat down with him. The very next day the grade changed from 4/100 to 97/100. As we see in Luke 24:30-31, Jesus disappeared after giving the blessed bread to the disciples at Emmaus. However, if we call him, he will come. I remember another incident from several years ago

when my parents came to the US to visit us. One morning while getting ready for Holy Mass, my father fell ill and his blood pressure went up, so he stayed home while the rest of us went for Mass. I was so worried about him. I asked the Lord to please come out from the altar, go to my house, and heal my dad. When we returned home, we saw that he was healthy and normal. I asked him when he started to feel better, and it turned out to be almost the same time when I said that prayer.

I love the moments soon after receiving Holy Communion. No words can express the peace, joy, and intimacy of those moments. My Eucharistic Jesus is my priority, my trust, my Saviour, and my best friend. He is the almighty Lord in whom I can find the solution to every problem and comfort to any pain, physical, mental, emotional or spiritual fight. Heavy traffic or extensive work hours no longer bother me as the presence of Jesus always accompanies me. ■■

Pushpaja Joseph is a nurse and clinical instructor who likes to spend time in silence with the Lord, loves nature and reaches Sunday school. She lives in Houston, USA with her husband and three daughters.

Are Miracles Possible?

A Rational Defense of
the Supernatural



Aby Jacob answers the question sceptics often ask.

Biblical theology is built on the supernatural acts of God. Historical events, such as the virgin birth of Christ and his miracle-filled ministry, are beyond nature's power to produce. Moreover, the central claim of Christianity is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Without the resurrection, there is no Christian message of hope and a new life. Apostle Paul wrote, *If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost* (1 Corinthians 15: 14-18).

Are miracles really possible? A question many people raise nowadays.

In this article, I aim to deal with the challenging question, can one rationally believe in the miracle claims of the Bible during an era of modern science? Many thinkers in the past have attempted to discredit miracles and tried to show that miracles are impossible. One of the challenges came from Scottish skeptic philosopher David Hume, who argued, 'A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; ...firm and unalterable experience has established these laws.'¹ How do we deal with this challenge? Let's see!

A miracle seems impossible and irrational if we presuppose naturalism. Naturalism is the belief that nothing exists beyond the natural world. However, a miracle is very likely if one admits the possibility of the existence of God. Miracles are possible in a theistic world.

If one denies the possibility of miracles, one must disprove God's existence in the first place. Where does the evidence lead? There is much undeniable evidence for God's existence from modern scientific and philosophical points of view (I have presented several arguments for the existence of God in previous articles). Three reasons for the existence of God with modern scientific support are the following.

For a long period, scientific materialists held that the material universe was eternal and self-existent; therefore, a creator explanation was unnecessary. They were proven wrong. Modern science discovered that the universe (time, space, matter, energy) came into existence a finite time ago. If the universe began to exist, it must have a cause that transcends time, space, matter, and energy, which points to a 'FIRST CAUSE'.

Modern science discovered that the fundamental physical laws and parameters are precisely fine-tuned. If there is a slight alteration in some constants of physics, advanced life would be impossible. The alternative, that is, all chance, is unconvincing. Many physicists have concluded that fine-tuning points to a cosmic 'DESIGNER'.

Molecular biologists discovered the presence of digital code at the foundation of life, DNA. Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of DNA structure, proposed that the chemical constituents in DNA function like letters in a written language or digital symbols in a computer code. Bill Gates said, 'DNA is like a computer program, but far, far more advanced than any software we have ever created.'ⁱⁱ This discovery suggests the work of a master 'PROGRAMMER'.

Who is that 'FIRST CAUSE', 'DESIGNER', and 'PROGRAMMER'? Whether one likes it or not, He is GOD – the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. All evidence points to a theistic world which particularly points to the God of the Bible. If God exists, then miracles are possible. If God can create the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), he can also intervene in creation. Christians do not believe God created a universe with a closed system of cause and effect. God can continue to act in his creation whenever he wants.

Now let us come back to our point regarding the miraculous resurrection of Christ and Hume's challenge of the miracle. Hume's statement itself suggests a regularity in the natural law. If bodies rise from the dead more frequently in the natural world, we cannot call it a miracle. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a miracle. God did not change the natural law, but it was a special act of God in history. The natural laws were created by God, but he is free to supernaturally cause events that nature, on its own, could not produce. Miracles are divine interventions into the natural world for distinctive purposes.ⁱⁱⁱ

I conclude this article by pointing out that one can rationally believe – with confidence – in the miracle claims in the Bible during an age of modern science. Theism makes miracles possible. The only way to disprove miracles is to disprove God's existence. Given all philosophical and scientific reasons, the existence of God is undeniable. Therefore, miracles are possible. Along with this philosophical defense for the possibility of miracles, there are other abundant reasons, including the undeniable historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ since it was an event in human history^{iv}. In addition, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ were fulfillments of Jewish prophecies. Moreover, millions around the world testify to Christ's presence in their lives and the extraordinary transformation, including my own life. Indeed! Miracles are possible. Jesus Christ is risen!

Moving Forward

As we continue this journey of faith and reason, there are many doubts we need to remove on several topics to bring a greater clarification to our understanding in order to develop a stronger foundation for our faith in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Some of the topics that I plan to address in the future articles may include but not limited to, The General and Special Revelation; God and Science; Naturalism Vs Theism; Scientism Vs Science; Creation days in Genesis – Young Vs Old Earth debate; Creation Vs Evolution; The Uniqueness of Humanity; The Problem of Evil and Suffering; Meaning and Purpose of life; Restlessness/Vacuum of Human Heart;

Major Worldviews; The Nature of Truth, Logic, and Exclusivism; Theories of Truth and Test for Truth; Comparative Religion; Why Jesus Christ is the only way to God?; Reliability of the Bible; The Doctrine of Trinity; Historical Evidence for the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; Why Judeo-Christian Worldview is Objectively True, Compellingly Rational, and Important to Whole Life?; Ethical Issues such as Abortion, Sexual Morality, etc.; Life and Death; Heaven and Hell; The Kingdom of God; Importance of Philosophical Foundations for Theology and Christian Life; and many more. I just want to give an idea of what you can expect in future articles, but it will not be written in the order listed. Instead, with my finite and limited ability, I will choose topics as God leads me. I hope you will continue to read the articles with much love and a thirst for truth, knowledge, and wisdom. Stay tuned! ■■

Recommended Readings:

Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. 3rd ed. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2008.

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References

i David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 90.

ii Bill Gates, *The Road Ahead*. Rev.ed. (New York: Viking, Penguin Group, 1996), 188.

iii See Chapter 3, Miracles: the Supernatural Precondition, Norman L Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume*. (United States, Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 38-39.

iv See the works: Gary R. Habermas, *Evidence For The Historical Jesus: Is the Jesus of History the Christ of Faith*. (United States, Capitol Christian Distribution, 2020); Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World*. (United States, Thomas Nelson, 2017); J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*. (United States, David C Cook, 2013).

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IN FOCUS



HEAVEN, IN MY OPINION

Kairos Global asked a few young people what their thoughts on heaven were?



Taste can be experienced but not recollected. Even while writing this, though the image of Jesus holding at the door comes to my mind, yet for me, heaven is something that we can find and might be something we can taste in part before we leave this world. Heaven is the state of pure love.... Love as in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Heaven is the state where my earthly desires are given up and I take nothing but my wandering soul to the most soothing place. It's not about visual or vocal beauty but a state where we are completely satisfied, an incomparable feeling. I believe there will be many souls but without any seniority all will be one.

DIVINE TOM, 29, INDIA



The perception of heaven has confounded humanity for ages, faceted and altered by individuals, based on their own beliefs and experiences. For me, I find comfort in the hope that there is a heaven after death. A place where I may meet angels and God, a place enveloped in never-ending love, happiness and inspiration. I believe heaven offers our soul a perspective which finds joy in all things by surrounding us with all that God has promised us with since the first covenant. I perceive it as not only a place but a state of peace within our souls, an assurance God is forever with us, that we are relieved from the Earthly yoke we held onto. My belief in heaven may heavily contrast with another, but overall, I believe it is a place where we may rest for the rest of eternity and find peace, joy and harmony.

JIYA, 16, AUSTRALIA



Yes, Heaven exists. I understand it as my home, from where I came from. After fulfilling my mission on Earth, I have to return to heaven. It's where my Abba Father is, all my saintly siblings, Mamma Mary constantly in a state of praise. Amidst the struggles here, the reward of heaven is what consoles me, a reminder of eternity, of permanent love and all the sufferings are worth the price.

It's not a geographical space, it's a spiritual state, the abode of the Trinity

**'It's a state of being
where we are uplifted to
be one with Him.'**

JISHA JOHN

and everyone who earned to savour divine love and bask in eternal light.

JENNIFER FERNANDEZ, 29, INDIA



Heavens!
The biggest of all the surprises in life. I reckon it's the presence of God that makes it Heaven. We have Him in the Holy Eucharist and in the Holy Bible. But our mortal eyes don't recognise him as he really is. It gives glimpses. Our fallen nature fails in its intellect and reasoning to make assumptions about heaven. We are being purified each day, being perfected and sanctified to approach the Holiest of the Holy. It's a state of being where we are uplifted to be one with him. It's the matter of the soul. It's a place of peace and joy. It doesn't end any day. And we will be reunited with the Creator there.

JISHA JOHN, 30, INDIA



What I know: Yes it definitely exists. Heaven is where God is. If God is in my room, then my room is heaven. It would be a place where all those who are present will be praising God continuously. We live the earthly life according to God's will so that we can see him and worship him in heaven. There are ranks for people in heaven. This is decided by how we live our earthly life. Therefore repent and believe in Christ.

What I don't know: Not sure when I can reach heaven.

EDWIN, 29, INDIA



Heaven will be a place of joy, with no suffering or pain. A place where we are in complete union with our God. The kingdom of God – where the will of God will be done effortlessly, without the wrestle with our flesh. Our reward is eternal life – heaven.

