

KAIROS

GLOBAL

Liturgy of Love

H.E. MAR SEBASTIAN VANIYAPURACKAL

ALSO ↓

Experiences of
a Young Priest
in Africa

■ FR SAGIL NADAKUNNEL CST

THE HOST OF
SELF-GIVING

■ FR SHOJI VECHOORKAROTTU





MARY, MY BELOVED MOTHER



Blessed are you, Mary, exalted Daughter of Sion! You are highly favoured and full of grace, for the Spirit of God descended upon you. Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, our model of prayer in the Cenacle, pray for us that we may become what we receive, the body of Christ your son. Amen.

EDITOR'S ROOM



DR. CHACKOCHAN J NJAVALLIL

 @readkairos

I HAVE ALWAYS WONDERED WHY THE CHURCH IS MOSTLY A 'NO SMILE' PLACE.

HOLY MASS AND SOME PRACTICAL QUESTIONS TO MYSELF

In connection with the theme of this month, I pose a few questions to myself.

Why do I strive to attend Holy Mass every day?

I spent quite a long time pondering about this and have yet to find an answer convincing enough. Though the reasons are many, I find it difficult to identify them.

Having participated in Holy Masses for so long, have I had any special experiences?

The answer is no. The same answer applies to my entire spiritual life till now. It does surprise me that there have been no special, unusual or remarkable experiences.

What have I gained?

I am sure that innumerable spiritual benefits were gained through my participation in the Holy Mass, especially growth in grace. Every Mass prompts me to introspect though I've failed many times in taking action.

What if I am unable to participate in Holy Mass on a particular day or for few days?

Surprisingly for me that day also goes on just like any other day. I don't generally experience any guilt or disappointment.

Are you able to always focus during Holy Mass?

The reality is that I am distracted many a time. It takes effort to concentrate and even then on some occasions I find it difficult to focus.

Handling distractions...

On certain occasions I am able to surrender the distractions to the Lord. I just admit the fact that I am distracted. The moment I realise that I am distracted I try to listen carefully to the prayers said.

Most uncomfortable things...

When some of the celebrants make the prayers and the entire celebration artificial, I feel very uncomfortable. I have always wondered why the church is mostly a 'no smile' place.

About silence in Mass...

A statement by the Pope that the significance of silence in Mass should not be ignored is something that caught my attention. Too loud sound systems and too much noise from the choir is a reason for dissatisfaction.

Do I usually go with some special prayer intentions to Mass?

I don't usually go with any special intentions but generally I have three petitions/ intercession areas in my mind. They are: 1. Personal (people and concerns related to the family and extended family); 2. Ministry (intentions related to Kairos, Jesus Youth and the Church); and 3. Professional (for the institution and people in the institution I work with).

I hope and pray that this issue of *Kairos Global* helps you immensely in your spiritual journey.



Also LOOK OUTFOR

- 12 Lessons from a Two-Century-Old Shrine
- 22 The Host of Self-Giving
- 32 Sweet Sacrament Divine



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Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.
John 6:54

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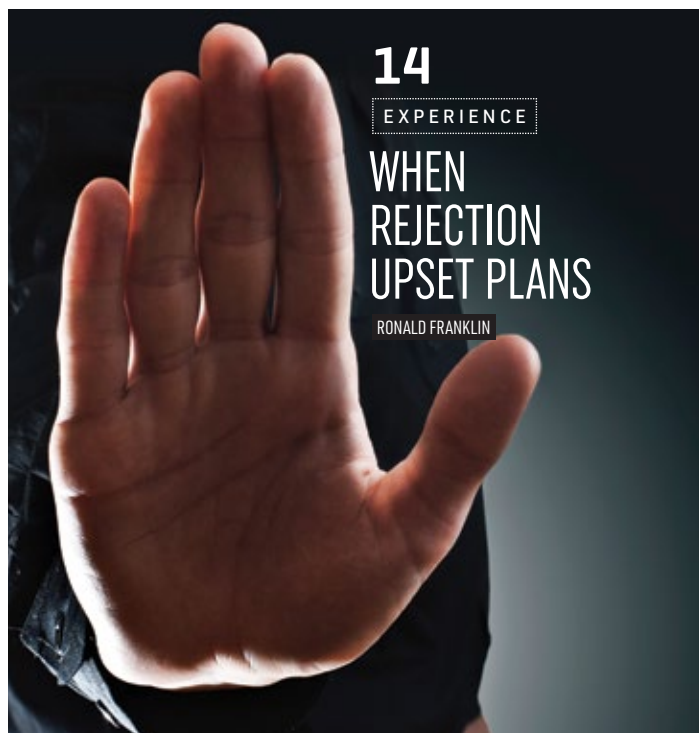
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ASK



FR. BITAJU

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

Q. Is music allowed in church? As a Christian, can songs, action songs and other entertainment media be used?

The role of music in the Church is biblical. The people of Israel sang a song to the Lord after escaping the Egyptians and crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 15). The Psalms manifest the beauty of God's people raising their voices in hymns to him in joy and sorrow, in praise and lament. Jesus and his disciples practised singing hymns (Matthew 26:30). St Paul exhorted the Colossians that *with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God* (3:16-17). The teachings of the Church affirm that 'sacred music is for the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful.' Further, it urges that 'sacred music should possess, in the highest degree, the qualities proper to the liturgy, and in particular sanctity and goodness of form. It must be holy, and must, therefore, exclude all profanity not only in itself but in the manner in which it is presented by those who execute it' (*Tra Le Solleitudini*, 1-2).

Regarding the second part of your question, whether Christians can follow songs, action songs and other entertainment media, it is good to remember that the lyrics of a song makes it Christian, though the composition can be of different genres. The Second Vatican Council permitted modern music in the vernacular, yet the Gregorian chant has a prominent place in the Western rite. We are aware that Christian music is not limited to the four walls of a church or

community. It ought to be present on the lips of every faithful, not only in their private lives but also when they gather together. As tastes and preferences of individuals vary, the vast genre of Christian music provides a rich variety to choose for the young and the old, the newbie or theologically mature, for solemn moments or private relaxation to connect to God according to their unique tastes. It is true that music sometimes makes you move your body too to express the soul of it in a better way. There are a variety of 'dance expressions' that accompany Christian music of which action song is one of them. How wonderful it is when our whole body moves in praise of God for his inexpressible gifts!

To conclude, it is important that one be watchful of causing scandal to another by way of the songs, action songs or entertainment media that one chooses to follow. 'Scandal is an attitude or behaviour which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbour's tempter' (CCC #2284). Further, the exhortation of St Paul is relevant: *whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31). The invitation here is to learn to discern in accordance with the teaching of the Church and one's conscience what God wants him/her in the choices he/she makes.



YOUCAT 354

CAN PEOPLE BE FORCED TO BELIEVE IN GOD?

No. No one may force others to believe, not even one's own children, just as no one may be forced to be an unbeliever. A person can make the decision to believe only in complete freedom. Christians, however, are called to help other people, by word and example, to find the way to faith. [2104-2109, 2137]

Pope John Paul II said, 'Proclaiming Christ and bearing witness to him, when done in a way that respects consciences, does not violate freedom. Faith demands a free adherence on the part of man, but at the same time faith must also be offered to him' [Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, 1990, no. 8].

DR. KOCHURANI JOSEPH

Prayer Intentions September

Abolition of the Death Penalty

We pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.



Pope talk

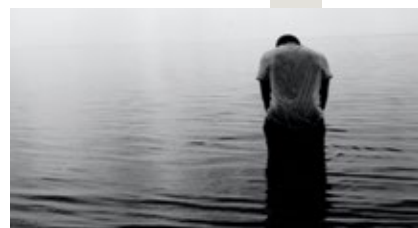


Time with the Word of God keeps our efforts from being 'sterile activism'.

Complaining that the world is evil is not Christian.

God never ceases to have confidence in you, not for a second. He believes in your talents.

Jesus comes to us when we are at our lowest.



You will come to realise that Jesus, from the cross, never points his finger at you. He embraces you and encourages you, because he believes in you even when you stop believing in yourself.

Christian joy is about the experience of a peace that remains in our hearts, even when we are pelted by trials and afflictions, for then we know that we are not alone, but accompanied by a God who is not indifferent to our lot.

Proclamation is not primarily a matter of words, but of a witness abounding with gratuitous love, for that is God's way with us.

If we learn how to listen, we can hear in the voice of creation a kind of dissonance. We can hear a sweet song in praise of our beloved Creator; on the other, an anguished plea, lamenting our mistreatment of this our common home.

JESUS YOUTH



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

Someone to say 'Come!'



I was in a teens' camp. It was time for the Holy Mass and all had gathered in the chapel. But as it often happens, the front seats were empty with everyone sitting far away from the altar. 'This looks quite shabby,' I thought. 'But how to tell these youth to fill up all the front seats?' After a few seconds, Anita, one of the main volunteers of the camp, came in. With a gentle smile, she quickly went around the hall gesturing to the group to move forward. Lo and behold! In a few seconds all the front seats were filled up. Now the whole place looked well arranged. Not only that, that day the participation in that Mass was quite active, maybe because everyone knew that there was someone actively in command.

As I sat there, I continued to reflect. What Anita did was what Christian leadership ought to be, someone raising the voice to say 'come'.

THE TRAGEDY OF GOOD PEOPLE WITH NO INITIATIVE

There is that very disturbing scene in the Lord's story of the Good Samaritan. A poor man attacked by robbers is lying on the roadside. A priest and a Levite, representatives of good and prayerful people, pass by 'on the other side', not doing anything about it. We don't know what their thoughts were. Most

probably they thought, 'I am already leading a good life, involving a lot in church matters, and this is none of my concern.' But in the picture that Jesus painted they were on the wrong side.

In most schools that I know the ideal kids are the ones who sit silently and never question or argue. As they grow up, they are often encouraged to follow the crowd, doing nothing out of place. When we look at life in a parish, good Christians are called 'sheep', the meek ones. There the faithful are expected to 'pray, pay and obey' and never speak out. 'Officially' no dissenting voice is encouraged, and the best behaviour for a Christian is doing what all others do, and that is 'obedience'.

The result of all this is the good ones are hopelessly passive, and the wrong ones are active in world leadership. We seem to tell our youth, 'You only need to pray, don't do anything else', while in the world youth are encouraged to take leadership and 'do something' wherever they are. I like these words of the famous British statesman Edmund Burke, 'ALL that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.'

WAITING FOR A SIGN OF LEADERSHIP

In a time of confusion someone needs to speak up, and then all would listen.

That is how leadership emerges. I have seen this happening in Jesus Youth numerous times. For example, in 2018 there was the Kerala floods, and all were shocked and confused. Rajju quickly made calls to Berly, Manoj, Binu and many others. In a few hours, a big initiative called 'Nalla Ayalkaran' (Good Neighbour) was born, offering help to thousands of devastated and helpless people. In another example, seeing the rampant drug abuse among the teens in the city, Suresh, Shalini and a few others gathered to discuss a suitable response. That was the starting of a series of big steps to help youth to 'say no to drugs'.

A loud voice saying 'come' gathers people lost in confusion and prompts them to take steps. If really inspired by the Spirit, it becomes a prophetic voice of big change. If Jesus Youth is vibrant in colleges or parishes, it is because in some confusion or hopelessness someone made a call and soon people came together. What St Paul says in his letter to Romans is indeed very true, the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God (8:19).

THE PERSONS WHO SAY 'COME'

After a short campus ministry meeting, Latha eagerly approached me, 'Please tell me how to begin a group in my



The Bible ends with a call to 'come' – *The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'* And let him who hears say, *'Come.'* (Revelations 22:17). And this is an invitation that the Lord and the Church extend to everyone eager to have the abundance of life.

college?' Most youth are scared and think of all the problems in inviting others. But what they need is an inner push of the Holy Spirit. Then they will take some simple steps and tell others to 'come'. Latha took a step, in faith, inviting many to a Jesus Youth gathering. She thus started a good group in her college.

Latha, who came from a Hindu background got to know Jesus from a JY conference. She experienced the love of God and was eager to do something beautiful for Jesus. She knew that the best way was to invite others to form a community where they would meet and grow in the Lord. Latha's simplicity and joy made her a welcoming person, most suitable to say 'come' to her friends.

As we already found, saying 'come' is a sign of good Christian leadership and three important qualities such

persons need are, love for the Lord, love for the neighbour and an enthusiastic disposition.

WE ALSO NEED PLACES TO INVITE PEOPLE TO

Linsey was a non-Catholic Christian, but through Jesus Youth she became an active Catholic. Mathew invited her once to the weekly JY gathering, where she met a very joyful bunch of young people. After a few weeks of attending the small group, she decided to learn more about the Church and her life has never been the same.

