



Asian Journal of Religious Studies

“The Lord is truly among us.”

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Asian Journal for Religious Studies

“The Lord is truly with us.”

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Editorial

Healing the Contagious Illness

Behind the indifference toward human life lies a contagious illness that blinds people to the challenges and struggles of others, Pope Francis said.

Like the mythical figure Narcissus, people risk becoming infected by a “contagious spiritual virus” that turns them into “mirrored men and women who only see themselves and nothing else,” the Pope said.

The Pope addressed the Pontifical Academy for Life as it began its general assembly on June 26, 2018, reflecting on the theme “Equal beginnings, but then? A global responsibility.”

“Evil looks to persuade us that death is the end of all things, that we have come to the world by chance and that we are destined to end in nothingness. By excluding the other from our horizon, life withdraws in itself and becomes just a good to be consumed,” he said.

The Pope told members that the “ethical and spiritual quality of life in all its phases” must inspire the Church’s “behaviour toward human ecology,” as is reported by Junno Arocho Esteves in “Catholic Herald.”

He also said that life from conception, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age, as well in those moments when it is “fragile and sick, wounded, offended, demoralised, marginalised and those cast aside” is “always human life”.

“When we surrender children to deprivation, the poor to hunger, the persecuted to war, the elderly to abandonment, we

are not doing our own work but rather the dirty work of death. And where does the ‘dirty work’ of death come from? It comes from sin,” he added.

Pope Francis also highlighted the need for “a global vision of bioethics” inspired by Christian thought, in which the value of one’s life is not determined by sickness and death but by the “profound conviction of the irrevocable dignity of the human person”.

Citing his 2015 encyclical, “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home,” the Pope called for a “holistic vision of the person” and the importance of articulating clearly the universal human condition “beginning from our body”.

“Our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation,” the Pope said.

Encouraging the Pontifical Academy for Life’s work in promoting a culture of life in the field of bioethics, Pope Francis said that this culture must always look toward “the final destination” where every person is called to be in communion with God.

“To recognise and appreciate this faithfulness and dedication to life raises gratitude and responsibility in us and encourages us to generously offer our knowledge and experience to the whole human community,” the Pope said. Can we be agents of life? Can we heal the indifference towards life? As requested by the Holy Father, can we collectively be truly grateful and responsible for ourselves and the larger world?

Kuruvilla Pandikattu
Editor

Christian Life between Memory and Hope

Thomas Padiyath
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"The Believer is essentially 'one who remembers'" -Pope Francis

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is Magna Carta of the pastoral vision of Pope Francis for the renewal of the Church. It does say something to all of us; to the hierarchy, to the priests and the consecrated men & women, to the theologians, to the lay faithful and to the youth and the children. It is a document rich in content and filled with pastoral thrust. Here heart speaks to the heart. That is the beauty of this exhortation. Who is a Christian believer? People have answered this question differently. Anyone could answer that a Christian is one who is baptized with the trinitarian formula. For Oscar Romero (1917-1980), former Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador and a martyr for justice and peace, 'a Christian is one who incarnates Christ in Life'. What is the answer given by Pope Francis? For him, "a believer is essentially one who remembers" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 13). What does Pope want to say? I would say it is the whole truth about Christian Life!

Faith is Remembrance

Faith is the remembrance (memory) of the salvific act of God accomplished through the history of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The central point of

this salvific history and memory is the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. Pope Francis writes: “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sor-

“Church is a mother who teaches us to speak the language of Faith”

row, inner emptiness and loneliness” (EG 1). Faith is the remembrance of this transforming experience with Jesus. “Memory is a dimension of our faith which

we might call “deuteronomic”, not unlike the memory of Israel itself. Jesus leaves us the Eucharist as the Church’s daily remembrance of, and deeper sharing in, the event of his Passover (cf. Lk 22:19). The joy of evangelizing always arises from grateful remembrance: it is a grace which we constantly need to implore” (EG 13).

It is also worth noting that Evangelist John relates both Faith and Memory in explaining the role of the Holy Spirit. “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (Jn 14, 26). It is the Church that keeps alive this memory which is faith. Church’s life itself is in this memory. Therefore, one can rightly say that she is at the same time the agent as well as the “remembering subject” (LF 38) of this memory. That is why it is observed that the “Church is a mother who teaches us to speak the language of Faith” (LF 38). It is equally true to say that faith is essentially ecclesial. It is in the faith of the Church that one participates through Baptism. So the profession of faith is two dimensional: personal as well as ecclesial. Church is the primary subject of Faith. Therefore, Pope emeritus Benedict XVI exhorts:

Confessing with the lips indicates in turn that faith implies public testimony and commitment. A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him. ... The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one's faith fearlessly to every person (PF 10).

Faith is a public act and liturgy is the public celebration of this faith. Therefore, each Christian should celebrate and live this memory with the Church and by participating in the life of the Church.