There are many places in the Bible that refer to heaven, we are told that we are citizens of heaven. Jesus says that there are many rooms in his Father's house and that Jesus is preparing a place for us. So heaven is God's plan for all our lives.

SOUNDRIYA, 29, AUSTRALIA



Heaven is the present, where you are right now. I believe heaven is on earth. If you do not experience heaven now, then either you are living in the past or in the future. It is a choice that you make.

ANJALI THOMAS, 27, NEW ZEALAND



Heaven is the ultimate place that we all want to end up in. It is especially a place of peace, where I will get to experience original peace. The place where I will be able to see and feel God personally. A place where I will hear never-ending praises of God. Heaven is the place where I'll encounter all the saints and angels. Heaven is where I want to be forever.

CLAYON FERNANDO, 32, SRI LANKA



Heaven is a place of peace and love and praising God at all times.

RICHIE JOSE ALEX, INDIA



Yes heaven exists. Heaven is the place where God resides. On his right side Jesus Christ is seated and on the left is the Holy Spirit. Mama Mary is seated there beside a lot of angels and holy infants. Heaven is full of music, happiness and peace. Heaven is surrounded with clouds and lots of flowers and fruits, birds and butterflies.

SHAHANA, 29, INDIA



God grants and victory is ours when we reach heaven. He is trustworthy to those who trust in him. How many of us were happy living? Heaven, we may say, is a place we pin our hope on. The holiness, good deeds we do, get returns in heaven as promised by the Holy Spirit. As we read in Galatians 6.7: *Those who sow evil, will reap evil and anarchy. One who sows good more, will reap more.* One who lives only for the body will perish. One who lives for the soul, will reap the benefit of everlasting life. This is heaven, after life, we are to understand.

Man has two choices....redemption and condemnation. Good and evil are before us to choose. Many do not believe in God. They enjoy the passing pleasures of life whereas we await an everlasting redemption. Our life offers good ways and evil. Some fall into the evil track without realising and move to eternal damnation. The Book of Revelation reads that heaven is a place of peace. Those who die in the Lord are blessed. God had a plan and sent us to be a part of his mission. What we are to become and accomplish is his decision. He will reach us to heaven's gate. In heaven we will serve God...before his majestic throne. Anything we do in his presence is joy unlimited.

Heaven will not be a drab, desolate place. Perhaps it's a resting place from the hardship and hard work on the earth. Duties in heaven will be of a different nature. By fulfilling his allotted duties, in heaven or on earth...whatever they be, will evoke happiness. We will be steadfast in serving him.

God's only commandment is to worship him and love our brethren. Love one another is his wish and he prayed for it shedding tears. Instead many,

pray for their wants, forget the zeal of prayer, with no confession of sins and Holy Communion. If at all they do it's for others to see and laud. Whereas, pray to God as a friend and open our thoughts heart-to-heart. The realisation that he has a plan for us and that he accomplishes it through us is a heartfelt one. It boosts our self-esteem and confidence.

Realise how valuable we are, and how responsible we should be. If not, we seek acceptance and recognition in the wrong angle and sense, from the fake people of the world. This, Jesus has shown by example. That we are valuable before God is seen when he raises us above others. We need not chase praise or honours from others. Similarly, when God is with us, we need not despair over failure. As David declared 'God lights up my life. No one can make me walk in darkness.' Be in good honest relation with God. Holding on to

'I perceive it as not only a place but a state of peace within our souls, an assurance God is forever with us.'

JIYA

this relationship, we can reach up to him in any eventuality, till we reach heaven's gate. We are called to be blessed and deserve to be with him in heaven.

The Pope has clearly outlined that prayer alone will stand us through. It will strengthen the mind and body. Never despair. The troubles of this world are to be borne with. We await a better place in God's land, heaven.

ASHIK JOSEPH, 30, OMAN



Yes, heaven does exist. It is the greatest aim of life for Christians. It's a condition when you see God in his fullness eternally where sin has no place. Those who live obedient to God's wish in their lifetime are the worthy ones for heaven. It's a condition where you are with God forever.

Only those who lead a holy life can enter heaven. Being in heaven is the greatest thing that a true follower of Jesus can achieve. It's the most glorious condition that a human can perceive.

It's a Christian concept that heaven is full of holy persons including all the saints, angels and those who are worthy, praising God in his glory.

JUAN MARIA TOJO, 15, INDIA



SHAWN'S HEAVEN



Tania Rose Josun remembers a twelve-year old's vision of heaven.

When Dr Chackochan Njavallil suggested getting responses from the youth on what they thought of 'heaven', the first thing that came to my mind was the remembrance card Sammara (names changed) sent me, over twenty years ago.

There are some moments in life that we never forget. Like luminous lampposts on memory's long and winding road. Sammara and I were good friends and classmates. Our siblings too were of the same age – her brother, Shawn, and my sister, Christine. One day, irritated by a fight my sister and I had the previous day,

I said in exasperation, 'I hate my sister!' Sammara simply said, 'I could never hate Shawn.' Nothing further needed to be said after that.

Nadia was one of the weakest students in our class. A thin, frail and awkward girl, who needed time and effort to understand even the most simple of lessons. Most of the time, she was the 'forgotten' classmate – whether it was for games or group activities. Somehow, no one thought of her. Did she even have friends? She had a friend though – someone who valued her, helped her, took the effort to teach her when none of us cared. And that was Sammara.

So when, after leaving school, I came to learn that she had lost her brother, Shawn to cancer, I was shocked. A year later, she sent me Shawn's first anniversary remembrance card. In it – in his words and in his writing – written a few months before he passed away, was what twelve-year-old Shawn thought about heaven:

My idea of a heavenly city would be a place up in the clouds where everything is soft, and there would be beautiful buildings studded with different jewels and precious stones, and all the population would be dressed in white robes and their faces would be glowing. There would be no crime, no evil, no poverty and everyone would be happy with what they have. The thing that would make my life the best would be if I was living in a place like that.

– Shawn, 21-10-1999

Shawn passed away on 28th April 2000. ■

Tania Rose Josun lives in Kottayam, India with her family.





Brushstrokes of Heaven

Taking the example of three famous paintings, Shaji Joseph Arakkal writes about how heaven has been depicted in art.

Heaven – It is the ultimate destination for the believers of all the various religions. While every religion has references to heaven, the Church of Christ has a different dimension. *I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me.* (John 6:38). Through these words, Christ makes it clear that there is a God in heaven, his Father, and that he has come to do the Father's will. Later, on various occasions, Jesus Christ outlines the ways of life necessary to be worthy of heaven.

It is probably because those words of Christ became deeply rooted in the minds of the faithful that numerous ideas about heaven found form as paintings from countries all across the world. Over the ages, innumerable works of art on heaven have been created in Christian churches, catacombs, tombs, artists' studios, and on the walls of homes. Even today these ideas continue.

Just as Christians have been the leading contributors to the world in the fields of science, literature, sports, and technology, so too have they made

significant contributions to the field of art. If a modern student of art failed to learn the history of Christian painting, his study would be incomplete indeed. Such is the abundance of a rich variety of compositions available today.

A few famous works on heaven, their painters along with a brief description of each are introduced here.

The Last Judgment by Michelangelo

Michelangelo's fresco 'The Last Judgment' on the altar of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican is so famous that all of us would have seen it, if not in person. It is a depiction of Christ's second coming and final judgment. The painting has more than 300 figures, with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin standing in the centre, surrounded by angels and saints. Almost all the men and the angels are portrayed naked. Christ is also depicted partially naked and strong.

On either side of Christ are the blessed, below are those going to eternal damnation. In Matthew 25:31-46, we read that those on the right are saved and those on the left are cursed. However, we must understand that neither Pope Clement VII nor other clerical authorities prevented the free expression of the artist from executing this different composition.

The composition is done by limiting the colors. Sky blue and the light brown skin tones are prominent. Oranges, greens, yellows and whites and grays are scattered throughout, but a monochromatic character has been adopted to simplify and unify the complex scene.

Many of the figures have been damaged over time and have since been restored. Measuring 539 x 472 inches, it took five years from 1536 to 1541 to complete.

This painting has historically received both artistic and religious acclaim as well as criticism. Rigid bodies, nudity, deviations from conventional methods, and literal deviations from biblical verses may all be grounds for criticism. However, among the paintings done on 'heaven', it is this fresco by Michelangelo that stands out all over the world, having given visual expression to the verses from the Bible.

Assumption of the Virgin by Antonio da Correggio

The 'Assumption of the Virgin' is a fresco painted inside the dome of the Cathedral of Parma in Italy. This composition belongs to the Italian Renaissance artist Antonio da Correggio. The painting of the 430 x 470 inch composition began in 1526

and was completed in 1530.

Correggio was a leading artist of the Parma school of painting (1520-50), a master of the illusory composition system.

The image depicts the Virgin Mary, clad in red and blue, ascending into the radiant light of heaven amidst clouds filled with angels, saints, and forefathers. Little angels surround Mary. The artist has created an illusion of depth and boundlessness through deliberate control of light by making distant bodies appear smaller in proportion to indicate distance.

The four patron saints of the city of Parma are depicted in the four corners. Saint John the Baptist with a lamb, Saint Hilary in a yellow robe, Saint Thomas and Saint Bernard.

If a modern student of art failed to learn the history of Christian painting, his study would be incomplete indeed. Such is the abundance of a rich variety of compositions available today.





In this massive composition, the entire architectural surface becomes one large pictorial unit, so that the viewer equates this dome of the church with the vault of heaven. Although this method was widely used by Italian Baroque artists, the method of introducing the viewer into the picture was a fantastic innovation at the time.