We need enthusiastic Christians to invite, but the question is, to invite to what or where? Of course, in a limited sense we may invite youth to some conferences or training, but eventually we say 'come' to join a community. 'The beauty of our group is that we have a number of ways to integrate people,

like a tea-and-snack group, outreach to the poor, a praise group, intercession group, Bible study, games evening, media day, and so on.' People should be invited to come and belong to a family. That is what everyone wants and that is the beautiful plan of God.

The Bible ends with a call to 'come' – *The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'* And let him who hears say, *'Come.'* (Revelations 22:17). And this is an invitation that the Lord and the Church extend to everyone eager to have the abundance of life. And the role of a Christian leader is to be a spokesperson for the Lord and say 'come' to those around, as Anita did in her little way during that teens' camp. ■■

.....

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

MISSION

TALK

TUMSIFU YESU KHRISTU

Fr Sagil Nadakunnel CST writes about Tanzania and his congregation's mission there.

'... It is an indispensable cultural trait of the Tanzanians to greet whomsoever they meet notwithstanding whether they are strangers or expatriates! Once they come to know that we are priests, they would immediately greet us, "Tumsifu Yesu Khristu" (Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ) ...' writes the first missionaries from the Little Flower Congregation (CST Fathers) to Tanzania in 1999.

Tanzania, a country in East Africa is one of the oldest continuously inhabited areas on earth. It shares borders with Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. Africa's highest mountain Mount Kilimanjaro is in northeastern Tanzania. The country has a population of around 61 million people, belonging to Christian and Muslim religions. As 'Freedom and unity' the motto of the country suggests, the culture of people is characterised by harmony, nonetheless the fact that there are more than 130 tribes in the country. These tribes are knitted together by inter tribal marriages and the one national language, Kiswahili. Tanzanians are raised in a culture where the young respect the elders. Even though according to the standards of United Nations Tanzania is a middle-income country, poverty is a stark reality there; many are farmers depending on small-scale farming and many a times they suffer from drought; however, in spite of that the people live in peace. About 63% of the population is Christian divided into Roman Catholic, Lutherans, Anglicans and Pentecostals. Thus, it is important to look into the historical development of Christianity in the country.

Christianity in Tanzania

The history of Christianity in Tanzania dates back to the missionary expeditions of the colonial age. First Catholic missionaries arrived in the country in the 15th century; they were two priests who accompanied the Portuguese merchant and explorer, Vasco

da Gama in his journey to India. They were chaplains to the Portuguese merchants. Some of those merchants were attracted by the gold and other minerals largely available on the coast of East Africa and thus they decided to stay back there in the countries of Kenya and Tanzania. They established their fort in Mombasa, Kenya, called Fort Jesus and this became the capital city of the Portuguese on the coast of East Africa. The priests, who were interested in converting the coastal people in eastern Africa, baptized some people in Tanzania and Kenya. However, the Portuguese could not survive long because of the constant attack from the Arabs who were much stronger in the Eastern Africa. Gradually, they were forced by the Arabs to flee from there. The Arabs destroyed everything left behind by the Portuguese and converted the few Christians to Islam.

However the wearing down of missionary spirit finally resurged in the mid- 19th century, when the *Propaganda Fide* urged the congregation of Holy Ghost, Spiritans to send missionaries to Tanzania. They arrived in Bagamoyo Tanzania in 1868, built schools, started catechising and introduced new yielding crops for agriculture with the support of the colonial government. However, Arabs were still strong on the coast of East Africa where slave trade was common. Missionaries tried to free the slaves by paying ransoms, then taught them catechism and send them to evangelise. These freed slaves worked as catechists in the many missions in Tanzania. After the independence in 1964, many religious congregations from different parts of the world arrived in the country to continue the legacy of the Catholic Church. I shall briefly narrate the story of my own congregation from India as an example.

Little Flower Congregation (CST Fathers) and its Tanzanian Mission

Little Flower Congregation (CST Fathers) is a religious-clerical congregation founded



in Kerala, India in the year 1931 by Rev Fr Basilius Panat CST. The congregation works for the upliftment of the poor with the motto 'Be Little, Serve the Little'. Following the dream of their patron saint, St Therese of Lisieux that is 'to preach the gospel on all the five continents', the Theresians entered into the new millennium by embarking upon a new hitherto unknown mission – the African mission. Thanks to the farsightedness of Fr Felix Nellikunnath CST, the then superior general of the congregation and the godfather of the CST African mission. After due deliberations and reflections, Fr. Jose Panikulangara CST and Fr. Joseph Padinjarekuttu CST, the pioneer CST African missionaries landed Tanzania on 8 August 1999 upon the invitation of Bishop Justin Tetmu Samba, the then bishop of the diocese of Musoma. That was a small step ahead of a giant leap!

Activities of Missionaries in the country

Right from the beginning, the missionaries focused on evangelisation and socio-cultural upliftment of the country by way of education and health services. As a result, along with the churches, they built schools, hospitals and other social centers as well. They got involved in building roads, irrigation systems and advocated for the people's needs. In the post conciliar era, the missionary activities became more human-centred than religious-centred. Gone are the days of mere proselytizing. Nowadays, the missionaries in spite of catering to the spiritual needs of the people, are also engaged in fighting for the rights of the marginalised, abused and the despised and the dispossessed of the social strata. Promotion of interreligious dialogue and ecumenism are also instrumental in facilitating the lives of the people more peacefully. Tanzania has one among the richest biodiversities in the world. Given that, the missionaries commit themselves for the promotion and preservation of the flora and



The people have pristine innocence that is basically oriented towards God. People love missionaries and they trust in the love of God. The country has the best appreciation for the schools run by the Catholic Church.

fauna of the country as well. Having seen the different activities of the missionaries in a nutshell now let us ponder upon an important question, what is the future of mission Tanzania?

The future of the Mission

Mungu ibariki Afrika or 'God Bless Africa' begins the national anthem of Tanzania – a visible sign of how assertively spiritual the country is! Studies show that not only Tanzania, but most of the African countries are the present-day Jerusalem, where Christianity is thriving day by day. There is great potential and possibility for the mission to flourish more yielding. This is because Tanzania, as said before, is a peaceful country united by one

language, Swahili and having a culture that is not adulterated by extreme secularism and atheism. The people have pristine innocence that is basically oriented towards God. People love missionaries and they trust in the love of God. The country has the best appreciation for the schools run by the Catholic Church. Besides, the number of Tanzanians joining consecrated life as priests and nuns is also on rise year by year. Right now, there is a vocation boom in Tanzania. However, the mission is not without challenges. Some parts of the country are extremely remote and the Catholics there do not have Holy Mass, even on Sundays due to the shortage of ministers. There is a need to address some of the wrong tendencies among the people like wanting to become rich easily, looking for miracles in the churches, etc. However, the words of Pope Francis give us great hope, not to brood over the details, but to find joy in the whole! 'The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all.' The Church in Tanzania as a whole has a promising future in spite of its limitations and challenges when zoomed into the details.

EXPERIENCE



Lessons From a Two-Century-Old Shrine

When they volunteered to help restore an old monastery's shrine, little did they realise how life-changing it would be. Derin James shares his experience.

We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life (Ephesians 2:10).

I am very excited to describe the wonderful experience we Jesus Youth had at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada. We were nine of us from different parts of Nova Scotia, gathered at Antigonish.

When Cathy, a devoted Catholic, welcomed us to the monastery all we had in mind was to just help Fr Albert MacPherson restore the shrine located 5 minutes away from the monastery. But

as soon as we entered the monastery walls, we were in one of the world's most peaceful places, the exact replica of paradise Jesus mentioned to the penitent thief (good thief) during the crucifixion. It was a whole new realm. A place where a few people lived, who only knew how to love and serve God.

Our Lady of Grace Monastery is home to the Contemplative Augustinian Nuns. Here these religious sisters live out their lives consecrated to Our Lord, where they pray for petitions received, friends and supporters of the monastery, the Church, and the whole world. When we visited the monastery, there were only 4 nuns and an Augustinian priest, Father Albert MacPherson. He is part of the Augustinian healing ministry. A quick outline of the monastery and the surroundings are as follows: Our Lady of Grace Monastery with its chapel, dormitory rooms, classrooms, library, office, kitchen, and dining areas. An ideal place for spiritual renewal and retreats. Just 2 minutes away from the monastery there is a hermitage which was built for the brothers who lived there years ago for leading a spiritual life and living in solitude to connect with GOD.

It is a special kind of spirituality and when I saw the hermitage, the first thing that popped to my mind was about the three brothers living in the hills of Panchalimedu, in Kerala, India for the past 20 plus years in silence and pure devotion to Christ.

Well, the most interesting part and the reason for our arrival was to restore the shrine situated 5 minutes away from the monastery. It was such an aesthetic and peaceful place to pray and reflect. The shrine was on a hillside with a shallow river beside it. There is also a freshwater spring that emerged from the hills, believed to be Mother Mary's miracle. People call it miracle spring water with lots of minerals in it. The people living around would come to collect this spring water in bottles to take it back home when they have some health issues. All of us drank from it and it was so refreshing.

Basically, this shrine is in the woods, and it needs to be cleaned periodically. So, if left untouched the shrine would turn into a forest. The 81-year-old Fr Albert was a tremendous inspiration for all of us. We came to know that restoring and cleaning the shrine was part of his daily routine. So, even if we didn't show up Father Albert would have done it all on his own. Being healthy adults, we were ashamed at seeing Father dealing with the chainsaw and other equipment because we could barely lift those machines. Father Albert taught us an important

lesson: no one and nothingness can also give you happiness. He always had a smile on his face. At some point we even wondered if he was St Francis Assisi, just because he wasn't talking much but simply loving nature, animals, and the people around. We could evangelize people just like that without talking much. It was a huge reflection for me.

Everyone among us enjoyed the time we spent there. See what Evelin Mariya Joshy has to say about her experience:

'At first, for me, this was a mission trip for a bunch of us Jesus Youth to help the priest and the Augustinian nuns in the restoration of an almost two-century-old monastery, I mean how cool is that?! But it turned out to be a humbling three



days of peaceful retreat, learning and realisations that sprung forth from encountering the extraordinarily ordinary life of the cloister nuns and the people there. It made me think of my call to be readily available to God and to serve the community, expecting nothing in return – to be a selfless giver. Our days were spent doing the most mundane of things like logging trees, mowing the garden, clearing bushes, doing the dirty dishes, etc. But the joy and togetherness were so much more fulfilling. All in all, it was a blessing to be part of such a mission trip and thinking back it was truly a blessing to be given an opportunity to meet and to know the stories of the lovely people at the Monastery of Our Lady of Grace.'

Apart from the labour and other acts of kindness, Fr Albert gave a healing service and anointed each one of us including some parishioners. It was such a blessing. Like all the Jesus Youth say, it was a great time of reflection and spiritual renewal for us.

I am concluding with what Cathy MacDougall has to say about our three days at the monastery: 'It was wonderful to host nine members of Jesus Youth at our local monastery Our Lady of Grace in Antigonish County. These young people were eager and willing to help with whatever needed to be done. It is evident that they love our Lord and wish to serve the Church. I wish them well in all their future endeavours and hope that they will return in the future to help keep the Shrine to Our Lady in top shape. Now more than ever do we need places of prayer for people who have nowhere to turn. This is an oasis of hope and healing for many a pilgrim on life's journey towards the Lord and his blessed mother. Thank you to Jesus Youth for helping to make this a possibility for people.'

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Colossians 3:23, 24).



Derin James is a 24-year-old who came to Canada as a student and is now working there full-time.



WHEN REJECTION UPSET PLANS

Ronald Franklin writes about what happened when his application to study abroad got rejected.

Last year was a life-changing one in my life. Like every other youth, I had a dream of settling abroad, having an amazing career instead of being stuck in a place where I knew that things wouldn't work out for me. With the help of a study abroad agency named Jubeerich, I applied to a college in Canada. Since my younger brother was there, I knew the country had vast opportunities and it was my best chance to get there as soon as possible.

I got my offer letter for the business management course from Lambton College in March 2021. On May 15th, my study visa application was submitted successfully via an agency. This was the most crucial part; I was in a 50/50 mood regarding what the result would be. This was an important step in my career decision because if my visa got rejected,

I could either go to Qatar or somewhere else in the Middle East for a job.

That was my plan-B but I was clueless and desperate. I needed God's intervention in my life. In our daily family prayer, I remember my mom praying for every member in the family including myself saying, 'Dear God, bless that visa officer who goes through Ronnie's application. You know the plans you have for my child, please guide him and be with him.' Her prayers gave me relief. She has always been my pillar of strength.