Believer = One Who Remembers

If faith is essentially a remembrance of the experience of encountering Jesus it logically follows that a believer is essentially one who remembers. A Christian is one who lives in the memory of the encounter with Jesus and the memory of the paschal mystery disclosed in Christ Jesus. Moreover, a Christian is one who lives in this remembrance and one who celebrates this remembrance. This is what Pope Francis means when he writes that "The Believer is essentially 'one who remembers.'" The content of this memory is the encounter with Jesus. That is why Pope Benedict XVI writes that "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (Deus Caritas Est 1). In the words of evangelist John this encounter/event is characterised by the experience of God's love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes

***"The Believer is essentially
'one who remembers.'"***

in him should ... have eternal life" (3:16). This encounter is salvific (EG 1). It is the memory of this encounter and the memory of the salvific mystery and history that guides a Christian leading one to have renewed hope in the Lord.

Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.

From another perspective one is able to understand the theology disclosed in the statement of Pope Francis that a Christian is essentially one who remembers. The liturgy

which is the commemoration and public proclamation of faith is celebrated in and through signs and symbols and through different liturgical seasons. Thus liturgical season is the saving memory of the paschal mystery. Therefore, celebration of the different liturgical seasons enables one to live in the memory of paschal mystery (SC 102). Liturgy is the source and summit of Christian life (SC 10). The Eucharist which is the heart of the liturgical celebration of the Church and also the source of all Christian spirituality is also a memorial celebration. Thus, one can conclude that a Christian is essentially one who remembers the mystery of faith with the Church (SC 99) because Church is the 'Subject' of this celebration. She keeps this memory alive in her life and empowers others to keep this memory alive in their personal life (LF 38). In this light one has to say it again that faith as well as its memory are essentially ecclesial.

Life between Faith and Hope

In continuation of what we have discussed above one can reasonably say that a Christian is essentially who believes, hopes and loves (Acts 2, 42; 1 Thes.5, 8). The

memory as well as its celebration leads to hope. Faith and Hope are inseparable. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that hope is the first fruit of believing. The reason is:

Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord's invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples (PF 7).

For Pope Benedict XVI "Faith is the substance of hope" (SS 10) because "[t]o come to know God—the true God—means to receive hope" (SS 3) and that "in faith [we have] the key to "eternal life"" (SS 10; Eph 3, 12; EG 161). Therefore, what is advisable is that Christians have to rediscover the hope because "[t]he dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open" (SS 2). Today, even Christians fail to live with hope and many like others want to build their

"Faith is the substance of hope"

'eternal tent' here on earth. Holy Father puts this in the following way: "We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God, and have grown accustomed to it, have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God" (SS 3). Therefore, the imperative is given to us that we need to rediscover hope for "[t]he one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life" (SS 2). A life without hope is not worthy of its name Christian. Because of the indissolubility of faith and hope one is right in saying that we are saved by hope. That is the reason why Pope Benedict XVI with St Paul could say that we are saved in

hope. Thus, it can be conclusively stated that a Christian lives in the memory of the redemptive mystery which gives saving hope.

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“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” — Aristotle “

Any fool can know. The point is to understand.” — Albert Einstein

“Turn your wounds into wisdom.” — Oprah Winfrey

“Let no man pull you so low as to hate him.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

“It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness.” — Leo Tolstoy

Christ, the Risen Lord of Mercy

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Freising- Germany

Christianity is based on the primary experience of Easter. So it is worthwhile to think and meditate about the fundamental truth of Christian faith, namely, Jesus' Resurrection. New Testament faith is a priori eschatological and depends on the Easter kerygma, the Resurrection of Jesus. This has been rightly pointed out by Jürgen Moltmann: "Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the raising of Jesus from the dead by God." Faith in the Resurrection is also faith in the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Therefore, "Faith in the God 'who raised Christ from the dead' and the confession that 'Jesus Christ is the Lord are mutually interpretative.'" Nevertheless the death and resurrection of Christ constitute one single action, which resumes in itself the entire life of Christ. And the stories of the resurrection, in fact, acquire credibility and reliability after the recognition of the truth of Christ's crucifixion, not before. Therefore, the heart of Christian faith is in the incarnate and crucified Son of God raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14).

***"Christianity stands or falls with
the reality of the raising of Jesus
from the dead by God."***

This Christ event in its totality, that culminates precisely in his death and resurrection is not an ordinary event in human history but rather is the result of the absolutely free intervention of God as God in history. Therefore, their consequences,

though they happened at one point in time, lasted throughout history and do not exhaust themselves. For instance, the Scriptural accounts tell us that the disciples fled (Mk. 14:50) and thought that the cause of Jesus was lost after his Crucifixion (Lk. 24:19-21). But “something happened” to the disciples after the Resurrection. The experience of the risen Christ captivated them

Ultimately, God wins over evil and God’s love prevails over hatred and reveals that death is not the end.

in self-grounding truth because it carried along in it and with it the ground of their reality and a truth that is not just the result of humanity’s activity in its own history. This certainty

of truth comes from the risen Jesus himself showing himself to his disciples. And the disciples understood Jesus’ Resurrection as the realization of the righteousness of God, and therefore, entrusted their future into God’s hands. Because of this certainty, disciples “cannot but” confess and commit themselves to what they have seen and heard and what now finds expression in the Christian kerygma. Against this self-grounding reality Paul writes to the young Church at Corinth: “if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain” (1. Cor. 15:14).