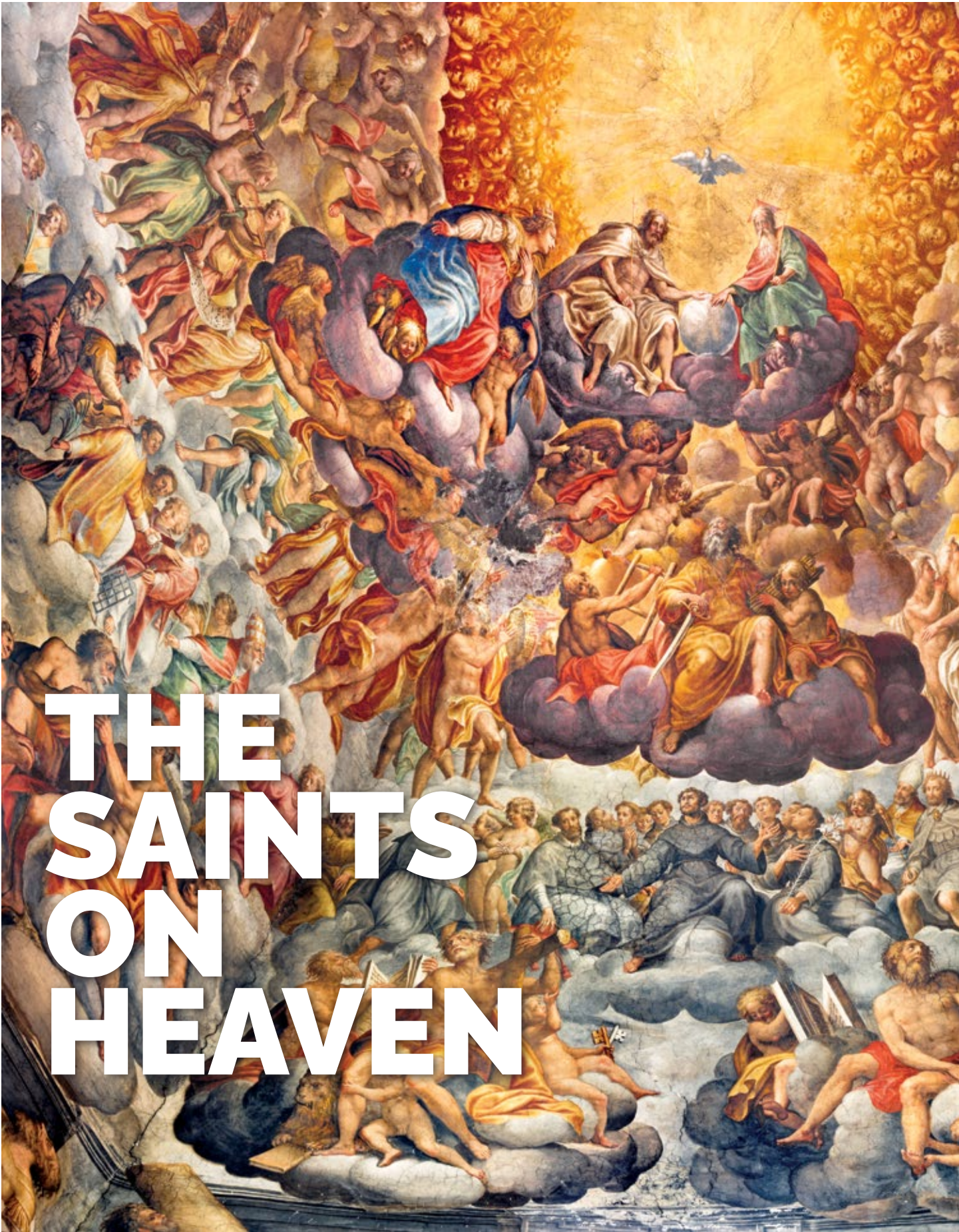
Ascent of the Blessed by Hieronymus Bosch

Hieronymus Bosch painted this picture in oil on wooden panel. Bosch was a Dutch artist born in the Burgundian Netherlands in 1450. He died in 1516. This painting is part of the famous 'Visions of the Hereafter' series and was composed around 1500-1504.

What is interesting about this picture is the illuminated tunnel above. From the perspective of heaven on the other side, the viewer can see beyond a tunnel with the scene of the saved being lifted up by angels in the foreground. A godly vision that is simultaneously exhilarating and yet worrying, it makes the viewer ponder about whether he is worthy of such exaltation.

Inside it and just in front of the tunnel are individual angels who help lift human souls to salvation. However, right beneath the tunnel from the bottom to the middle of the picture there are two angels each to help the human souls. The idea of the composition may be the scientific sense that gravity decreases and the weight of objects lightens as one rises from the earth to the sky. But does not the background of earth indicate the weight of sin and the background of heaven the lightness of purity?

The human souls depicted have similar forms, without any gender-differentiating organs. They are also naked. The reason for this peculiarity could be the verse, *When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven* (Mark 12:25). ■



THE SAINTS ON HEAVEN



Dr Nycil Romis Thomas compiles the wisdom of saints on 'heaven'.

St Augustine of Hippo said: 'We are Easter people and *Alleluia* is our song. Let us sing here and now in this life, even though we are oppressed by various worries, so that we may sing it one day in the world to come, when we are set free from all anxiety.'

Heaven described by the saints

The thought of heaven lifts our gaze up, from all earthly attachments or miseries. What is there in store for us? **St Elizabeth Ann Seton** expresses her firm faith in the mystery of heaven. Even though we do not see it, we are moving towards it, with this faith.

Can you expect to go to heaven for nothing? Did not our dear Saviour track the whole way to it with his Blood and tears?

St Faustina describes witnessing heaven in spirit.

Today I was in heaven, in spirit, and I saw its inconceivable beauties and the happiness that awaits us after death. I saw how all creatures give ceaseless praise and glory to God. I saw how great is happiness in God, which spreads to all creatures, making them happy; and then all the glory and praise which springs from this happiness returns to its source; and they enter into the depths of God, contemplating the inner life of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whom they will never comprehend or fathom. This source of happiness is unchanging in its essence, but it is always new, gushing forth happiness for all creatures.

It's simply not like earth, says **St Anselm of Canterbury**:

No one will have any other desire in heaven than what God wills; and the desire of one will be the desire of all; and the desire of all and of each one will also be the desire of God.

This does not mean that heaven is a boring place...assures **St Francis de Sales**.

Do not imagine then, my dear souls, that our spirit will be dulled or drowsy by the abundance and joys of eternal happiness. Quite the contrary! It will be very alert and agile in its various activities.

It doesn't stop there. Listen to **St Alphonsus Liguori, St Peter of Alcantara and St Augustine**:

In heaven, the soul is certain that she loves God, and that he loves her. She sees that the Lord embraces her with infinite love and that this love will not be dissolved for all eternity.

And what can one say of the other blessings of heaven [besides living with God]? There will be health, and no sickness; liberty, and no servitude; beauty, and no ugliness; immortality, and no decay; abundance, and no want; repose, and no cares; security, and no dread; knowledge, and no error; satiety, and no feelings of revulsion; joy, and no sorrow; honour, and no contention.

[In heaven] it belongs to the intellect to know all at once, not in part, not in a dark manner, not through a glass, but as a whole, in plain sight, face to face, not this thing now and that thing then, but, as has been said, it knows all at once, without any passage of time.

Living on earth to be in heaven eternally

We can also see that saints lived their lives looking forward to, and steadily fixing their gazes upon heaven.

*Life is passing. Eternity draws closer; soon we will live the very life of God. After having drunk deep at the fountain of bitterness, our thirst will be quenched at the very source of all sweetness. **St Therese of Lisieux***

*The souls of the elect are daily and constantly transferred by the hands of the holy angels from places of learning to a place of rest, where they are fitted into the supernal city. Each is assigned its place there according to the order of the blessed spirits that has been appointed by God, and each soul has a brightness according to the quality of its merits. This is that structure, and the master of this whole operation is the Archangel Michael. **St Elisabeth of Schonau***

*Enter eagerly into the treasure house that lies within you, and so you will see the treasure house of heaven – for the two are one and the same, and there is but one single entry into them both. The ladder that leads to the kingdom is hidden within you, and is found in your own soul. Dive into yourself and in your soul you will discover the rungs by which to ascend. **St Isaac of Nineveh***

*But, my soul, if your faith is strong and vigilant, you cannot deny that after this life, which flits away like a shadow, if you remain firm in faith, hope, and love, you will see God clearly and truly as he is in himself and you will possess him and enjoy him far better and more intimately than you now enjoy created things. **St Robert Bellarmine***

O my dear parishioners, let us endeavour to get to heaven! There we shall see God. How happy we shall feel! If the parish is converted, we shall go there in procession with the parish priest at the head. . . We must get to heaven! What a pity it would be if some of you were to find yourselves on the other side!

St Jean Marie Vianney, the Cure of Ars

The saints were willing to sacrifice anything for heaven.

*I would willingly endure alone all the sufferings of this world to be raised a degree higher in heaven and to possess the smallest increase of the knowledge of God's greatness. **St Therese of Lisieux***
*My crown in heaven should shine with innocence and its flowers should be radiant as the sun. Sacrifices are the flowers Jesus and Mary choose. **St Bernadette Soubirous***

*I understand that, each time we contemplate with desire and devotion the host in which is hidden Christ's Eucharistic Body, we increase our merits in heaven and secure special joys to be ours later in the beatific vision of God. **St Gertrude the Great***

*A precious crown is reserved in heaven for those who perform all their actions with all the diligence of which they are capable; for it is not sufficient to do our part well, it must be done more than well. **St Ignatius of Loyola***

Toil and sorrows are precious tools to reach heaven. Listen to these saints.