On July 21st early morning, I got an email from the IRCC. My agency was

only able to access it. So I called them to check the status of the application. I was nervous; at that very moment, one of the agency managers called back and said, 'Sorry Ronald, your visa application got declined.' According to the rejection reason, they felt that I would not leave the country at the end of my stay based on the purpose of my visit. I was sad and didn't know how to break the news to my parents. The manager said that if I re-applied, there was a higher chance of rejection again because of my weak profile – the field of study I had opted for was different from what I had studied here in India; I also had a low percentage with a lot of arrears in my graduate course. He recommended that I choose the UK as the best study abroad country for my solution. I was not interested in going there but didn't have a choice so he suggested that I discuss this with my parents first.

I told my mom about my visa rejection and she was a bit shocked, worried for me and they didn't want me to go to the UK as the expenses were too high. Also, this agency was only recommending the UK because they would get a higher commission if I opted to study there. It is not that it was best for me.

My older brother who was at home at that time discouraged me from going abroad on learning about my visa rejection. It was like some of my family members lost hope, just as I did. I was about to ask for a refund of my application and the fees that I paid when my cousins from the US advised me not to do that. They encouraged me to re-apply and see what would happen. Usually after the first rejection, no one would re-apply because the visa process takes time. Added to that the higher chance of getting rejected again. But my mother too encouraged me to give it another try.

And so I did. I polished my Study Purpose statement, added more Financials and applied for the study visa again on August 2nd, 2021. This time I prayed hard daily during those crucial days. I would always recite the Rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet at 3 pm every day. I would go into my room and burst into tears, depressed thoughts running in my head. Prayer gave me a moment of peace during those times. I felt like Jesus was present in my midst like a teacher

I was nervous; at that very moment, one of the agency managers called back and said, 'Sorry Ronald, your visa application got declined.' According to the rejection reason, they felt that I would not leave the country at the end of my stay based on the purpose of my visit. I was sad and didn't know how to break the news to my parents.

guiding my weak soul. During every family prayer I used to pick a Bible verse, and every time I felt God was talking to me. The last verse I remember getting was from Jeremiah 29:11-14 *For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

My mom had great confidence in me after receiving this verse. I am a man with a 'never give up' mentality because I know faith in God never fails even when others don't believe in me or when the circumstances aren't right. I know that he will show me a way and that's exactly what happened. Within 10 days' time, I got a message from IRCC but was nervous

and didn't know how to inform or remind the agency about it, thinking it would be bad news again.

Exactly on my mother's birthday, which was 15th, I grew confident and decided to inform the agency about the mail from IRCC. This time, the same manager called me after a few minutes and told me with a surprise that shocked me. 'Mone ni goal adichalo (Son, you scored a goal this time). Your study visa got accepted. Congrats.' I couldn't believe it and was speechless for some time. Then I quickly went and told my parents the news. My mother was so surprised and burst out in joyful tears just like everyone else.

This was the marvellous work of God. When my agency that was supposed to encourage me didn't trust my ability to get the visa after the rejection, and when others told me that I couldn't achieve my Canadian dream, God told me, 'I am possible.' He tested my faith because I didn't pray enough. I used to go to church only on Sundays. I didn't focus more on God but now this was the turning point of my life.

He has shown me miracles in the past and now I firmly believe that he will uplift me through all the struggles that I will face in future. He showed that no path to success is an easy one but has to be earned through the loving relationship with Christ.

Now I am in Canada, writing this testimony. I can't believe I'm well settled here after what happened last year. God is indeed the way maker. This is a miracle that I felt should be told so it can encourage many others who hope to go abroad and fulfil their dream. May this be an example to those who are turning away from Christ. Without God, we are like a wrecked ship down to face disaster. Let God be at the driver's seat leading us to our wonderful destination. Never stop believing and always have faith. ■

Ronald Franklin is pursuing his MBA in International Business from Lambton College, Sarnia, Canada. He loves making worship music.

FAITH & REASON

Pursuit of

Aby Jacob writes about absolute truth and addresses some of the objections to it.

Truth is one of the core subjects in philosophy. When one begins an intellectual journey to find the truth, the goal must be to remove all misconceptions and falsehoods from their mind and pursue what is true. It may sometimes demand a lot of courage and humility to make paradigm shifts to follow and stand for the truth. When it comes to man's quest for the truth, one can ponder these questions: Does truth exist? Is there absolute truth? Can we know the truth? Does God exist? Is there one true religion?

Today, many people do not want to accept the idea of absolute, objective, and universal truth. Instead, they believe that all truths are relative by saying, 'it might be true for you, but not true for me.' This approach is called relativism. Relativists hold that there is no such thing as absolute truth, and all truth is specific to its place, culture, and time. Many people have a relativistic approach towards religion today. Some people think that all religious truth claims are just a matter of opinion. But does absolute truth exist? In this article, I aim to show that absolute truth exists along with addressing some of the objections to this claim and an introduction to examining religious truth claims. I want you to embark on this journey with thirst and love for the truth by widely opening your mind to think critically about this culturally relevant topic.

Everybody believes in absolute truth in real life, even if they say they don't believe in absolute truth. If one declares, 'there is no absolute truth,' I can ask, 'is it absolutely true that there is no absolute truth?' If the answer is 'yes,' that person agrees that absolute truth exists because



Relativism is not only self-defeating but also has many consequences. If all truth is relative, then no book can be truer than any other book. People can have their own reality and define reality in whatever way they want. Then words cannot have objective meaning.



the assertion ‘there is no absolute truth’ itself is an absolute truth statement. Such a claim is a contradiction and plain absurdity. It is important to note that truth corresponds to reality. For example, I am currently in the USA. It is a fact that I am not somewhere else. Even if you are now in India or South Africa, it is also true for you that I am in the USA when referring to me. It is a false claim if someone says I am currently in the UK when I am in the USA. ‘1+1=2’ is true for everyone in every culture. There are objections to the idea of absolute truth, which comes in different forms and can sometimes confuse people instantly.

Many people believe all truth is relative. However, relativism is self-defeating when we apply the claim to itself. If one says, ‘all truth is relative,’ I can respond by saying, ‘that statement

itself is not a relative truth; the statement, “all truth is relative,” is an absolute truth claim.’ Absolute truth is true for everybody. If something is true for everybody, then it is not relative truth. Relativism is not only self-defeating but also has many consequences. If all truth is relative, then no book can be truer than any other book. People can have their own reality and define reality in whatever way they want. Then words cannot have objective meaning. For example, if one sees a bottle labeled ‘poison’, does anyone ever take it as ‘it is true for you, but not for me?’

Communication becomes impossible if everybody defines their own reality. One cannot make absolute historical claims. For example, one cannot even say that India became an independent nation on August 15, 1947. A relativist can disagree with the historical truth that the Taj Mahal was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. Instead, one can say the Taj Mahal was built by a group of red ants with the help of many fishes in the sea and birds in the sky. Isn’t this absurd? If relativism is true, one cannot make absolute moral statements such as ‘torturing babies for fun is wrong.’ Now it is clear that everyone believes in absolute truth. We should not fall into the absurd and incoherent idea of relativism. There are other objections to the idea of absolute truth.

Some agnostics or skeptics claim, ‘you can’t know anything.’ Then I can ask, ‘how do you know that is true?’ or ‘how do you know “you can’t know anything?”’ If the statement is true, then that person at least knows that ‘you can’t know anything,’ which defeats itself. Some people say, ‘you should not judge me.’ The statement collapses itself as it is a statement of judgment. These self-refuting statements are similar to saying, ‘I can’t write a word in English.’ What about religious truth claims?

When it comes to questioning religious claims, many people get angry if one tries to defend that all religious claims cannot be true. People often get irritated and say, ‘Christianity may be true for you, but Hinduism is true for me.’ Many believe relativism seems to be a humble approach to showing respect to people of all religions. While it is important to respect

people regardless of their religious beliefs, it does not necessarily mean what they believe is true. All religious claims cannot be true simultaneously because religions disagree concerning their truth claims. God cannot exist and not exist at the same time. God cannot be one and many at the same time. If Jesus Christ is the only way to God, then there cannot be other ways to God.

If God exists, it is true for everybody, whether one believes it or not. If one of the religious worldviews is absolutely true, it is true for everybody. If it is a historical fact that Jesus lived, died for sin, and rose from the dead, then it is true for everybody. I argue that the biblical worldview is true, rational, and important to whole life. It passes all tests for truth and answers all worldview questions sufficiently and satisfactorily. I do not have space to expand on comparative religion here, but I look forward to writing on it in a future article. Regarding the quest for truth, someone’s opinion does not matter; the truth is what matters. It is vital to note that truth has an eternal significance. Truth gives intrinsic value, meaning, and purpose to life. So far, in our intellectual pursuit of truth, we have learned that absolute truth exists, and all religious truth claims cannot be true simultaneously. In the future, I hope to walk you through this journey by addressing the most important questions about the existence of God, life, and the cosmos by integrating theology, philosophy, science, and apologetics. Stay tuned! ■

Recommended Reading:

Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 2022 (Chapters 5 & 6).

Aby Jacob was born and raised in Kerala, India. He is currently pursuing an MA in Philosophy and a Certificate in Scientific Apologetics at Southern Evangelical Seminary (USA). He dedicates his life to defending the Christian faith and answering people’s honest questions about God, life, and the world.

IN FOCUS

This is My Body and My Blood

Eucharistic Miracles

Claire Noble writes about Eucharistic Miracles, how the Church investigates them and miracles of the Eucharist in the lives of the saints.



The 8th of December, 1991 was a special day at the Marian Shrine of Finca Betania in Cua, Venezuela. The chaplain, Fr Otty Ossa Aristizabal was offering the celebratory midnight Mass on the feast of The Immaculate Conception. During the time of Communion, he divided the host into four parts, consuming one and returning the rest to the paten. When he looked down a few minutes later, to his surprise, blood seemed to be flowing out of one of those three pieces, like it would from an open wound. He took the piece of the host and secured it in the sacristy. Early morning the next day, he went back to check on it to find that the bleeding had not stopped – but it was only on one side. The other side had no change in colour nor did any liquid come out. When enquired, witnesses present at the Mass testified that the priest had no visible wounds from which the blood could have flowed out.

On hearing about this incident, Pio Bello Ricardo, the bishop of Los Teques ordered the fragment be further studied, and was sent to the Department of Forensic Medicine of Caracas. It is there that it was determined that the blood, that was still flowing out of the host, was not just the same blood type as that of the priest, but exactly same as that on the Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium of Oviedo, and Blood of Lanciano, blood group AB+. The Miraculous Host was later venerated in the Perpetual Adoration Chapel of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Los Teques. There it continues to bleed and engulfed in various phenomena – occasionally caught by pilgrims on video.

This is just one of the many Eucharistic miracles that have occurred throughout the years and around the world, where the host, or at least a part of it, starts bleeding or shows signs of human life. During the consecration Eucharistic prayers, the bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ. This change is called transubstantiation, a term reserved to describe the change itself. Often, the phenomenon remains unexplained as many have tried and remained clueless how it occurs.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains what typically happens to the Eucharist, 'By the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change

Teresa Neumann is one such example, where the famed Catholic stigmatic from Bavaria subsisted on no solid food but the Holy Eucharist from 1926 until her death in 1962 some 36 years later.

of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood' (CCC 1376). This means that while the appearances of bread and wine remain, the substance is changed (through the power of God) completely to the body and blood of Christ. But just because the appearances do change as part of the miracle, it is not immediately accepted without a thorough examination further into the situation.

As in the case with all miracles, it starts with an investigation launched by the local bishop, where the miracle occurs. He is the local leader who has the authority to declare an event as a miracle. The Holy See could take over the investigation, but generally leave it to the bishop unless there is a just cause to step in. In most cases the Eucharistic miracle under scrutiny will be observed over a period of time. This will help determine if the miracle is in fact a miracle, or can be explained by a natural phenomenon. Often, it is proven true, and there are over a hundred Eucharistic miracles approved by the Church. (The Vatican International Exhibition of the Eucharistic Miracles of the World showcased 126 miracles approved by the Church.)

Sometimes, it isn't enough for people to join in with jubilee. Many still express disbelief, calling it a scam or something made up. But most Christians do, and even renew their faith, the miracles reminding them of God's holy presence amongst us.

These are instances of truth, special moments when Christ himself appears to his people on earth, when his blood flows out of the pieces of bread or when

it beats or takes the shape of actual flesh, even being the only source of food for many saints and people for years. Teresa Neumann is one such example, where the famed Catholic stigmatic from Bavaria subsisted on no solid food but the Holy Eucharist from 1926 until her death in 1962 some 36 years later. Another example is Saint Faustina receiving the Eucharist from a seraph. A dazzling seraph dressed in a gold robe, with a transparent surplice and stole came to her one day, holding a crystal chalice covered in a transparent veil, which he gave Faustina to drink.