*In this world we are all in a valley of tears. Our consolation is not here; we shall have it eternally in Paradise, if we suffer tribulations on earth. **St Benedict Joseph Labre***

*Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. **St Thomas More***
Heaven is the possession of God. In heaven God is contemplated,



*adored, loved. But to attain heaven it's necessary to be detached from what is earthly. What is the life of a Carmelite if not one of contemplating, adoring and loving God incessantly? And she, by being desirous for that heaven, distances herself from the world and tries to detach herself as much as possible from everything earthly. **St Teresa of the Andes***

Eternity always at hand! I look to the far, so far distant shore, the heaven of heavens – a few days more and Eternity – now, then, all resignation ... rest in him – the heart in sweet bitterness.

St Elizabeth Ann Seton

*Let us remember that every act of mortification is a work for heaven. This thought will make all suffering and weariness sweet. **St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori***

Earthly life with no thought of heaven – listen to these saints

*What does it profit a man to gain the universe if he loses his soul? A terrible thought, but profoundly true! As Saint Ignatius said: How insignificant earth seems to me when I consider heaven. **St Bernadette Soubirous***

*He who beholds heaven with a pure eye, sees better the darkness of earth; for, although the latter seems to have some brilliancy, it disappears before the splendour of the heavens. **St Ignatius of Loyola***

*The path to heaven is narrow, rough and full of wearisome and trying ascents, nor can it be trodden without great toil; and therefore wrong is their way, gross their error, and assured their ruin who, after the testimony of so many thousands of saints, will not learn where to settle their footing. **St Robert Southwell***

An academican by profession, Dr Nycil Romis Thomas teaches at Rajagiri College. She lives with her husband and two kids in Ernakulam, India.

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CULTURE OF LIFE

BEGINNING WITH 'THE BEGINNING'

In this first of a six-part series, TOB educator **Nicholas Koeppl** introduces the first chapter of Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.



Theology of the Body by St John Paul II: A Summary of Chapter 1

I would like to write for you an introduction to the *Theology of the Body* by St John Paul II. You may have heard this phrase before, 'Theology of the Body', but do you know where it comes from and what it means? This phrase forms the topic of a series of lectures that were delivered by Pope St. John Paul II from 1979-1984, every Wednesday in Rome. In these Wednesday addresses, St John Paul II gave us the phrase 'Theology of the Body'. In this text there are many important truths to study and learn about that will have an impact on our lives, whether we are single, dating, married, a priest, religious, etc. Whatever your vocation is, the Theology of the Body is for you!

In these first three articles, I would like to focus on the first three chapters of *Theology of the Body*, which is really an 'anthropology'. Anthropology means a 'study of the human person' – what does it mean to be human? If we can understand our identity, who we are, created in the image and likeness of God, then we can better know our vocation, how we are to live. The *Theology of the Body* is full of Scripture. It really is a huge Bible study about the question, 'what does it mean to be human? And what is marriage?' St John Paul II looks into the Bible, the Word of God, 'Revelation', in order to discover the answers to the question: 'Who am I?' What does the Bible have to say about the meaning of being human, the meaning of being a body? It has much to say, and John Paul II helps us to see that clearly.

The first chapter of *Theology of the Body* is called 'Christ Appeals to the Beginning'. This chapter starts by focusing on Jesus' words in dialogue with the Pharisees, when Christ refers to the 'Beginning' twice. (Matthew 19:3-8). The Beginning is what the first book of the Bible, Genesis, speaks about. The same root word in Genesis is found in other English words like 'Generation', 'Generate', and 'Genealogy'. Genesis tells us the story of God's creation of the world and the creation of the human person, 'male and female in the image and likeness of God.' Genesis has two creation accounts, two stories that express the creation of the world in different ways. The first account tells the story more 'objectively'. It tells how God 'spoke' and the world was created in seven days. The second creation account starts in Genesis Ch. 2, and tells the story of creation

in a more 'subjective' way. This means that it tells the story from the perspective of Adam and Eve, and relates to us their experiences in the Garden. John Paul II likes to explain the Bible stories referring to the 'experience' of Adam and Eve. In this way, we can relate to them and reflect about our own human experience. Somehow, we can know deep in our hearts that these things are true.

St John Paul II speaks about three fundamental experiences of Adam and Eve in the Garden: 'Original Solitude,' 'Original Unity,' and 'Original Nakedness'. In Genesis 2:18-20, God placed Adam in the Garden and gave him the task of naming the animals. To name something has a strong connection with identity. Something is named based on its identity, and a name reveals the identity of a person. As Adam named the animals, he came to discover that they were all different than he was. He realised his own uniqueness as a human person. He did not discover in any of the animals a suitable partner for himself, another being that was a 'person', with whom he could enter into a personal relationship. And so Adam discovers that he is 'alone'. This solitude is first of all based on his own 'humanity'. As a human, Adam differs from all of the animals and all of creation. The human person is the only creature made 'in the image and likeness of God'. Unlike the animals, Adam has reason and free will. He is placed in a relationship with the Creator himself. The solitude of Adam can also be expressed in another way, in terms of his relationship to another person, to Eve. Adam was still awaiting the moment to encounter Eve and build a mutual reciprocal and personal relationship on a human level.

So 'original solitude' leads us to 'original unity'. The Bible tells the story of how God put Adam into a deep sleep and formed from his 'rib' – Eve. The fact that God forms the woman from the rib of Adam shows that she is made with equal human dignity. Masculinity and femininity are complementary – they are two ways of being human that mutually enrich and complete each other. What a man is good and strong at can help serve a woman, and what a woman is good and strong at can help serve a man. Men and women are equal in human dignity but different in complementarity. This complementarity and difference is on all levels: physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Our contemporary culture has started to cast doubt on masculinity and femininity, but Scripture and the theology of the body point out how God is the author of our sexual difference, and he calls the 'two to become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). So Adam and Eve are made in the unity of the same humanity. They are both fully human and are able to enter into a personal, reciprocal relationship with each other that Adam was not able to have with the animals. Animals are amazing creatures of God and can do amazing things, but there is no substitute for personal relationships.

Adam and Eve formed this unity in another way, by the 'two becoming one flesh'. God is the author of our sexuality and of marriage. In the beginning, God said, '*be fruitful and multiply*' (Genesis 1:28). The world and contemporary culture does not value marriage, family, the body, and our sexuality enough, but

the Church has always proclaimed the dignity of the human body and of the human person! When Adam and Eve form this unity, they form what is called the ‘communion of persons’. St John Paul II shares an important insight here. He tells us that precisely by forming this communion of persons Adam and Eve are in the image of God. He says that because God is a Trinity, an eternal exchange of love in the communion of persons between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, man and woman form the image of God when they live as a communion of persons, like God, who is a communion of persons. ‘Not so much in the moment of solitude, but in the moment of communion does man and woman form the image of God’ (TOB 9.3).

The third fundamental experience of Adam and Eve in the Garden is called ‘original nakedness’. In Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve were ‘naked without shame.’ This verse points to the *experience* of Adam and Eve that they were naked and did not feel shame towards each other or towards the body. Why was this so? John Paul II says it is not because they were like children but, in fact, they were mature and were fully aware of the sexual values of the body. They did not have shame because they lived in the ‘fullness of love’. The creation story of Genesis tells us of a time before ‘the Fall’, before ‘Original Sin’, defined by the Church as a time called ‘Original Innocence’ or ‘Original Justice’. Adam and Eve experienced life together without sin, in perfect communion of persons, a communion of love. They had no need to hide their bodies through clothing. This need would come later after they sinned (Genesis 3:7). St John Paul II describes their experience as a relationship of reciprocal gift, a relationship of trust. He says when they looked at each other, including each other’s bodies in their masculinity and femininity, they, in fact, ‘saw each other with all the peace of the interior gaze’. This gaze meant that when they looked at one another, they had no desire to lust or use the other, but they saw the full personal value and dignity of the other. They wanted to love and to serve the other. This was the experience of nakedness in the state of original innocence.

In Chapter 1 of *Theology of the Body* there is another very important teaching that St John Paul II gives us, a point that will come up later in all six chapters. It is a concept called ‘the Spousal Meaning of the Body’. I will try to explain it in this way: first, God made all of creation for the human person as a gift. All the stars, planets, mountains, oceans, rivers, fields, animals, plants – these are made for you! God loves each person for their own sake, not for the sake of someone or something else. All of creation is a gift for the human person because the human

St John Paul II shares an important insight here. He tells us that precisely by forming this communion of persons Adam and Eve are in the image of God. He says that because God is a Trinity, an eternal exchange of love in the communion of persons between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, man and woman form the image of God when they live as a communion of persons, like God, who is a communion of persons. ‘Not so much in the moment of solitude, but in the moment of communion does man and woman form the image of God’ (TOB 9.3).



person is created in such a way that he/she can receive that gift from God personally. God made the world out of love, as a gift. He had no need to make the world. From all eternity, God was happy, He lacked nothing. He lived in an eternal exchange of love: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He created the world out of love, as a gift for the human person.

Our bodies also reveal this gift. If you look at the masculine and feminine body you will see that the male body does not make sense by itself and, also, the female body does not make sense by itself. Only in light of each other do the male and female bodies make sense and complete each other. Masculinity and femininity were created to be a gift for one another. This meaning of the body is called ‘the spousal meaning of the body’. The body has a ‘marital meaning’. From looking at our very bodies, we can discover that we are called to make a gift of ourselves, to make a gift of our lives, to enter into relationships with others and to form the communion of persons. Our bodies call us to form the image of God with others by living in a communion of love. There are many ways to live the spousal meaning of the body; it can be done by forming a good human community in society, on sports teams, at school, in a family. But one primary way to live out the spousal meaning of the

body is through your vocation. Most people in the world live their vocation to love in marriage. But also, people can choose ‘celibacy for the kingdom’. Celibacy has several forms including single life, consecrated life, religious life, and priesthood. Both marriage and celibacy are two ways to live out the same spousal meaning of the body.