Hearing about such miracles inspired Blessed Carlos Acutis to know a lot more. He was 11-years-old when he started cataloguing Eucharistic Miracles around the world and wrote at the time, 'The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven.'

His parents even started taking him to all the places of the Eucharistic miracles at his request, and two-and-half years later the project was completed. He researched over 136 Eucharistic miracles that occurred over the centuries in different countries around the world, and have been acknowledged by the Church and collected them into a virtual museum. Besides creating a website to house this virtual museum, he helped create panel presentations that have travelled around the world.

To this day, these documented miracles, not just of the Eucharistic presence, but also of the apparitions of Mother Mary have been used to spread and share the good news, his website and collection used as further references by those who desire to seek more out and document them. These are what help remind one, that God is with us, and it is his Body & Blood, which has been given unto us. ■■

Works Cited: Galeone, Christine. '7 Amazing Eucharistic Miracles | Well-Known Eucharistic Miracles | Catholic Church and Eucharistic Miracles.' *Beliefnet*, 21 September 2017.

'How a Eucharistic miracle is approved by the Church.' *Aleteia*, 1 June 2018



Experiences of a Young Priest in Africa

Newly-ordained priest, **Fr Sagil Nadakunnel CST** shares his experiences of Holy Mass in the African mission.

‘Eucharist makes the Church, Church makes the Eucharist,’ proposed Theologian Henri de Lubac. This article about the African mission tries to understand how the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life moulds the Church and also how the Eucharist as a celebration of Christian life is enriched by the life and culture of Tanzania in return. Let’s have a close look into the Eucharistic celebration in the land of Africa.

Sunday is a busy day for me. For on the Lord’s Day I offer three Masses in three different parishes. I get up very early as the distance between the parishes are quite far. The first mass starts at 7.00 am, then at 9.30 and the last mass at 11.30 am. Normally I have my lunch from the last parish. Although it’s quite tiresome to get up early and drive my motorcycle through the thick blanket of fog at dawn, I enjoy this, because I have been given a chance to serve the people of God, who eagerly wait for the weekly Holy Mass.

Actually, before my arrival at Tanzania,

the only priest here had to manage everything single handedly, with six parishes to look after. I’m happy that I could lessen his workload of six Masses per Sunday. Besides, now the frequency of Masses from once a fortnight is also increased to once a week. The people are very loyal to attend Mass without fail, despite the long distance to the parish. One thing that really impressed me is the difference between my culture and the culture of these people. Honestly speaking, very often back in my home country, the attendance of people for the daily Mass is far less than what we see here – although here, the people do not have a proper church as such but only a centre of prayer.

Rain or at least drizzling is common here. Even if it is raining heavily and the day is cold, that doesn’t hinder the faithful from attending the celebration of Mass. This was really a surprise for me! When it rains, they often get wet and of course the temperature gets colder and they have to wear sweaters and shoes

to go to church. On a rainy day, before entering the church all the parishioners including the priests must first clean their shoes that are full of mud in a square space next to the church. This takes 3 to 5 minutes. At first, this amused me because it had become some sort of a 'ritual'. The muddy road makes the journey to church a herculean task because the wet mud sticks to the shoes or the wheels of the vehicle get stuck in the mud. The mud dries up after 9 o'clock in the sunlight which becomes a new problem. The dry mud forms a cloud of dust that fills the entire road. So, we have to use masks or pieces of cloth to cover our mouth and nose. Compared to my hometown, the facilities at the church are very minimal.



Although there is electricity, fans and various other appliances, electricity failure is quite frequent.

As a priest I feel very lucky because a priest here really helps the people to grow in their faith. I am very edified to live here because not only am I 'needed here' but there is a need for many priests, whereby there is a new Pentecost here! As the Gospel says *The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few* (Matthew 9:37), this is literally true in the context of the African mission because the shortage of priests is very pressing and the mission is yet to be explored further. There is another danger due to the meagre number of priests, the Catholics may change to other denominations such as Protestant, Natalist or any other independent

churches as they are very active and their ministers go to visit people. Priests here have to manage schools and social centres besides the parishes which makes six Masses a day practically difficult. Suppose there are six priests in these parishes, we can give sufficient faith formation in all these six churches. So, this is a very meaningful and fulfilling experience for me as a newly ordained priest with so much passion and dreams.

I would also like to share my experience with you from my mission place in Kenya (East Africa). The predominant religion in Kenya is Christianity followed by an estimated 80% of the total population. They are faithful and devoted. The official language in Kenya is English but each county (state) has its own local language. Therefore, Holy Mass is celebrated either in the respective local languages or in English (Latin Rite). The majority of the Kenyan Catholics are farmers. Although they celebrate the Holy Mass only once a week (because of the lack of priests) and they have a long distance to travel for that, nonetheless they celebrate it with great devotion. As Psalm 105:2 says, *Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works*, this literally happens among them. For them, Holy Mass is not merely a ritual, it's their life! They pray, they clap, they sing during the Eucharistic Celebration. As farmers, their lives and livelihood revolve around hard labour, despite their standard of living being average. Under these circumstances, the offerings they

make during Holy Mass is remarkable. Reminiscent of the widow's mite, they bring a portion of their belongings such as milk, fruit, fowls, goats, etc. to offer. Adding to this, they always set apart a little of their income from the field. For them, Sunday Holy Mass is a feast. During the Liturgy of Word, they come as a procession holding the Bible, and the priest receives it and blesses them.

In some places, they don't have a proper place of worship, only the building-tent for the priest. On such occasions, the Eucharist is celebrated in the open air ignoring the risks. The Sunday choir is organised by themselves, and they make it a point to practise thoroughly from Monday to Saturday. Because of this, the liturgical celebration becomes not a monologue of priests, on the contrary a symphony of a believing community. They pray and live with one heart and one soul as the early Church. Perhaps, about such is what Jesus said once *to you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God* (Mark 4: 11). ■

Fr. Sagil Nadakunnel CST is a member of the Khrist Jyoti Province of the Little Flower Congregation (CST Fathers). Having been ordained as a priest on 2nd Jan 2022, Fr. Sagil readily opted for the challenging mission in Africa. He is presently appointed in Kenya, learning the culture and language of the region.



The Host of Self-Giving

A session by a Eucharist-loving Hindu stirred his heart and formed the seed to his vocation, says Fr Shoji.


I was ordained as a priest 12 years ago, when I was 36. One of the reasons for my joining the seminary was my love for the Eucharist. It started with a Jesus Youth Campus Meet programme I attended when I was a student. One of the sessions was a sharing by Dr Sindhu who told us, 'How fortunate you all are, you can receive Jesus in the Eucharist. My eyes fill up with tears every Eucharistic Celebration because I can't receive him in the Holy Host for I am not a Catholic. So I will sit close to somebody who received the Eucharist so that the presence of God may pass to me.' I was deeply moved by that and all those occasions when I missed the Eucharist fully came to my mind. She continued, 'Suppose you are invited for a marriage function and you attend the whole function but you do not participate in the reception, how bad the host of the marriage may feel? This is also how Jesus will feel when you attend the whole liturgy where he prepares a feast of his own body and blood and you become a mere spectator without receiving Communion.' From that year onwards I tried my best to attend daily Mass. Gradually it became a part of my life. Even though I had to live alone in a rented house very far from my home from the age of 22, my 'daily Manna' kept me safe from so many evil ways.

Spending an hour every day before the Eucharist was an inspiration I got after reading *Treasure in Clay*, the autobiography of Ven. Fulton J Sheen. It was on such an occasion that I first got the inspiration to join the seminary. After joining for priesthood also this practice was continued. Sometimes I may not be capable of praying, but still simply sitting in the presence of the Lord really consoles and rejuvenates me and many of my friends. One of my priest friends was asked by another friend, 'If we are tense in the workplace, we are rejuvenated when we go back to home and spend time with the wife and children, how would you manage your tensions?' His answer was sitting before the Eucharist. I have some priest friends

who go out for any ministry only after spending a few minutes before the Eucharist. When they come back also they do the same. This may be the reason Mother Teresa was ready to send her sisters to any country provided there was the Eucharist.

Sometimes my Protestant friends ask me why we give so much importance to the Eucharist. It deserves a lengthy answer. God the Father's nature is to give himself to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son's nature is giving himself to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's nature is giving himself to the Father and the Son. God created us in his own image and likeness. So, the self-giving nature is inbuilt in every human being. This is the reason we call a person who does charity a real human being; we don't attribute this to people with great muscle power or intelligence.

Adoration to God and wholehearted free service to human beings or giving oneself to a noble cause are the best ways for expressing this self-giving thirst in our heart. Also, if the nature of God is self-giving, the best way to communicate with him is also self-giving. Most of the mystics in the world (whatever be their religion, culture or faith) did the same. In the New Testament, this self-giving is truly manifested in the life of Mother Mary, the poor widow, sinner woman who anointed the feet of Jesus with ointment, St Stephen, etc. Also, there are people who failed in this self-giving like Judas, Ananias and Saphira, the rich young man, etc.

The best self-giving in history is that of Jesus. The Holy Eucharist is the best way to offer our attempts in self-giving (even though they are not complete) with the perfect self-giving in all of history. 

Fr Shoji Vechoorkarottu is a parish priest of two parishes in the Archdiocese of Trivandrum. He also teaches at St John's College, Anchal, India.

The Gifts we Bring

Geetha Jose writes about how she stopped going for Mass 'empty-handed'.



Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty' (John 6:35).

I was rushing to church for the evening Mass. As soon as I entered the church, I noticed I was feeling quite disturbed but I couldn't understand why. Immediately there was a strong feeling that I should not come empty-handed for Mass – that I had to bring the prayer offerings of others when I came. From then on I started to offer the prayer requests of people even before going for Mass. Amazingly, I have seen many people ask me for prayer help, even though they weren't in my immediate contact circle. It often made me think and left me wondering why they felt like opening up to me and asking for my prayer support.

The preparation and dedication towards Holy Eucharist blesses my life to walk one more step closer with God. I've often felt that God honours my desire and makes things possible even when it seemed impossible to go to daily Mass.

The real value of anything is realised only when faced with its scarcity. The pandemic days have taught us real drought, having been forced to attend online Masses because of the Covid restrictions across the world. Although I initially found attending online Mass challenging, I eventually came to embrace it as the will of God because it was the only option. It was often painful at the time of the spiritual communion prayer as I could not receive the Body of Christ.

The easing of the pandemic's restrictions led to the opportunity to attend physical Masses again was immensely relieving. It was during that time, we tried not to miss the opportunity to attend Holy Mass as family. I felt really blessed and fortunate to offer Mass with the whole community.

I believe that Jesus is concerned not about the big things that we do but loves to see us do the little things most lovingly. Once, when I was coming out after Mass, a young woman came to speak to me. She was upset about her sister's agony and asked me to pray for her. I consoled her by assuring my prayers for

Suddenly I heard a voice asking me: 'Have you seen that person? Do you know her?' I immediately answered: 'I don't know.' The next question came: 'If you feel so much compassion and pain for someone you don't know, how much more pity will I feel?' After hearing that, I was deeply touched. It was an experience that taught me about the Lord's compassion and mercy.

her sister and also asked her to keep her faith rooted in the Lord. One day during Mass, her prayer request came to mind as I had forgotten to offer it. I submitted it right away and soon I started to feel distressed. As my eyes welled up, I quickly managed to wipe my tears away trying not to catch anyone's attention. Suddenly I heard a voice asking me: 'Have you seen that person? Do you know her?' I immediately answered: 'I don't know.' The next question came: 'If you feel so much compassion and pain for someone you don't know, how much more pity will I feel?' After hearing that, I was deeply touched. It was an experience that taught me about the Lord's compassion and mercy.

The full presence of Father God, Jesus, Mother Mary, saints and angels is felt at every offering of the Eucharist. I can say with certainty that the desire to come to the Eucharist comes from one's own personal experience of God. It is a heavenly feeling when the prayers and songs of the Eucharist are done as a community.

The fellowship experience is not only in the church but when I leave after Mass, I usually don't try to rush home. The Lord may have retained someone who is in need of a company to share. I often feel that fellowship is an extension to share the joy of the Eucharist. As every Jesus

Youth's life is based on joyful spirituality, we are obliged to share it wherever we are. This conviction makes me want to share my joy with others.