In conclusion, I would like to say that there is a lot of truth about the human person and the human body that John Paul II speaks about in Ch. 1 of the *Theology of the Body*. We learn about the three fundamental experiences of Adam and Eve in their ‘original solitude’, ‘original unity’, and ‘original nakedness’. We also learn about the spousal meaning of the body, which I will speak about more in later articles. While the world may not understand this, it is important to remember that God made all of creation good, including our sexuality – masculinity and femininity, and including marriage. *God saw all that He had made and indeed it was very good* (Genesis 1:31). Love produces the good. Since all of creation is good, it reveals the author of this creation to be God, who is Love. ■

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

SPECIAL

BEST OF HOLY HABITS

In October 2022, Kairos Buds announced Holy Habits – an invitation to Catholic parents to send pictures or videos of their children dressed as saints. This was to commemorate All Saints’ Day in a more meaningful manner, as well as a counter to the highly secular narrative of Halloween. The Holy Habits initiative was a resounding success, with hundreds of entries coming in from all across the world (From 14 countries including Australia, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Singapore, apart from USA, UK, and India). Below entries are the ‘Best of Holy Habits’ – entries that were simply superb. A huge shout out to all the parents and children who made Holy Habits a vibrant and huge success.



A



B



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D



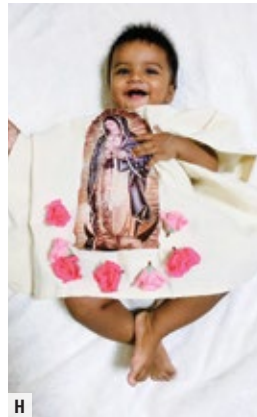
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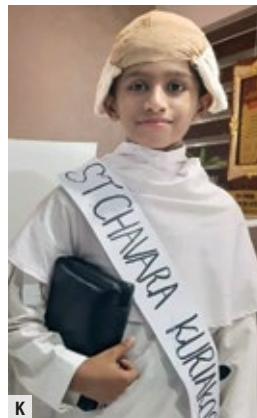
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L

- A. Faustina Caney D Rose as St Faustina
- B. Averin Ann Abraham as St Teresa of Calcutta
- C. Ann Rochelle as Our Lady of Grace
- D. Eloï Antony as St Edmund
- E. Anthony Nibin as St Anthony of Padua
- F. Jiya Sanu as Bl.Sr Rani Maria
- G. Alfred Maximillian as St Alfred
- H. Liyan Perera as St Juan Diego
- I. Lizzie Vino as St Margaret of Scotland
- J. Pio Mathew Daniel as St Pio of Pietrelcina
- K. Joel Sajesh as St Kuriakose Elias Chavara
- L. Mary as Mother Mary

JESUS YOUTH INTL. COUNCIL – NEW OFFICE BEARERS (2022-2025)

Dr. Midhun Paul, Coordinator

Dr. Midhun Paul is from India. He joined the Jesus Youth movement in 2003 and has been actively involved since. He currently serves as the International Council Coordinator. He was part of the Jesus Youth International Mission Team and Jesus Youth National Council India previously. He also served as the Coordinator of Jesus Youth Kerala. He works as assistant professor in an engineering college in India. He lives with his wife Betty and their children, Jessica and Jerome.

Vandana Maria Paul, Asst. Coordinator

Vandana Maria Paul hails from Hyderabad, India. A JY for more than 20 years, she has been a part of the previous JY India National Council and JY International Council. She had been working as operations manager for a financial research company but left her job and for 5 years was in one of our Mission countries. She currently helps with the JY International Mission Office and is also studying spiritual theology from Avila University, USA.

Charles Antony Bastian

Charles Antony Bastian is from India. He joined the Jesus Youth movement in 2001 and has served as the National Coordinator of Jesus Youth India from 2016-2022. He is an experienced management professional and lives in Kerala with his wife Julia and their children, Luke and Emma.

Ammu Zachariah (USA)

Ammu Zachariah has been involved with the movement since 2002 and was a full-timer in Nagpur in 2003-2004. She has been actively involved with various ministries in Bangalore and Chennai, and was also part of various Full-timer's training teams. Currently, she is a member of the US National Council. Ammu lives in Maryland, USA with her husband Alex and two daughters, Natalie and Reina.

Specioza Murekatete (Uganda)

Specioza Murekatete is from Uganda. She has been active in the movement since 2015. Specioza became a full-timer in 2015-2016. She served on the Ad-hoc team for three terms. She completed a one-year mission in South Sudan and is currently a member of the International Council.

Febina Baby (UK)

Febina Baby is from UK. She started her journey with the Jesus Youth movement in 2013 from Delhi and has been actively involved since. She currently serves as Assistant Coordinator of Jesus Youth UK and International Council member. She was previously the coordinator of JYUK Nurses Ministry and Assistant Coordinator of Nurses Ministry in Delhi. Febina works as a nurse in UK and recently got married to Sebin.

Maria Sonia Wilma (Qatar)

Maria Sonia Wilma joined the Jesus Youth movement from India in year 2004.

The 40 days of formation and a year of commitment as a full-timer in 2004-2005 had deep-rooted her faith in the Lord and committed to the JY movement. She has served in many councils, National Teens Team of India, Karnataka Council, London Core Team, GCC team for 2 terms and Qatar National Council. She works as a HR associate manager for Dorsch Qatar LLC. She has been living in Qatar for past 10 years with her husband Antony Dino and her children, Eloï and Ohel.

Nobin Jose (Singapore)

Nobin Jose became a Jesus Youth in 2004 while studying in India. In 2006 he moved to Singapore and has been actively involved there since. He currently serves as chief editor of *Kairos Buds*, the children's Catholic magazine and is also animator of the youth team in Singapore. Nobin works in the cyber security team of a bank. He lives in Singapore with his wife Jilu and their children, Savio, Celine and Cecilia.

Fadi Qastoon (UAE)

Fadi Qastoon is from UAE. He joined the Jesus Youth movement in 2009 after ACYC in UAE. Currently a member of GCC team. He works as an IT support officer in the National Library and Archives of UAE, in Abu Dhabi.

Sebin Alexander (USA)

Sebin Alexander is from USA. He joined the Jesus Youth movement in Canada in 2008 and was actively involved



there. He was also part of the full-timer's batch of 2011. He moved to the USA in 2015 and currently serves as the National Coordinator and a member of the International Council. He is self-employed and lives in Lakeland, with his wife, Sherin.

Soji Joseph (Australia)

Soji Joseph is from Australia. He has been journeying with Jesus Youth since 1991, he is currently serving as a member of the National Formation Team in Australia. Soji works as a teacher in a Catholic secondary college in Shepparton, Australia where he lives with his wife and their five children, Johann, Jerome, Isabel, Marybel, and Christabel.

Berly Earnest (Animator)

Berly Earnest is from India. He has been involved in the Jesus Youth movement since 1990. He currently serves as Animator of the International Council. He is director of Ark Motion, motion control solution providers in India.

He lives with his wife Annie and their daughters, Angel, Michelle and Sheryl.

Santhosh Mathew (Animator)

Santosh Mathew has been with JY since 1999 and has served with Sharjah, National, Middle East, and International Teams. He currently serves the International Mission Team, International Council and African Mission Team. An electrical engineer by profession, Santhosh has been doing business in the industrial sector for 23 years. He lives in Sharjah, UAE, with his wife Biji and their four children, Sneha, Mathew, Hannah and Nicole.

Fr Joseph Ezhumayil (Chaplain)

Fr Joseph Ezhumayil was ordained as a priest in the year 2000. He belongs to the Kothamangalam diocese in India, and is presently serving in Australia. He was involved with Jesus Youth since 1995 and currently serves as Chaplain of the Jesus Youth International Council.

Bejesh Pereira (Mission Director)

Bejesh Pereira is from UAE. He joined the Jesus Youth movement in India in 1999 and has been actively involved in India and UAE. He is the current International Mission Director and a member of the International Council. He works as the IT director for a holding company having investments in real estate and hospitality in Dubai, where he lives with his wife Limiya and their children, Catherine, Lucas and Noah.

Manoj Sunny (Formation Director)

An engineer by profession, Manoj Sunny is a full-time missionary who has been actively involved in the Catholic lay apostolate for 35 years. He was the first National and International Coordinator of the Jesus Youth movement. Presently he serves as the International Director of Formation and Convener of FEMA (Fraternity of Ecclesial Movements in Asia) under the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference. He lives in Cochin, India with his wife Beena, and their sons Joel and Mario.

Fr Thomas Tharayil (Priest in charge of Clergy and Seminarians)

Fr Thomas Tharayil is from the diocese of Vijayapuram, Kottayam, in Kerala. He was ordained a priest in 1986, and was associated with Jesus Youth from 1985. He initiated JY activities in USA and helped as chaplain of JYA till 2005. Fr Thomas Tharayil served as international chaplain of JY from the formation of first International Council, for three terms and presently serves as the Priest in charge of clergy and seminarians of Jesus Youth. Father currently holding the office of Deputy Secretary General of Kerala Region Latin Catholic Bishops' Council (KRLCBC) and General Secretary of Kerala Region Latin Catholic Council (KRLCC).

Shoy Thomas (Permanent Invitee)

Shoy Thomas was a management professional in a financial institution based in Bangalore. He is married to Chinchu Maria Francis. He has been a Jesus Youth for 23 years now. He was the former coordinator of Jesus Youth International and Jesus youth India.

PARENTING

THE BRIGHT STAR THAT IS THE SANGUINE!

In this fourth part on the series on parenting with the temperaments, **Jilu Chengat** describes the sanguine.



Do you have a fun-loving sanguine child? They are the ones with infectious joy, a creative and spontaneous spirit, and the life of the party. Similar to the other temperaments, sanguines have blessings and struggles which are uniquely reflected in their interior lives and the world.

One of the greatest gifts of a sanguine child is their excitement for life. They lighten the mood and have a cheerful disposition. While these are major strengths, they may also allow the sanguine to be susceptible to peer pressure. Their need to please others may pressure them to follow the crowd, even when it goes against their conscience.