I have never seen any of my prayer offerings go unnoticed by Jesus. He has given me many experiences in my life to ascertain it. I strongly believe that there is no other time in this world where I could feel loved, encouraged, healed, strengthened and corrected other than during the Holy Eucharist.

When Holy Communion becomes a priority of life, all other things will fall in its place. From the wisdom of the saints, what has deeply touched me are the words of Saint Josemaria Escriva, **When you approach the tabernacle remember that he has been waiting for you for 20 centuries.**

Yes Jesus is still waiting for me because my presence matters to him a lot. I love you Lord!

O Sacrament most holy,
O Sacrament divine!
All praise and all thanksgiving,
Be every moment thine. ■■

ENRICHED BY THE EUCCHARIST

John Prakash shares his Holy Mass experience especially in the light of the pandemic.

Eucharist has been the centre of my life since childhood days. My love for the Eucharist and zeal to participate was strengthened with my charismatic renewal.

In my personal life Holy Mass was a priority during normal times; with Covid-19 churches were closed and spiritually became a desert.

My soul has always longed to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, but when the church opened up I was a bit hesitant to go initially fearing Covid situations and attended online Mass for a month after opening.

The church had opened up with Mass registration with limited seats for the faithful, I made up my mind to participate in the morning Holy Mass every day at 6.30 am. I would reach church around 5.50 am to ensure I got a seat and weekends I would come 1 to 1.5 hours ahead to participate in the Eucharist celebration. Most days I had to go 30 minutes to 1 hour ahead to get a seat in the church for Holy Mass and it taught me the value of the Eucharist in my life.

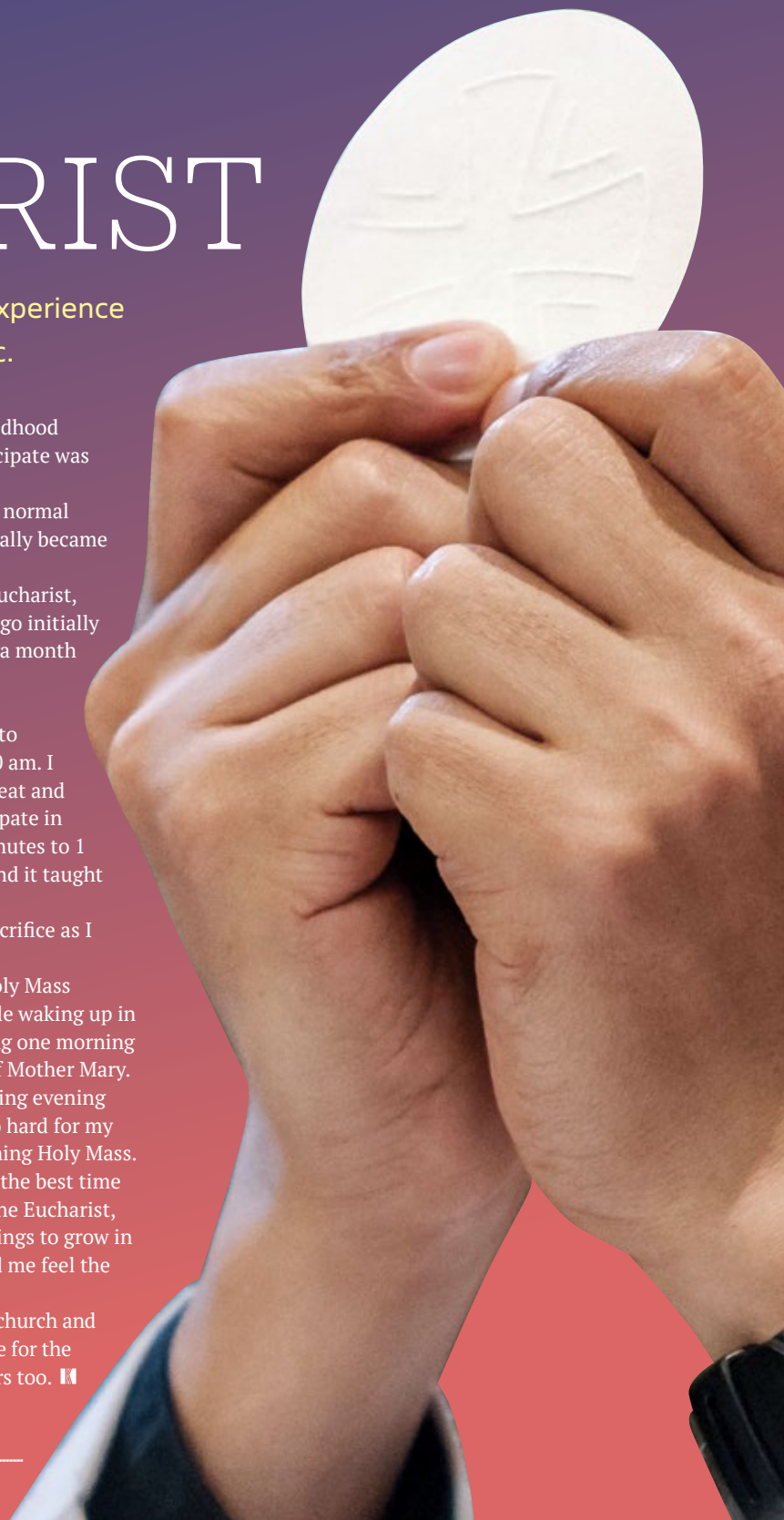
My love for the Eucharist grew with my personal sacrifice as I used to be a bit lazy to wake up early in the morning.

I personally had two healing experiences during Holy Mass recently. I had dizziness, headache and imbalance while waking up in the morning and I received a miraculous healing during one morning Mass, by the grace of Lord and with the intercession of Mother Mary.

Second experience was one day I thought of attending evening Holy Mass but some powerful force was pushing me so hard for my soul to attend the Eucharist and I participated in morning Holy Mass.

My life has changed a lot and the Covid period was the best time in my spiritual life. It helped me enrich my soul with the Eucharist, spend time reading spiritual books and Catholic teachings to grow in spirituality. The Eucharist and the Rosary have helped me feel the divine presence of God and Mother Mary.

The Holy Spirit inspired me to write prayers for the church and eight of my prayers got published in the Vatican website for the Synod and I wrote Holy Communion preparation prayers too. ■■





PRAYER FOR HOLY COMMUNION

written by John Prakash

Mother Mary, the Word of God dwelt in your womb and was made flesh, today as I receive the Eucharist, Lord make my heart meek and humble, enlighten my soul and spirit to embrace God's will to embark my life of faith and hope as the prophets and saints.

Mother Mary, you went in haste to serve Elizabeth, grant me grace too. My guardian angel, awaken me each morning to receive the Eucharist. Help me to be the saint and prophet of my generation. Amen

Lord, in this Eucharist, Take and Redeem

Leesa Joy Cherian writes of an incident when her restless and upset heart was restored its calm after Holy Mass.

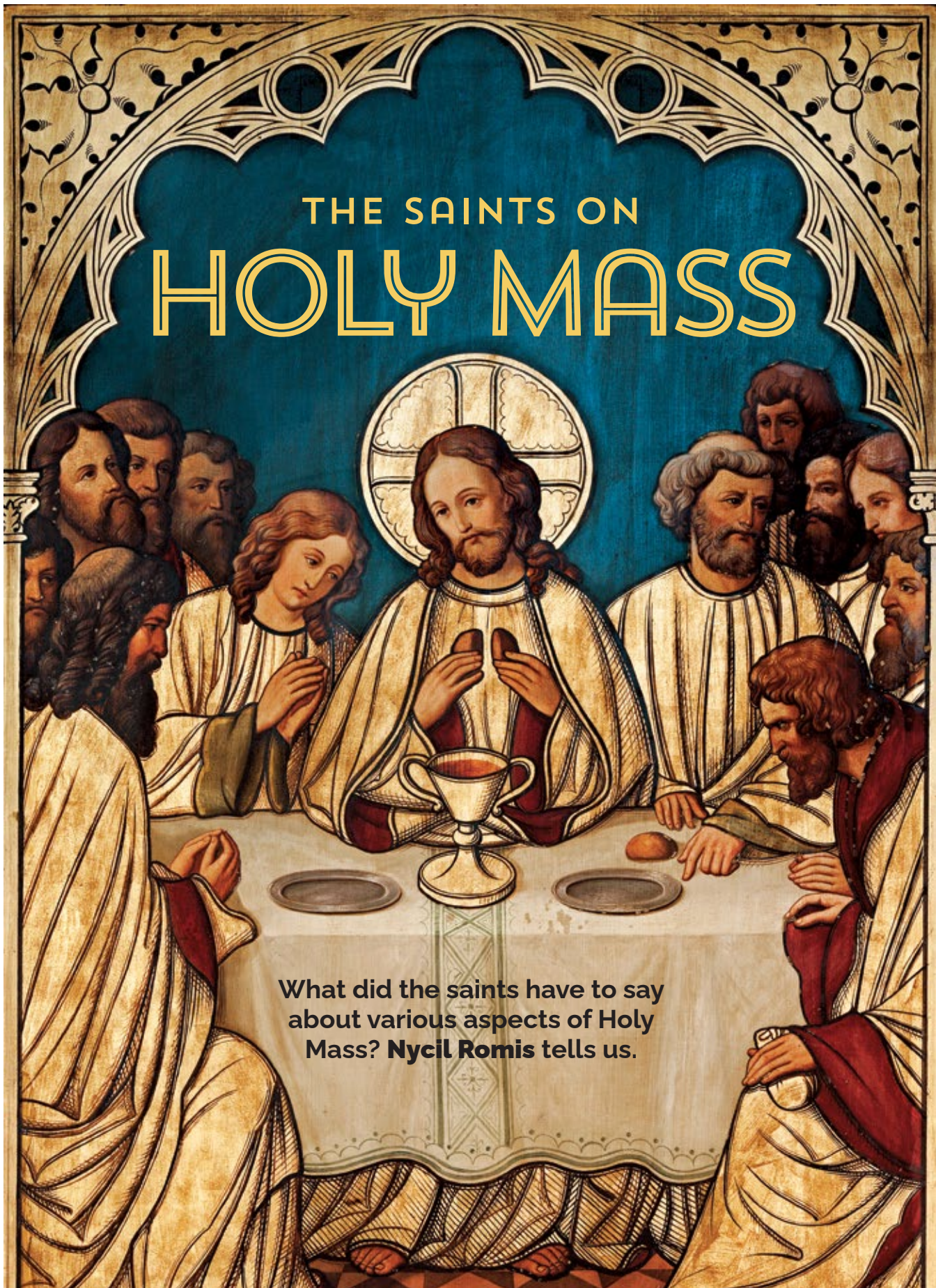


Holy Mass is the primary place where we encounter God in the most profound way possible here on earth. In Holy Mass, Jesus wants to meet us, heal us and transform us.

I would like to share an experience I came across recently. I am personally not a fan of thriller movies, especially when there is too much violence. Once I was so tempted to watch a movie by seeing a clip and ended up watching a frightening scene. Suddenly, I stopped watching the rest of the movie. I felt restless and had upsetting thoughts. During that time, my sister was so inspired by Ajna George (Ajna George, who passed away in January 2022 after a faith-filled, valiant battle with cancer), who stayed faithful and attended Holy Mass every day, even in tough times. My sister encouraged me to join her to go to church that day. During Holy Mass, I surrendered completely to Jesus all that I saw and my worries. After receiving Jesus, I felt a complete transition in me that I was at peace. I felt Jesus healing me completely from those unpleasant emotions I had and felt his love flowing. This gave me a realisation that God works through all our messy situations and wants to encounter us at every Mass, no matter what the circumstances may be.

'One of the most admirable effects of Holy Communion is to preserve the soul from sin, and to help those who fall through weakness to rise again. It is much more profitable, then, to approach this divine sacrament with love, respect, and confidence, than to remain away through an excess of fear and scrupulosity' – St Ignatius Loyola. **■**

THE SAINTS ON HOLY MASS



What did the saints have to say about various aspects of Holy Mass? **Nycil Romis** tells us.

The Holy Mass is central to our Christian living. But do we actually know its worth? Do we actually long to physically attend Mass and receive Holy Communion? Please check out while you go down. We have a long list of saints who clung to this sacrament of sacraments, no matter what happened in their lives.

Is it that important not to miss Holy Mass?

As St John Mary Vianney says, 'If we knew the value of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, how much greater effort we would put forth in order to assist at it!'



It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass. – St Padre Pio



The celebration of Holy Mass has the same value as the death of Jesus on the cross. – St Thomas Aquinas



If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion. – St Maximilian Kolbe



Ask Jesus to make you a saint. After all, only he can do that. Go to confession regularly and to Communion as often as you can. – St Dominic Savio

Going late for Holy Mass? Find out all who are there already!