However, when formed properly, sanguines can be the ones leading 'positive peer pressure' and influencing their peers for the good! Sanguines are likely to be great evangelists, attracting many to the faith with their joyful invitation to discover Christ.

Growing in virtues of perseverance and self-control are essential to sanguine children becoming mature Christian adults. These are rooted in a nurtured self-awareness of their tendencies and high-feeling nature. So how does a parent form a sanguine child?

One practical way is to help your child stick to their commitments. This may look like continuing with music lessons, finishing chores, or completing homework before playing. Sanguines thrive on that initial thrill, so finding small and creative ways to keep them encouraged will help them build muscles of faithfulness and steadiness without denying their spontaneity. Sanguines also tend to have sensual natures so helping them with small age-appropriate disciplines

of fasting and setting boundaries will greatly aid them grow in self-control. For a young child, this may look like encouraging them to eat slowly, recognise when they are full, and to avoid taking another helping of the food that they love. An older child can be encouraged to fast from food or media consumption. Nurturing their self-awareness can help ensure that they won't over-indulge on even a good thing! Sanguines are known to be spontaneous and creative. This also means that they are usually reactive and impulsive. While this can be a strength, especially in times of need or protecting someone, these tendencies can also be challenging as they rarely think about what comes next. It will be helpful to train a sanguine to think of the bigger picture or beyond their own perspective.

With good formation, a sanguine can learn to find balance and rootedness through a deeper understanding of themselves, their true desires and the effect that they have on others. These can be used to their advantage as great evangelists, leaders and activists who can easily invite their peers to love the Church, society or world! Let us thank God for all the sanguines of the world that make life more joyful, exciting and bright!

BE FATHERED

When in relationship with God the Father, parenting can lead to your own inner healing. It requires self-awareness and intentionality to let the Father heal us through the gift of our child, who may be very much like ourselves! Let's see how this can play out.

Jennifer sighed heavily as she practised her piano. And then, again, another heavy sigh. It took all of Lisa's

energy to not get upset. As a young girl, her parents had told her she was flaky and unreliable because she had trouble sticking to a commitment. She saw that her daughter Jen had a similar sanguine nature and had resolved to help her stay with her commitments, but it proved very challenging.

'Mom, I can't do this. It's so boring. Piano used to be so fun. I loved learning new songs and playing for recitals. But this is hard and boring.'

'Jennifer, I know you love recitals and performing, but everything takes hard work and practise. I believe in you.' Suddenly, Lisa remembered those words, 'I believe in you,' from a memory with her childhood dance teacher. Mrs. Samuel had been the one elder in her life who encouraged her rather than reprimanded her to stay focused. With Mrs. Samuel's support, Lisa had excelled at dance where she had failed at her other commitments.

Lisa looked over at her daughter's defeated face. Somehow, she had done what her parents and many others in her life had done – took the joy and creativity out of learning. In that moment, she asked God for forgiveness for not seeing her daughter's potential. She knew that God was also inviting her to forgive those who had not seen her own potential.

'Jen, I know you have been saying that we haven't gotten much time together. As a reward for practising every day, we will do something special on Saturdays. Also, here's a challenge! I hear you humming songs all the time. Why don't you see if you can write down the notes and compose your own songs? How does that sound?'

'Sure, mom I like that challenge and love spending time with you!'

Can you relate? Are you a sanguine parent? How may God be inviting you to receive healing in your temperament so that you can more confidently and generously parent your child? ■■

Temperaments of the Saints!

It always helps to look to the saints as a model of virtue. Like all of us, saints had blessings and challenges that came with their temperament. Let's look at a famous sanguine saint!

ST PETER

A look at the life of St Peter shows us a sanguine in action! The first to jump into the water to demonstrate faith and to chop off a ear to protect Jesus, he was also quick to deny Jesus three times when under pressure. Yet, when St Peter receives love and forgiveness in and for his nature and impulsive actions, he is the one chosen to be the rock for the Church! He serves as a beautiful witness in that there is no one temperament suitable to greatness, but that in Christ, all are called to holiness through purification and formation.

Jilu Chengat lives in Massachusetts, USA where she lives out her missionary call as a wife and mother to three children. She enjoys writing and accompanying young people as they discern the voice of God in their lives.



Summit of sanctity

Anil Israel reflects upon a life with Christ – heaven.

Among the so-called four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell, unanimously we all would love to embrace heaven and distance ourselves from the other three. Heaven is simply incredibly attractive, that many saints joyfully embraced martyrdom on earth to be able to enjoy the *face to face* (1Corinthians13:12) beatific vision in heaven. We all might have our own imaginative impressions influencing our personal sense of 'heaven'. Childhood perceptions tend to hover over: 'heaven is a wonderful place, filled with glory and grace'. In the Gospel, we hear Jesus assuring us: *I go to prepare a place for you* (John 14:2). The word 'place' might tend to imply that it is a location somewhere out there. But where exactly is heaven?

Since we are bound in time and space, we tend to think in terms of geographical

co-ordinates as far as location is concerned. We who are God's masterpiece, are made up of both a physical body and a spiritual soul. So the place called heaven actually refers to a spiritual co-ordinate. It is not a geographical place but a spiritual state – the state of our soul. Our souls are destined to be elevated to godly levels and be *partakers of the divine nature* (2 Peter 1:4).

The Catechism vividly teaches us: 'This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity – this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed – is called "heaven". Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness' (CCC 1024).

What Luke's Gospel refers to as *Kingdom of God*, Mathew's Gospel refers to as *Kingdom of heaven*. This is a kingdom in the spiritual realm. This is the kingdom of love where God reigns. It is a kingdom made of people's hearts – the hearts of all *called to be saints* (Romans 1:7). To live in heaven is 'to be with Christ' (CCC 1025). 'For life is to be with Christ, where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom' (St Ambrose).

This life with Christ is the life of the soul that Jesus promised: *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* (John 10:10). This abundant life in Christ is *what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him* (1 Corinthians 2:9). This heavenly life is not what the soul begins to live after it has departed the mortal body in its earthly existence, but the soul can already start living this saintly life as St Therese of Child Jesus often reiterated: 'I will spend my heaven doing good on earth.'

St Paul mentions being *caught up to the third heaven* (2 Corinthians12:2) giving a clue to different levels of intimacy with God. Our nearness to God on earth is our foretaste of heaven. Jesus's promise to the good thief: *Today you will be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43) is yet another



assurance of the heavenly experience of the nearness of Christ.

'The son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God' (C.S. Lewis). The prince of peace incarnated, to restore peace in our hearts. For 'our hearts are restless, until they find rest in you' (St Augustine). *He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son* (Colossians 1:13). *We are no longer slaves to sin* (Romans 6:6) but *children of light* (Ephesians 5:8) and *co-heirs with Christ* (Romans 8:17).

THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY › JOHN 10:10



The Catechism vividly teaches us: “This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity – this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed – is called “heaven”. Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness’ (CCC 1024).

We are all therefore called to live transformed lives *rooted and built up in him [Christ]* (Colossians 2:7) with the help of divine assistance – *the Helper* (John 14:26) – the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Having received the triple anointing of priest, prophet and king through baptism, we are called to live pure, holy, faultless lives – sinless, saintly, godly lives, for *without holiness no one can see God* (Hebrews 12:14). May all that we do, be solely done for the greater glory for God alone. *He who seeks the glory of God... in him there is no falsehood* (John 7:18).

God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). Our ardent pursuit of personal sanctification is our homecoming journey *from darkness to light* (Acts 26:18). This is a life-long journey of consistent perseverance. *It is necessary of us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God* (Acts 14:22).

May we crave the *splendour of God* (2 Corinthians 4:6) and radically reorient our lives to emit the *light of the Gospel* (2 Corinthians 4:4). May we experience his awesome presence, by offering in our hearts a *throne of praise* (Psalm 22:3). As a faithful disciple, may we always endeavour to *be with him* (Mark 3:14). For, ‘to be without Jesus is a grievous hell, and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise’ (St Therese of Lisieux).

We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are not made for this world, we are made for more – *our citizenship is in heaven* (Philippians 3:20). May we joyfully pursue this journey from parched life to the springs of eternal life. Permeated in pureness, soaked in Scripture, drenched in Divine light, inebriated in the pursuit of eternal bliss, may we scale the summit of sanctity and *become sons of light* (John 12:36). Am I willing to be a living tabernacle – a living monstrosity – radiating Christ? ■■

SOUNDREPLY



MOVIE

WEST SIDE STORY

pearls, who found the pearl of great price'; while many others find it in rather ordinary ways, 'like the dragnet cast into the sea that gathered fish of every kind.' Find it we must – sooner or later, for if not we become like the walking dead.

West Side Story is an adaptation, directed by Steven Spielberg, of the hugely popular 1957 Broadway musical of the same name. The story of the musical is inspired from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and is set in 1950s Manhattan – where the authorities are trying to clear the slums of the Upper West Side neighbourhood, in order to make way for Lincoln Centre. Vying for control of this multi-racial neighbourhood are two rival gangs – the Jets, predominantly of white Caucasian ethnicity and the Sharks, of Puerto Rican origin. Police officer Krupke and Lieutenant Schrank try constantly to restore order and infuse some sense into these troubled young men, but as far as gang wars and turf wars go, their efforts find little traction.

Riff, the leader of Jets, wants to propose a rumble (a winner-takes-all fight between the gangs) with Bernardo, the leader of Sharks at the neighbourhood dance evening. For this, he entreats the help of Tony, a former member of Sharks, now out on parole, and working at Doc's drugstore, a general store run by an old Puerto Rican lady, Valentina. Tony refuses to help, convinced now that he doesn't

I was particularly impressed by the genuine effort to touch upon the various existential questions that every generation and every human being is faced with – of race; of brotherhood; of the meaning of loyalty; of why some people go on to become who they are; of how life would have turned out different if children had more peaceful, loving homes; of the life-transforming power of love; of the vanquishing power of hatred – and above everything else, of our own choices; choices of whether to love or not!



Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* says, *Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'*. Every human being yearns to find his/her place in this big, wide world; and knowingly or unknowingly every human action, every endeavour, every goal, every objective – is in a way our relentless pursuit to find our identity – who we are and where we belong! Some find it in grandiose ways, like the 'merchant seeking beautiful

REVIEW BY
Joseph Anthraper

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

want to return to his old self, and is trying to rebuild his life with the help of Valentina. Yet, out of his love for Riff, he goes to the neighbourhood dance evening, where he meets Maria, Bernardo's sister and the two fall in love.

Bernardo is enraged to learn that his sister, who is engaged to his best friend Chino, is in love with Tony, and agrees to the rumble on condition that Tony also attend it. Meanwhile Maria, on learning of the fight, seeks Tony's help in preventing it – which Tony promises to do. On becoming aware of the fight, Officer Krupke and Lt Schrank also deploy forces across West Side to stop the gangs from harming each other. Tony arrives at the rumble and tries talking with Bernardo, but Bernardo fights Tony, and although Tony walks away, in the ensuing fight Bernardo inadvertently fatally stabs Riff. When Riff dies in his arms – in a moment of utter helplessness, sorrow and rage – Tony stabs and kills Bernardo.

Chino tells Maria about Bernardo's death. A shocked and dejected Tony decides to go and see Maria one last time before going to the police. Though grief-stricken, Maria gives Tony hope that together they can go somewhere else to start a new life together, but time is running out for both of them as more trouble begins to brew.

The story stays true to Romeo and Juliet – but what has made *West Side Story* so popular has been its music and the mesmerising dance sequences, and Steven Spielberg – arguably the greatest filmmaker of our generation – doesn't disappoint



on both scores. Having never seen the Broadway production myself and so lacking any reasonable yardstick for comparison, I was particularly impressed by the genuine effort to touch upon the various existential questions that every generation and every human being is faced with – of race; of brotherhood; of the meaning of loyalty; of why some people go on to become who they are; of how life would have turned out different if children had more peaceful, loving homes; of the life-transforming power of love; of the vanquishing power of hatred – and above everything else, of our own choices; choices of whether to love or not!

West Side Story is a love story – much like your story, my story, and the story of humanity; and where love fails to make its presence felt, the coldness and numbness of hatred begins seeping in. As Fr Mike Schmidt says, even nature abhors a vacuum, and takes God and his regenerative love out of the equation – it doesn't take much to know that the future is bleak. Yet for all the hatred and suffering around us, we take courage in the knowledge that our lives, however seemingly inconsequential, now find meaning in his love, and our stories, however tragic they may seem till now, have the perfect ending in His hands!

Photos: IMDb



Chandeliers

✦ *St Faustina Comes to Encourage*



St Faustina

Online



Message



Audio



Video

Chels: I was reading St Faustina this evening. 'I felt extremely happy. I thought I had entered life in paradise. One big prayer of thanksgiving sprang up from my heart! O my dearest Faustina! Will you please ask Jesus to share the same happiness with me?'

Faustina: Why not? Your prayer is answered even before you thought of asking it.

Chels: Oh wow! I can't believe this. My dear Faustina! I'm thrilled to meet you.

Faustina: I'm sent by Jesus to give you company.

Chels: Thank you my Jesus! I love this fellowship.

Faustina: Yes! I too had such instances while on earth.

Chels: I was just reading your book – the part where you enter the convent. Since you are here, why don't you narrate the rest, dear Faustina?

Faustina: Sure. Before that, tell me what you have read.

Chels: You were born in 1905 in Poland as the third child of Marianna and Stanislaw. You were named Helena. Your parents brought you up in the fear of the Lord. You were a special child from the beginning. You were woken up by your guardian angel at night to pray. An immense desire to enter religious vocation kindled in you at the age of 7 but your parents denied it whenever you asked their permission. You started working as a housemaid to help your family.

Faustina: You have an excellent memory!

Chels: Thank you! And thank you dear Holy Spirit. Tell me, what happened after this?

Faustina: Mhmm... Okay. My parents denied me permission. And slowly, I moved away from God's calling. Once, I went to a dance but I saw a vision of Jesus, all covered with wounds. He asked me this question, '... how long are you going to keep me waiting?' It burdened me. I went out immediately and made my way to the Lodz Cathedral. I heard Jesus telling me to go to Warsaw. I had to begin my religious vocation there. And I departed without the consent of my parents.

Chels: Oh! Who accompanied you to Warsaw? Had you been there before?

Faustina: It was Jesus who called and accompanied me. That was the first time I went to Warsaw, which was nearly 137 km away. There I entered a church and was directed to a lady by the parish priest. I was appointed a housekeeper in her house. While there, I continued to look for the place God had called me to. After a long search, I reached the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. When I presented my wish, the Mother General told me to ask the Lord of the house if he would accept me. And when I asked, I heard him saying, 'I accept you, you are in my heart!' This confirmed my

By Jisha John

entry. But I had to wait a year to gather the dowry for that. It was on 1st August 1925, I entered my religious vocation.

Chels: How was life in the convent? How long have you been there?

Faustina: It was so good. It was a thirteen-year journey until my death. I began to have great moments with Jesus. He exposed his heart to me which is the epitome of love and mercy. He instructed me often. The Holy Mother visited me sometimes. I felt like her little child. After the stay in Warsaw, I was sent to other convents. My duty too differed in between. I was a cook, gardener and a portress. Jesus was making me the Apostle and Secretary of Divine Mercy.

Chels: Yes, the Apostle of Divine Mercy! My dearest Faustina! That has a great impact on me. When I stumble, I repeat that prayer. When I find no way, I say it. 'Jesus, I trust in You.' I am strengthened when I pronounce it.

Faustina: Yes. Jesus, we trust in you.

Chels: Tell me about your seeing Jesus.

Faustina: There were many occasions. He always told me that he needed me. He needs you too, my little soul. Be prepared for the call. I had many apparitions. I could feel the heart of Christ, pained and burning for love of us. I couldn't resist it. He shared his thirst with me. People around me misunderstood me. They thought I was having hysteria. Apart from that I began to fall sick. The struggles were intense at times. I was prompted to submit everything for the conversion of sinners.

Chels: When did Jesus tell you about his Divine Mercy? How did you get that image of him in a pristine white garment and having those red and white rays?

Faustina: I saw him so one evening while I was in Plock. He appeared and asked me to make a picture of him as I had seen in the apparition. He asserted about the Feast of Divine Mercy. It was hard for me to carry out that mission since I was uncertain about what to do. I sometimes doubted the apparitions. I had gone through dark nights where I didn't feel his presence. The authorities tested me to see whether I was right. It took years to venerate the Divine Mercy picture.

Chels: Fr Michael Sopocho was sent to you to carry out that mission.

Faustina: Yes. Confession helped me a lot. I was sometimes misguided. I prayed to the Holy Spirit to enlighten my confessor. That prayer was magical. The congregation had to confirm God's doing in it. I once saw Fr. Sopocho in a vision even before we first meet. Jesus told me that Fr. Sopocho would help me to carry out his will. It happened just as he said. Fr. Sopocho tested me to see that I wasn't guided by

hallucinations and fantasies. He stood along when he found me true. He too had suffered for God's will. We were to prepare the world for Jesus's Second Coming.

Chels: We celebrated the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Divine Mercy from Dec 8, 2015 to Nov 20, 2016. That was a great time of blessing.

Faustina: Yes, the Holy Spirit leads the Church through his missionaries. Pope Francis has done the will of God just as St Pope John Paul II and others.

Chels: Oh I thought of asking you about this. What did Jesus say about Papa John Paul?

Faustina: He once spoke about Poland that he had a special love for it. And he said '...from her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for my final coming.'

Chels: That was prophetic. Prepare us, O Lord that we may be found worthy to sit with you.

Dear Faustina, you are so blessed. You had invisible stigmata. It was a special gift, wasn't it? And tell me about this incident where a seraph gave you Holy Communion for 13 days. How was that experience?

Faustina: That was majestic. I was sick and couldn't go to the chapel. It made me sad but I felt calm and resigned myself to God's will. A seraph came to me and said, 'Behold the Lord of Angels.' As soon as he gave me Holy Communion, he disappeared. Once, while I was journeying to Vilnius, one of the seven spirits rode with me on the train. I constantly saw him beside me. I saw angels standing on guard at every church we passed, and they bowed their heads before the Spirit who was near me. The angels accompany us. My guardian angel always accompanied me.

Chels: Jesus! I wish to have such episodes in my life too. Send your angels to guard me.

Faustina: They are with you. We are with you. We are a great team together.

Chels: Yes, but I wish to see them with my mortal eyes.

Faustina: Let's pray. May God grant this wish!

Chels: Thanks a million!

Faustina: You are a lovely soul. May you be a saint!

Chels: Pray for me that I be as holy as our Lord desires and wills.

Faustina: Sure. Take heart. God bless you.

Chels: Thank you.

NewsWatch

Why is Our Lady of Guadalupe patroness of the unborn?

On December 12 we celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Did you know that she is the patroness of the unborn?

Our Lady of Guadalupe is quoted as comforting St Juan Diego. 'Am I not here, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?'

She spoke as his mother and as the mother of an unborn Baby Jesus when she appeared on the Hill of Tepeyac in Mexico City in 1531. Her miraculous image, imprinted on the saint's *tilma*, or cloak, shows her wearing a black sash, an indication of pregnancy in the native culture.

Today, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City houses the original image left on Juan Diego's *tilma*, which is visited by millions of pilgrims each year. She is not only considered the

patroness of the Americas but also of the unborn. Here's why.

In 1999, Pope John Paul II established December 12 as the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. 'This is our cry: life with dignity for all! For all who have been conceived in their mother's womb, for street children, for Guadalupe!' He declared at the basilica.