O you deluded people, what are you doing? Why do you not hasten to the churches to hear as many Masses as you can? Why do you not imitate the angels, who, when a Holy Mass is celebrated, come down in myriads from paradise and take their stations about our altars in adoration to intercede for us? – St Leonard of Port Maurice



When Mass is being celebrated, the sanctuary is filled with countless angels who adore the Divine Victim immolated on the altar. – St John Chrysostom



The angels surround and help the priest when he is celebrating Mass. – St Augustine



How happy is that guardian angel who accompanies a soul to Holy Mass! – St John Vianney



When you approach the tabernacle remember that he has been waiting for you for twenty centuries. – St Josemaria Escriva

No time for Holy Mass? Just listen to these people

The best way to economise time is to lose half an hour each day attending Holy Mass. – Frederic Ozanam



Once, St Teresa of Avila was overwhelmed with God's goodness and asked Our Lord, 'How can I thank you?' Our Lord replied, 'ATTEND ONE MASS.'



If it is 'daily bread', why do you take it once a year? Take daily what is to profit you daily. Live in such a way that you may deserve to receive it daily. He who does not deserve to receive it daily, does not deserve to receive it once a year. – St Ambrose of Milan



My dear ones, the visit to the Blessed Sacrament is an extremely necessary way to conquer the devil. Therefore, go often to visit Jesus and the devil will not come out victorious against you. – St John Bosco



With all the strength of my soul, I urge you, young people, to approach the Communion table as often as you can. Feed on this bread of angels whence you will draw all the energy you need to fight inner battles. – Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

How does Holy Mass help in your daily life? We have the following great saints with their testimonials!

Battling daily struggles victoriously

Every morning during meditation, I prepare myself for the whole day's struggle. Holy Communion assures me that I will win the victory; and so it is... This bread of the strong gives me all the strength I need to carry on my mission and the courage to do whatever the Lord asks of me. The courage and strength that are in me are not of me, but of Him who lives in me – it is the Eucharist. – St Faustina



Resisting mortal sin

He who devoutly hears Holy Mass will receive a great vigour to enable him to resist mortal sin, and there shall be pardoned to him all venial sins which he may have committed up to that hour. – Saint Augustine



Strengthening you in your mission

I begin each day with Holy Mass, receiving Jesus hidden under the appearance of a simple piece of bread. Then I go out into the streets and I find the same Jesus hidden in the dying destitute, the AIDS patients, the lepers, the abandoned children, the hungry, and the homeless. It's the same Jesus. – Mother Teresa



Bouncing back from weaknesses/sin

One of the most admirable effects of Holy Communion is to preserve the soul from sin, and to help those who fall through weakness to rise again. It is much more profitable, then, to approach this divine Sacrament with love, respect, and confidence, than to remain away through an excess of fear and scrupulosity. – St Ignatius of Loyola



Food for our journey of life

If Christ did not want to dismiss the Jews without food in the desert for fear that they would collapse on the way, it was to

teach us that it is dangerous to try to get to heaven without the Bread of Heaven. – St Jerome

What should we do while attending Holy Mass?

Put your sins in the chalice for the precious blood to wash away. One drop is capable of washing away the sins of the world. – Mother Teresa



Place in this Heart all your sufferings and difficulties. Everything that comes from the Sacred Heart is sweet. He changes everything into love. – St Margaret Mary.



Nowhere does Jesus hear our prayers more readily than in the Blessed Sacrament. – Blessed Henry Suson



Do you realise that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you – for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart ... don't listen to the demon, laugh at him, and go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love... Receive Communion often, very often ... there you have the sole remedy, if you want to be cured. Jesus has not put this attraction in your heart for nothing... – St Therese of Lisieux



When we work hard, we must eat well. What a joy that you can receive Holy Communion often! It's our life and support in this life. Receive Communion often, and Jesus will change you into himself. – St Peter Julian Eymard



Once for all beloved children, the surest, easiest, shortest way is by the Eucharist. It is so easy to approach the holy table, and there we taste the joys of paradise. – Pope St Pius X

What to do after receiving Holy Communion?

When you have received him, stir up your heart to do him homage; speak to him about your spiritual life, gazing upon him in your soul where he is present for your happiness; welcome him as warmly as possible, and behave outwardly in such a way that your actions may give proof to all of his Presence. – St Francis de Sales



Grant, oh my God, that when my lips approach yours to kiss you, I may taste the gall that was given to you; when my shoulders lean against yours, make me feel your scourging; when my flesh is united with yours, in the Holy Eucharist, make me feel your passion; when my head comes near yours, make me feel your thorns; when my heart is close to yours, make me feel your spear. – St Gemma Galgani

Let's pray with the saints for the grace to approach Holy Mass with utmost love and longing

Give me the grace to long for your holy sacraments, and especially to rejoice in the presence of your body, sweet Saviour Christ, in the holy sacrament of the altar. – St Thomas More



IT WOULD BE
EASIER FOR THE
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WITHOUT THE
SUN THAN TO DO
WITHOUT HOLY
MASS.

ST PADRE PIO



Virgin Immaculate, perfect lover of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we ask you to obtain for us the graces we need to become true adorers of our Eucharistic God. Grant us, we beg of you, to know him better, to love him more, and to centre our lives around the Eucharist, that is, to make our whole life a constant prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Amen. – St Peter Julian Eymard

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



Sweet Sacrament

Divine

When Sunday churchgoer, **Prejomy Jose** had an encounter with the Eucharistic Lord, life changed with a thirst.

Just as a regular Catholic, I was only a Sunday church-goer for years. From the year 2000, I got involved with the Jesus Youth movement. In 2001, while attending a JY programme, I saw the agonized face of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament during adoration. I knelt down and cried aloud with tears gushing from my eyes; it was my first encounter with the Eucharistic Lord. From that day onwards, there was a thirst from my heart to attend the Holy Mass daily.

Though it was my desire to attend daily Mass, due to my work location and timings, I was not able to attend it often. My wife Reeja and I shared the same desire and we had been praying together for the grace to receive Holy Communion every day since our marriage. After eagerly waiting for almost 5 years, we finally received the blessing to go for the daily Eucharistic Celebration and receive Jesus. Since 2009, with divine grace, we – the entire family – have been going to church daily except in unavoidable circumstances.

The Holy Mass is the source of my energy. When I am weak – physically, mentally or spiritually; it is my holding point. In every Holy Mass, I feel the presence of Jesus and many times I have been unable to leave the church without my eyes getting wet. To add cherry on the cake, the Lord opened Eucharistic Adoration centres in all the parishes where we stay. My children also love to sit before the Blessed Sacrament and testify how the Holy Spirit is guiding them in their life. As Psalms 51:22 says, I cast all my burdens to the Lord during Eucharistic adoration and come out with a renewed heart.

I love to travel and in all my journeys I never missed daily Mass. Even at remote villages of North India or in countries with minimal Catholic presence, according to the travel time the Lord arranged things so that I never

On some of my journeys, when I was sure that I would miss Mass, to my utmost surprise, I was able to attend inside the airport terminal itself during the layover time coinciding with the exact Mass timing.

miss the Holy Mass. On some of my journeys, when I was sure that I would miss Mass, to my utmost surprise, I was able to attend inside the airport terminal itself during the layover time coinciding with the exact Mass timing.

After attending the daily Mass for many years, a thought came to my mind. Am I attending Mass because of my love for Jesus or is it because of a habitual activity? I was unable to find the answer for quite some time and then the Covid-19 pandemic came. It was then I realised that attending online Mass does not fulfill the desire to receive the Eucharistic Jesus in its physical form. The joy of hearing the news of church reopening after the lockdown could not be expressed in words. Online Mass can never be a replacement for the actual Eucharistic Celebration attended in the church.

And finally, my only prayer is not to take me from this world without receiving Jesus on that particular day. ■■

LITURGY OF LOVE

Maria Teres speaks with Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, Curia Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church about Holy Mass.



The Holy Eucharist is an inexhaustible topic; you can talk, write, discuss and do it all a hundred times, and there will surely be millions of pages left unsaid.

Conversing with Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, Curia Bishop of the Syro Malabar Church, I felt the same; that to talk about Christ's love in the Eucharist, on a theoretical as well as experiential level, is a treat in itself. And to be on the receiving end of such an enriching discussion with someone as patient and knowledgeable as Bishop Sebastian was indeed a blessing. Questions effortlessly gave way to experiences and insights, and as I sat down to contain it into a few pages, I was amazed at the treasure trove of knowledge he had provided. A glimpse into the conversation on the importance and experience of Holy Mass, in the Bishop's own words...

It was a missionary priest working in Papua New Guinea who recently shared this incredible experience with me. The weekly Mass had just ended when a group of villagers arrived for Mass after a long hike of two days and two nights. While the priest prayed over them, this pious group of people made a strange request: 'Can you pour some water into the chalice used for the Mass and bless the water for us?' It was, they explained, for a pregnant woman in their village, and they believed this blessed water from the chalice would help her have a pleasant delivery. They returned next week with the good news of a safe delivery. I remember the priest telling me: 'A priest who celebrates the Holy Sacrifice should always remember that the chalice used for Mass holds the Holy Blood of Christ. How careful and respectful I should be when taking it in my hands, drinking from it and even when I am drinking the water I wash it with!' It was and still is ordinary people who have inspired me, with their simple but sometimes astounding faith, how holy my pastoral work is.

Eucharist, the sum and summary of our collective faith

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the Eucharist is 'the source and summit' of the Christian life (CCC 1324). In the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, we read that 'The Mass consists in some sense, of two parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these being so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship.' Renowned liturgical scholar Gregory Dix explains it as 'the four-action shape of the liturgy' that originates from our Lord's actions at the Last Supper: He took bread, blessed or gave thanks, broke, and gave it to those present (Luke 22:19). The Holy Mass, thus encompassing 'the table both of God's Word and of Christ's Body,' is the ultimate celebration that goes beyond languages, geographies or rites to bring all the faithful together in adoration of our Lord. St John Paul II beautifully explains this communion in his encyclical *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*: 'The gift of Christ and his Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our common sharing, to a degree which far surpasses that of the simple human experience of sharing a meal.' (No.24)

The Holy Mass thus becomes a participatory experience, meaningful and powerful in its entirety. One of my professors at the seminary who taught liturgy used to ask if it was possible to pinpoint the exact time when a banana becomes ripe. Just as the ripening of the banana is a gradual process, no one moment of the Mass can be considered a moment of singular importance.

I remember the priest telling me: 'A priest who celebrates the Holy Sacrifice should always remember that the chalice used for Mass holds the Holy Blood of Christ. How careful and respectful I should be when taking it in my hands, drinking from it and even when I am drinking the water I wash it with!'

Our human disposition causes our attention to waver, though makes it necessary for the priest and the liturgy to frequently invite our attention back into the seemingly important parts.

The deep mystery that Eucharist is, is made known to us through the use of symbols, 'the visible signs which the sacred liturgy uses to signify invisible divine things' (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 33), and assists us in the expression of our faith. As we express our love for someone through signs like a flower or a hug, so is this mystery of mysteries communicated to our limited senses through symbols.

'Mummy, here comes the Qurbana'

I remember an experience that a bishop shared during a priestly ordination. In his initial years as a priest, when he went for a walk through his parish, a six-year-old child playing in the courtyard called out to his mother, 'Mummy, here comes the Qurbana.' The incident made him dwell deeper on who he is – the one who celebrates the Eucharist, receives the Eucharist, becomes the Eucharist. This is true of all the faithful who receive the Eucharist, but especially the priest. Pure hands, thoughts and heart bring about a powerful blessing; it's said that for a Mass that is 30 or 45 minutes long, if the priest can prayerfully prepare as much time, it will be much beneficial for his flock and produce much fruit.

For the lay community too, preparing for Mass is an important factor in experiencing the immeasurable love in the Eucharist. The physical preparations – cleanliness, fasting – are symbolic of a deeper inner preparation that is required of every individual. To observe a period of silence before Mass is one practice I would highly recommend. I witnessed this most recently at the famous Novena Church in Singapore; I had arrived at the Church by 10.30am for the 12.15pm Mass, expecting scanty participation. The church opened by 10.45 and people immediately started coming



in. By 12.00pm, there was a minimum of 1000 people in the church. How beautiful it is to silently be in the Lord's presence before the Mass, not on insistence from the priest or Church but from a purely self-motivated desire to grow closer to Jesus... Amidst our worldly concerns, rushing in and out of church to ceremoniously attend the Mass seems more of a ritual than heartfelt adoration. To discipline the body and mind so that the Mass becomes a personal encounter, is a 'sacrifice' that rightly prepares you to take part in the greatest sacrifice of all time.