Nearly 20 years later, in 2018, Pope Francis entrusted to Our Lady of Guadalupe 'in particular, those who are awaiting the birth of their children.'

'St. John Paul II commended to her maternal protection the life and innocence of children, especially those who run the risk of not being born,' he told Polish pilgrims during his general audience. 'By her intercession, in this time of Advent, let us implore the gift of children for families without children, respect for the conceived life and the openness of hearts to Gospel values.'



A 2-YEAR SPIRITUAL PREPARATION JOURNEY STARTS FOR THE DECENNIAL EXPOSITION OF ST FRANCIS XAVIER'S RELICS IN GOA

The decennial exposition of the sacred relics of St Francis Xavier would be held in Old Goa near Panaji between November 21, 2024 and January 5, 2025, Archbishop of Goa and Daman Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao said.

The dates for the celebrations have been announced two years in advance to help the pilgrims plan their participation in the event, the Goa church said in a statement. 'The two years of spiritual preparation leading to the exposition will focus on walking with the poor and the marginalised, walking with people of all faiths and cultures and walking in harmony with creation,' The statement from the diocese added.

The decennial spiritual event gives the faithful an opportunity to reflect on the 'faith journey' of St Francis Xavier, popularly known as 'Göycho Saib' and to emulate his zeal for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it said.

The exposition of the sacred relics of St Francis Xavier in 2024-2025 will be the culmination of a 2-year spiritual journey, a journey of renewal and of hope to be undertaken by every individual, every family, every parish and the entire Church in Goa and Daman, the statement said.



‘Church in Myanmar is wounded, displaced,’ cardinal says

Photo: Bjorn Christian Terrissen



Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon says the Church in Myanmar is wounded and displaced as thousands of people are forced to flee their homes, villages are burned and churches are destroyed amid the conflict triggered by last year’s military coup.

‘The people of Myanmar have been suffering from the Covid pandemic and political instability for the last two years and thousands of people are homeless and seeking refuge in the camps,’ Bo said in his homily at the ordination of two Salesians held at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Nazareth Apostolate School, Anesakahan, near Pyin-Oo-Lwin, on December 8. ‘Amid the darkness and the suffering, the Church is wounded, the Church is displaced,’ he said.

The cardinal, who is also the

head of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Myanmar, has called for peace, dialogue and reconciliation in the beleaguered Southeast Asian nation. ‘The only thing we need in Myanmar is love, reconciliation,’ he said, urging Catholics to pray for the country and lend a hand to those most in need regardless of race and religion. The cardinal, however, did not mention the military’s arson attacks on villages including his own.

The latest appeal by Cardinal Bo came just two weeks after his home village – Mon Hla in the embattled Sagaing region – was raided by the military and homes were set ablaze while at least three civilians including a 7-year-old boy were killed. At least 110 homes that belong to Catholic and Buddhist villagers from Mon Hla who have been living in harmony for decades were destroyed in the November 24 attack by junta forces, according to Church sources. St Michael Church, the priest’s house and the convent were not affected by the fire.

The military has also targeted other Catholic villages. At least 800 houses were destroyed by junta troops in the historic Catholic villages of Chan Thar and Chaung Yoe in May and June. The military regime is specifically targeting these three historic Catholic villages in the Bamar heartland of Sagaing in a bid to stamp out growing resistance by people’s defense forces. Thousands of Christians have been displaced and sought refuge in churches, relatives’ homes and in the jungle under the military’s reign of terror.

More than 1.4 million people are displaced across the country, of whom more than 1.1 million have been displaced since the 2021 military takeover, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report on December 3.



FIFTH EDITION OF CRAFT CITY

Kairos Media’s online workshop for children, Craft City had its fifth edition, *Mystical Rose*, on 26 November 2022. It was a huge success with over 200 participants from countries like Germany, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Singapore, Pakistan, UAE, USA, UK, and India.

time out



Take a picture of the solved image and send it to quiztime@jykairosmedia.org before 25th January 2022.
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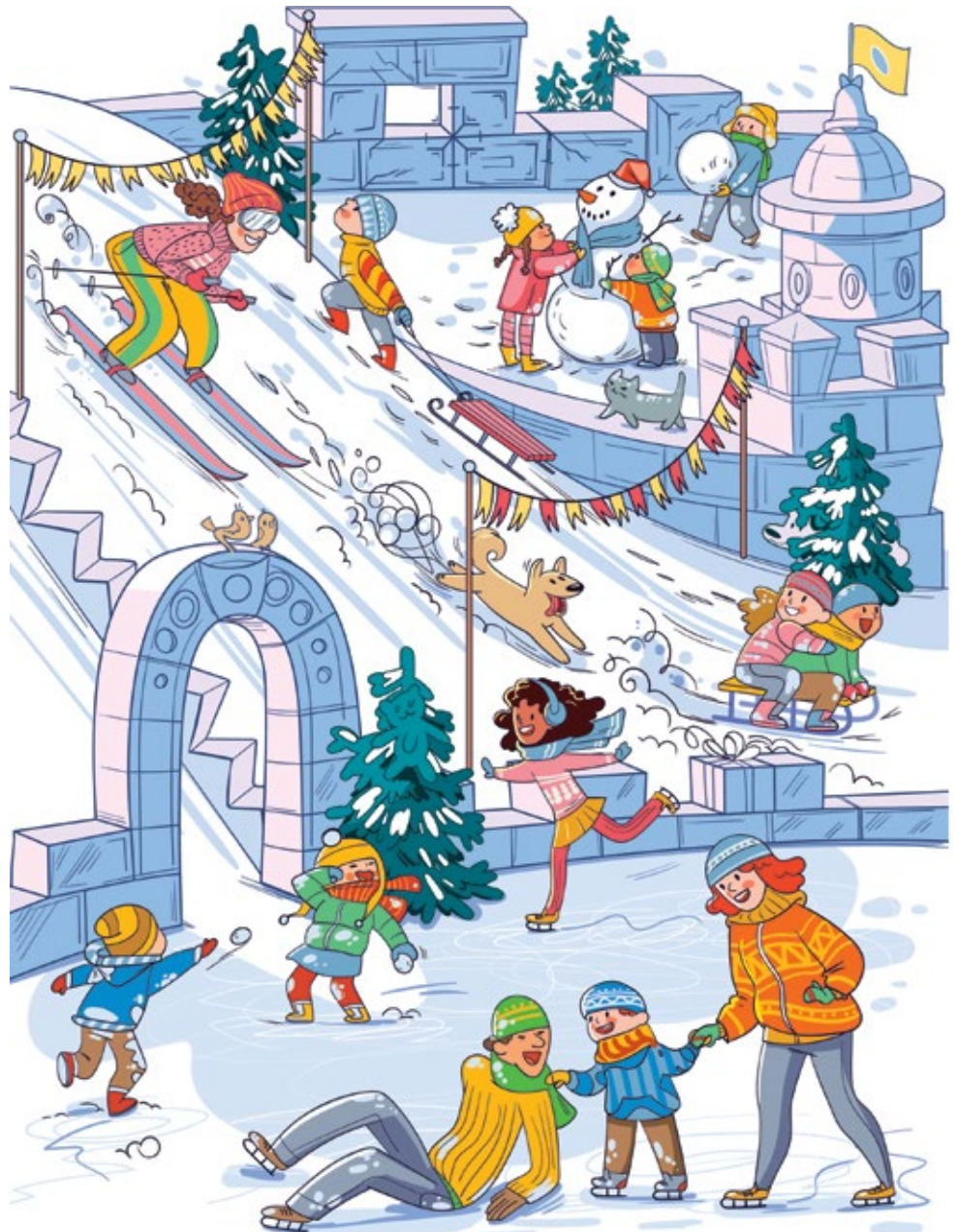
Q Hidden Objects

Find 10 hidden objects in the image below

HIDDEN
ITEMS



BONUS
ITEM



LUKAS and RAY

By Steffi Ambat Fira
IG @sculptures-steffi



When there is a surprise math test?
When your cupcakes get burnt?
When Alex questions catholicism?
A lot can frustrate you, Ray.



Yeah, all of that, but isn't it unfair we can't see heaven right now? I mean, what exactly is it like? What if I don't like it when I get there?




Do you know that an iceberg is a large chunk of ice cutoff from an even bigger glacier? And how much of an iceberg can you see? Ten percent! And yet you know that the entire chunk is made of the very substance that makes the glacier.



Do you love Jesus?

of course!



Then heaven is the same substance as Him. He came to give you a taste of heaven and knowing you, Ray, you are going to love it.

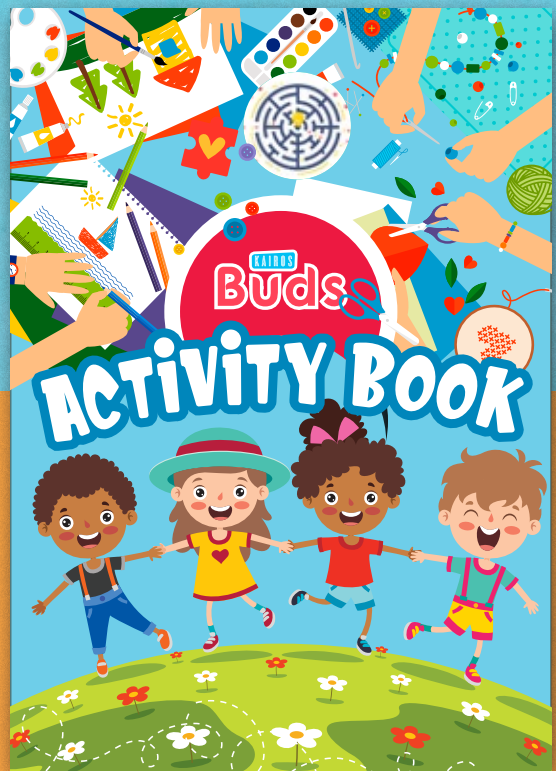


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