The mobile phone, for example, is something you can do without for 30 to 45 minutes, yet so many people are so particular about bringing it to church. Priests have reached a point where they beg the community to at least keep it silent so as to not distract anyone else. It is an individual choice on one's part to bring oneself into an atmosphere where one is free of distractions. Totally abandoning this device for the length of the Mass can indeed lead you into deeper meditation. When you go for Mass, the call is to focus on the celebration you are being part of, separating yourself from the world and immersing yourself in heavenly affairs.

Ite, Missa Est

The Mass is at once a mystery, thanksgiving, offering, sacrifice and a missionary call. The English word 'Mass' comes from the Latin word *missa*, which means to be 'sent', and to be sent as a missionary of God requires a spiritual strength that can only

be attained through the merit of his sacrifice. I can't stress the importance of daily Mass enough; saints and holy lives before us have given ample testimony to the importance of this sacrament for a holy life. Mother Teresa's primary condition to set up a convent was the spiritual assistance of a priest and the assurance of daily Holy Mass. Venerable Fulton J Sheen reminds us that being in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord is 'a sharing in the work of redemption' and helps to 'grow more and more into his likeness'.

I remember with great fondness, Fr Jacob Thekkemury from my home diocese, who was diagnosed with kidney disease during the early years of his priestly life. While staying at the priest home, even in his illness, he'd spend around one-and-a-half hours celebrating Mass. He could have offered a shorter Mass or assisted for another Mass, but he chose to dedicate quality time and focus on offering daily Mass solemnly. This, in turn, has inspired so many towards a deeper devotion to the Holy Mass.

The Holy Eucharist in my life

My own passion for the Eucharist sprouted from



the lessons sown at home. I grew up seeing my farmer parents painstakingly making time for daily Mass amidst their difficult schedule. One incident in particular that I remember is from my early childhood, when I was caught red handed for doing something naughty. After his share of scolding, my father told me to go to church the next day, confess and receive the Holy Communion. At home, life was always centred around the Holy Eucharist.

Journeying through the early years of priesthood, I remember keeping aside the money given by the faithful for offering Mass as a holy treasure, and using it only for charitable causes. But a very important realisation that priesthood brought with it, and the episcopal office affirmed even more, is that this is more than my desire; this is a divine mystery, eligible for God's work. I think it is best communicated in the words of one of my brother priests in the Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum who is not with us anymore... a week before he passed, there was a video from him circulated in the social media that said 'I wanted to be a holy priest for so long, but once I became a priest, I realised that becoming a holy priest is no longer

HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR MASS?

1. Physical preparations that the Church calls for - cleanliness, fasting - are symbolic of a deeper inner preparation that is required of every individual.
2. Maintaining a silent disposition on the way to Mass
3. Silent meditation in the church before Mass
4. Keeping a distance from mobile phones before and during Mass
5. Focus on the sacrifice and not the priest or other external elements



a desire but a responsibility.' I am, at this point, reminded of the verse: *From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.* (Luke 12:48).

A memorable incident that I would describe as miraculous, happened when visited the US. I was visiting my brother, who is a parish priest and also a hospital chaplain and he always carries with him the Holy Eucharist in a pyx, for the sick who wish to receive the Eucharist. He took me along when he went to visit one of the most established hospitals in Florida, the Mayo Clinic, wishing to give me the ministering experience, and explained the process of ministering. Unfortunately, we were only able to visit the hospital and see the facilities. But, as we were getting into the elevator to leave, a woman got in, and seeing our priestly garb, requested us to visit her husband in their hospital room. Both of them received the Eucharist, we listened to them and prayed with them; they were overjoyed that the Lord miraculously made all of it possible. It felt like such a blessing for both of us but our astonishment at the Lord's ways didn't end there. As we were leaving the hospital premises, we met another couple in the parking lot, about to leave the hospital. The man was in a wheelchair, and his wife asked us if he could receive Communion. My brother asked her if she also wanted to. Apparently, she hadn't confessed in a while, but in the busy hospital we found a quiet spot, and this Spanish-speaking lady confessed to my brother who did not know Spanish, and both the husband and wife received Communion.

Ever since, I have been even more reminded of the fact that priesthood is not a privilege but a responsibility, a call to serve the faithful and lead them closer to the Eucharistic Christ.

All knowledge and understanding apart, more than three decades into my pastoral journey, I am still trying to discover how to love the Eucharist more every day. Whenever I take up the chalice in my hand, I remember those Papua New Guinea villagers; the ordinary faithful are teaching me simple and profound faith, reminding me every once in a while that I should never be apathetic in the work of the Lord. ■



Fountain of Holiness

Prayer is relationship with God, and Holy Mass is the highest form of prayer. **Anil Israel** reflects upon the Eucharistic Celebration.



Man is a unity of body and soul. The body is mortal and perishable. The soul is immortal and imperishable. The body has a natural life. The soul on the other hand has a supernatural life. Just as air, water and food are essential for the life of the body, sanctifying grace is essential for the life of the soul. Sanctifying grace is infused in the soul and resides in the soul.

The soul receives sanctifying grace through the sacraments. With sanctifying grace, the soul receives the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity which are essential to align our imperfect human will to God's perfect Divine Will. With venial sins there is a partial loss of sanctifying grace. With mortal sins, there

is a total loss of sanctifying grace, leaving the soul in a state of loss of life. A return to the *throne of grace* (Hebrews 4:16) by frequent reception of sacraments help restore sanctifying grace which is the life of the soul.

Among all the sacraments, 'the Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation' (CCC 1359) is at our disposal for daily reception. In the supreme sacrifice of the Holy Mass, we encounter Jesus both in the liturgy of the Word and in the liturgy of the Eucharist. Jesus is not only the *Word became flesh* (John 1:14) but also the *living bread which came down from heaven* (John 6:51). The 'Word of God' proclaimed through the reading of the Holy Scriptures is essential spiritual nourishment for our

THE BREAD OF THE ANGELS; FOOD HE SENT IN ABUNDANCE › PSALM 78:25



One of the greatest blessings and least known facts about the Eucharist is that in the reception of Holy Communion, a person's venial sins are forgiven.

souls. The Word thus becomes Bread for our spiritual life. Likewise, the reception of *the bread of life* (John 6:35) in Holy Communion is the indispensable *daily bread* (Matthew 6:11) to sustain the life of our soul. *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life* (John 6:54).

When we participate in the Eucharistic Celebration and receive Holy Communion, we come into union with Jesus. Every time, we consume the Holy Eucharist, Jesus becomes one with us, and we unite ourselves with the mystical body of Christ – the Church. For *He [Christ] is the head of the body, the Church* (Colossians 1:18) and *we are the members of his body* (Ephesians 5:30). Just as when we take in unhealthy food we deteriorate ourselves, and when we consume healthy food we nourish ourselves, likewise, 'If we receive the Eucharist worthily, we become what we receive' (St Augustine).

In the Memorial sacrifice of the Holy Mass, the words of Jesus: *this is my body* (Matthew 26:26) and *this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many* (Matthew 26:28), reminds us that when we unite ourselves to Jesus, we resolve to offer ourselves *as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God* (Romans 12:1). Just as the host is made up of grounded wheat and the wine is made up of crushed grapes, we remind ourselves that like our Master, we too choose to die to self. When we let our egos be deflated and let our sinful pride be crushed, we imitate the sacrificial victim being offered – *like a lamb that is led to the slaughter* (Isaiah 53:7). 'The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white Host' (Ven. Fulton J Sheen).

The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life' (*Lumen Gentium*, 11; CCC 1324). In all other sacraments, we receive grace; but in the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, we receive the source of all graces – Jesus himself. Therefore, Eucharist is the *source* of the Christian life. The goal of Christian life is union with the divine life. When we partake in the Eucharistic meal, we

become one in communion with Jesus. Therefore, Eucharist is the *summit* (goal) of the Christian life.

One of the greatest blessings and least known facts about the Eucharist is that in the reception of Holy Communion, a person's venial sins are forgiven. When we offer Mass for holy souls in purgatory, we can also consider praying: 'Lord, I offer this Mass, in union with all the Masses offered all over the world today, for the atonement on my sins and for the sins of all those in my family.'

Jesus' parting words *I am with you always* (Matthew 28:20) explicitly assures us of his continuous presence in our midst, thereby reaffirming Isaiah's prophetic name *Emmanuel* (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14) – God with us. Today we are truly blessed to have Jesus' real presence – body, blood, soul and divinity – under the species of the Most Holy Eucharist, in all the tabernacles all over the world. Yet how often do we set apart time *to be with him* (Mark 3:14)?

Prayer is relationship with God, and Holy Mass is the highest form of prayer. In my relationship with my family members, I give them the freedom to intervene in my life. Why am I unwilling to give freedom to God, to intervene, to intertwine, to intermingle and operate in my life? Why don't I ardently desire to be healed by His Mercy and to be shaped by His Grace?

'If the Angels could envy, they would envy us for Holy Communion' (Pope Pius X). If I have access to daily Holy Mass, why am I dampened by the *spirit of reluctance* (Romans 11:8) to approach the altar of grace – the fountain of holiness – the *fountain of life* (Psalm 36:9) and receive the *bread of angels* (Psalm 78:25)? Like Blessed Carlo Acutis, may we too choose to devoutly embrace the Eucharist as our escalator – our expressway to Heaven. ■

NewsWatch

SIGNIS World Congress 2022

SIGNIS World Congress 2022 with the theme 'Peace in the Digital World' will happen from 16-19 August 2022 in Seoul, South Korea. It will be the **world's first Catholic event held in Metaverse.**

A little Context: SIGNIS (official name: World Catholic Association for Communication) is a Roman Catholic lay ecclesial movement for professionals in the communication media, including press, radio, television, cinema, video, media education, internet, and new technology. The word SIGNIS (always in uppercase) is a combination of the words SIGN and IGNIS (Latin for 'fire'). The Mission of SIGNIS is: 'To engage with media professionals and support Catholic Communicators to help transform our cultures in the light of the Gospel by promoting human dignity, justice and reconciliation.'

From the 1970s on, the digital world started expanding worldwide. The home computer meant that the digital world was entering fast into mass culture. It was as if it absorbed the bits and digits of mass culture like a lightning fire. The Vatican was also alert to this evolution. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications (PCSS) published a series of documents on this topic such as *Ethics in Advertising* (1997), *Ethics in Communications* (2000), and *Ethics in Internet*(2001). During the discussion which led to this document on ethics in the internet, Pope John Paul II supported the reflection of the PCSS. He felt the urgency to have a kind of guidance in this field. In *Ethics in Internet*, he considered the digital as a great help to the Church's pastors and faithful in facing the many challenges of the emerging media culture. He wrote:

METAVEVERSE



'Opportunities created by new technology, by the process of globalization, by deregulation and privatization of the media present new ethical and indeed spiritual challenges to those who work in social communications. These challenges will be met effectively by those who accept that serving the human person, building up a community grounded in solidarity, justice, and love, and speaking the truth about human life and its final fulfillment in God were, are, and will remain at the heart of ethics in the media.'

The SIGNIS World Congress 2022 Seoul is:

- A hybrid conference of face-to-face meetings and virtual conferences.
- A metaverse platform opening in a cyber world.
- A mixed-media conference to be transmitted via YouTube, Zoom, Metaverse & TV.

You can find more information about the event by visiting www.signis.net



By **Ajith Jacob**, Stuttgart, Germany

Pope's 'penitential pilgrimage' to Canada

Pope Francis made a pastoral visit to Canada from 24 to 29 July 2022. The main intention of the visit was reconciliation and dialogue with the indigenous people due to the injustices that occurred during the past century where Catholic Church was also involved. The theme of the apostolic visit was 'Walking Together'.

'Unfortunately, in Canada, many Christians, including some members of religious institutes, contributed to the policies of cultural assimilation that, in the past, have severely harmed native communities in various ways,' the Pope said on July 17, referring particularly to the involvement of dioceses and religious orders in running residential schools.

Pope Francis has agreed with the view that the forced removal of indigenous children from their families and their treatment in Canada's residential school system was a form of 'cultural genocide'.

Canada's residential school system, to which Pope Francis referred, ran for more than 100 years from the 1870s to 1990s. Over 150,000 First Nation, Métis and Inuit students were sent to this residential school system. It worked to stamp out indigenous culture and language systematically, often by removing children from their families by force. Catholic organisations ran at least 60% of the government-funded boarding schools.

On 25th July, Pope Francis met with Metis, Inuit, and First Nations people in the rural Maskwacis, Alberta. 'I am here because the first step of my penitential pilgrimage among you is that of again asking forgiveness, of telling you once more that I am deeply sorry,' Pope Francis said.

He then traveled to Edmonton, Québec, and Iqaluit on what he called a 'penitential pilgrimage' to apologise and repeatedly express his shame and sorrow to the country's indigenous communities for the role the Catholic Church played in the system.



Photo credit: Vatican Media



EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE BECOMES LEGAL ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Yet another blow for the sanctity of life

New South Wales has become the sixth and final Australian state to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022 passed through NSW Parliament on 19 May 2022. The legislation will come into effect from 28 November 2023 after an 18-month implementation period. Its legislation forces health care and elder care organisations with religious objections to allow the practise on their premises.

'If a civilization is to be judged by how it treats its weakest members, the New South Wales parliament has failed miserably, and has set a dark and dangerous path for all posterity, determining a new and disturbing definition of what it means to be human.' Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney said May 19.

The bill allows euthanasia or assisted suicide to Australian citizens who are at least 18 years old. They must have a terminal illness and be expected to die within six months. Those expected to die in twelve months may seek euthanasia or assisted suicide if they have a neurodegenerative condition and experience unbearable suffering. Their application for euthanasia or assisted suicide must be assessed by two medical practitioners and they must

be found to be making their decision voluntarily, without duress.

'The disturbing nature of this legislation is compounded by the way the debate over amendments was conducted,' said Archbishop Fisher. 'All amendments put forward by those who would seek to make this deadly regime even a little bit safer were rejected.'

Objecting religious health care providers had sought the ability to ban euthanasia and assisted suicide from their premises, but the relevant amendments were rejected.

Here is a quote from St Augustine which sheds light into the Church's view on this matter:

'Christians have no authority to commit suicide in any circumstance. It is significant that in the sacred canonical books there can nowhere be found any injunction or permission to commit suicide either to ensure immortality or to avoid or escape any evil. In fact, we must understand it to be forbidden by the law "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13), particularly as there is no addition of "your neighbour" as in the prohibition of false witness, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16).' St. Augustine, *The City of God*.

SOUNDREPLY



MOVIE

CODA


her parents, Frank and Jackie, as well as her brother, Leo are deaf. The family has a fishing boat, and she assists them daily with the fishing early in the morning before attending high school, where often, she gets bullied because of her family.

Ruby loves singing and when she notices her crush at school, Miles signing up for choir, she impulsively does the same. The choir teacher, Mr Bernardo Villalobos, notices her talent at singing and offers to give her private lessons to prepare her for auditioning for a scholarship at Berklee College of Music. With returns from fishing diminishing all the time because of new regulations as well as from unscrupulous middlemen, Frank and Leo proceed to set up a co-op business to procure fish from fishermen and sell it directly; and they are counting on Ruby to be their voice. Ruby tries hard to juggle her two loves – the love for her family and her love of singing, but of course, something must give and through many heartbreaks and tears, each of them learn in a deeper way what it is to truly live for the other; what it is to need one another.

We all have our fears, yet it can be hard for a ‘normal person’ to truly understand the fears and anxieties of another who has a disability. True, all of us are wounded in one way or another, but some of us bear disabilities and profound wounds, which none apart from his/her maker can truly comprehend. At its core, the movie delves into the fears of the deaf protagonists, their fear of failure; the fear of not being ‘normal’ enough – scarred by social interactions and

True, all of us are wounded in one way or another, but some of us bear disabilities and profound wounds, which none apart from his/her maker can truly comprehend.

scared of being the odd one out – fears which have been reinforced time and again through life’s bitter experiences. Yet, they compensate for all that silence with love and laughter and in the end, it is that love for each other in the family that shines through.

All the deaf characters in the movie are portrayed by deaf actors, Troy Kotsur and Marlee Matlin as Ruby’s parents are outstanding, as is Daniel Durrant who plays Leo. 

NB: Viewer discretion is recommended as language is R-rated

We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, affirms St Paul in his letter to Hebrews. Strange as it is, in his wisdom God himself deemed it necessary to suffer the full breadth of man’s infirmities and sufferings! For infirmities and limitations we have in abundance – and it’s only in the law of self-giving love (the law of the gift as St JP2 calls it in the context of marriage), that one truly finds the freedom to rise above and beyond those all-so-prevalent human limitations, that sometimes seem to smother life of all its joys.

CODA, directed by Sian Heder, tells the story of Ruby Rossi (masterfully portrayed by Emilia Jones) and her deaf family (CODA is the acronym for *Children of Deaf Adults*). Ruby is the only hearing member of the family –

REVIEW BY

Joseph Anthraper

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

Chandeliers

✧ *Blessed Imelda Lambertini*

By Jisha John

My dearest Jesus,
My love! I long to meet you. I love you
with all my heart. I desire to be one with
you.

Jesus, as you know, I happened to
read about Blessed Imelda Lambertini
this evening. The moment I completed
reading, I felt like writing to you at once.
What a soul! How little and how blessed!

I struggle with my opposing inner self.
When I go to bed, I make up my mind to
catch up with you in Holy Mass. But I find
myself sleeping within my cozy blanket in
the mornings. How many days! How many
chances have I missed!

Well, I must write this now. Imelda
challenged me. Her question struck my
soul, 'Tell me, can anyone receive Jesus
into his heart and not die?' How could she
ask such a question at such a young age?
The one who was born in Bologna in the
14th century and who died at the tender
age of 11, Imelda's conviction and wisdom
are as far away as a galaxy than my own.

She was born a wealthy child. Her
parents, Igano and Castora were devout
Catholics. The generous parents and
their corporal works of mercy groomed
their only child. Little Imelda was being
prepared for higher things. She found joy
in sharing. She gave her belongings to the
poor kids. Jesus, you were training her
from her birth. Oh! I missed one thing.
Imelda's mother had a dream after the
little saint's birth. Castora saw St Dominic
walking through the streets towards
her. He raised his hands and blessed her
before entering the Dominican convent.
Wasn't it a sign? I'm pretty certain.

Imelda requested to receive Holy
Communion on her 5th birthday. What
prompted a little child to ask for the
Holy Eucharist when it is quite natural to
desire for chocolates, toys, and friends? I
don't understand this mystery. She had an
oratory set up in her house. And I'm sure,
you both had sweet conversations there.



Little Imelda wished to enter the
convent and lead a religious life. Though
her parents were surprised at this early
move, they granted her permission. She
went to live with the Dominican nuns
at Val di Pietra near Bologna when she
was just nine-years-old. She wore a
Dominican habit. She must have been
beautiful in those vestments.

Imelda begged to receive you in the
Holy Eucharist but her plea was denied
as according to the custom, children
received First Holy Communion only at

14. Poor one! The sisters and the chaplain
said 'no'. Later, they thought they had
succeeded in diverting her from her
'childish fancy'. But Imelda wasn't ready
to give up.

Again, she sought to receive you the
day before the Vigil of the Ascension. And
it was denied. On May 12, 1333, the Vigil
of the Ascension, Imelda stayed back after
Holy Mass, absorbed in prayer. She must
have been praying intensely to receive
you. And then it happened. One of the
nuns saw a glowing light shining above
her head with the Sacred Host suspended
in the light. She quickly fetched the priest.
The startled priest had no option other
than to give you to little Imelda. When
you insist, none can stop. As you say, 'Let
the little children come to me and do not
stop them.' What amazed me the most
was what happened next.

Imelda was allowed to remain in the
chapel for thanksgiving. When a nun
came to get her for dinner, she was still
kneeling with a glorious smile upon her
face. When Imelda didn't respond to the
call, the nun lightly tapped her shoulder
at which Imelda collapsed to the floor and
died.

It was her First Holy Communion and
that took her to the everlasting endless
communion. Such was her desire to be
one with you! You both couldn't wait
anymore.

Ah! It wasn't possible for her to live
after receiving Jesus to her heart. It
reminds me of what I'm invited to have.
How am I so silly about this Bread of Life?

I wish for the morning
Take me to the altar
May I see my Lord in the tabernacle
And receive Him into my soul
Come and fill me, Lord.
I long to be united with you.
Love you, my Jesus!
Oh Heavens! Prepare me ...

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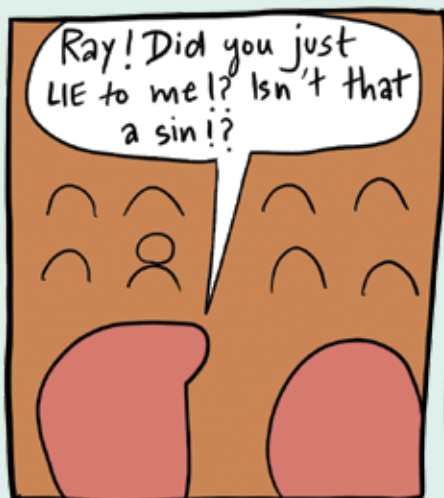
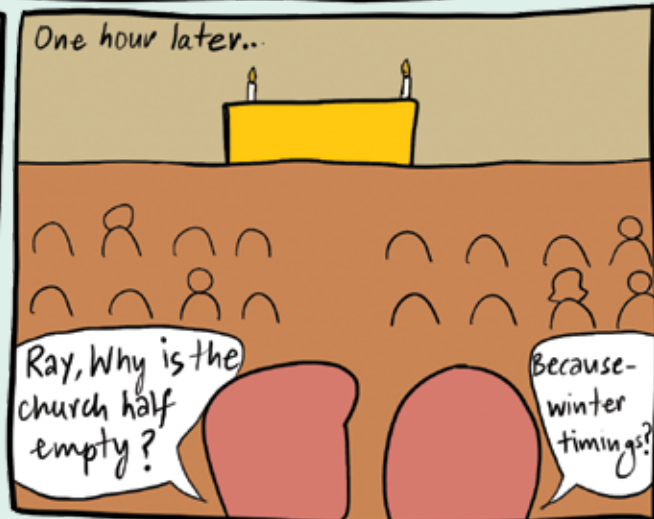
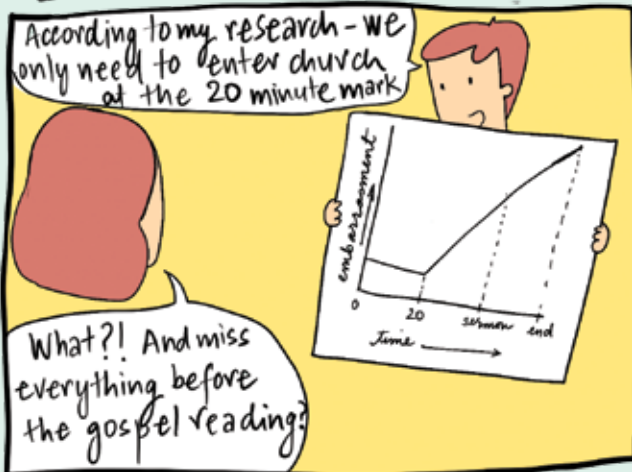
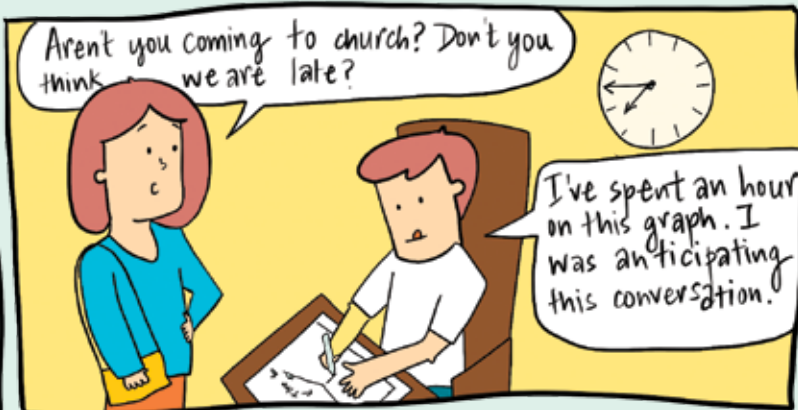
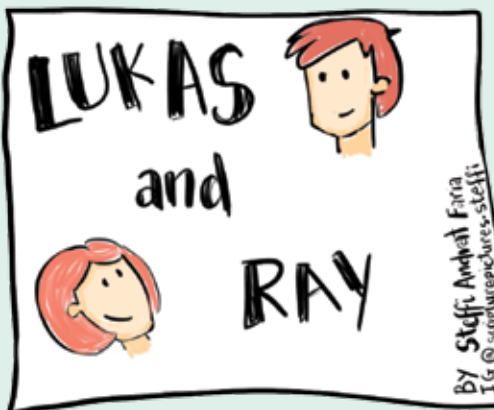
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