During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, the celebration of the Paschal Mystery has a special meaning. The risen Lord shows us the mercy of the Father (cf. Lk. 6:36). The Mystery of Resurrection is a mystery of Divine Love: God out of his love for this world sent his only Son to save this world (Jn. 3:16). But Jesus’ Crucifixion was a criminal act which humans carried out against God’s will. Humans tried to thwart God’s plan to save the world, but the Resurrection shows that God did not allow them to destroy his plan to save the world. More particularly, the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead re-orders the outward appearance of ordinary human historical events. The Resurrection reveals that evil and injustice do not have the last word. Ultimately, God wins

over evil and God's love prevails over hatred and reveals that death is not the end. Furthermore, the Resurrection of Jesus is a reinterpretation of the meaning of life, because our God is a God of life and love, and this love is the merciful love of God.

And this merciful love is the heroic act of *amor benevolentiae* that we see on the cross of Jesus. He does not condemn his opponents but forgives and prays for them from the cross (cf. Lk. 23:34). This is God's loving activity of loving-in-spite-of human persons' acts to thwart God's plan to save them. Furthermore, the Post Resurrection appearances of Jesus also prove this merciful love, i.e., although the disciples were unfaithful and left Jesus after his arrest, Jesus remains faithful. In spite of their infidelity, the risen Lord gathers them again and gives them a new perspective on life and new spiritual power.

This truth is very explicitly explained in the image of Divine Mercy, in representations of the crucified and risen Christ. In the image of Divine Mercy, we see the rays of blood and water flowing from the veiled pierced heart of Jesus, and the wounds on his hands and feet giving witness to the events of Good Friday. But the image also depicts Jesus forgiving sinners and giving them his love. Thus this image portrays the Mercy of the risen Lord, despite his Good Friday experience. This is the resurrection faith of the New Testament: Jesus has risen, Jesus is the Lord of mercy, Hallelujah. According to Pope Francis, the Joy of God is to forgive the repentant sinner. According to the Pope, the three parables from Chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke depict this Joy. These concern "the lost sheep; the lost coin; and the parable of the Prodigal Son"; they are typical of Luke. While the parables of both the lost sheep and the lost coin narrate the determination of God the Father to find 'the lost,' the parable of the Prodigal Son catches the enduring salvific love of the merciful father who rejoices in the return of his son more dramatically. God is the loving Father who goes after 'the lost' in need of Mercy and, more importantly, God rejoices when he finds them back.

Therefore, the Easter season is a time to be touched by God's Divine Love: "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!" (Ps. 118:1). At the same time, God dares us to practice compassion for others. God's greatness is not found primarily in his mighty works but rather in his kenosis on the cross. Christ's self-emptying that culminated on the cross may be foolishness to the world (cf. Phil. 2: 7-8; 1. Cor. 1:23), but Christ exhibits the true love of God on the cross: to love and forgive humanity even when it wants to destroy him. The cross exhibits the paradox of God's revelation, i.e., He has given signs of supernatural and given the testimony of the truth of God. He has made some extraordinary signs; he has healed the sick and he gave life to the dead. But Christ's death on the cross shows that he shared all human indigence to the end and never contradicted or suppressed the human freedom, i.e., "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him (Mat. 27. 42). Jesus identified himself with human beings in their experience of sinfulness, a forlorn situation of insecurity, thus offering them God's gift of love, the only real security for human persons. Against this background Jürgen Moltmann writes that:

What has already happened to Christ is representative of what happens to everybody: it is happening *pars pro toto*. Consequently, he has suffered vicariously what threatens everyone. But if he has suffered vicariously what threatens everyone, then through his representation he liberates everyone from this threat, and throws open to them the future of the new creation.

The cross is the kenosis of Christ. Its self-emptying constitutes a remarkable moment of meaning for human beings. Therefore, Christ's true act of kenosis had been a great force of Christianity as such, because, acts of true love spring from acts of humility. Therefore, Jesus could say at the washing the feet of his disciples, "For I have set you an example...love one another. Just as I have loved you..." (Jn.13:15, 34). God's mercy

is a virtue worth emulating for us humans, because his act of love on the cross has somehow conquered the principalities and powers of this world, which culminates in resurrection. This is the symbolic expression of the cross and remains a symbol of our Identity. Apparently, it's not just about not doing evil alone but also about doing good. This has been rightly explained by the Spanish philosopher, Xavier Zubiri, when he writes:

When Christ wished the common people to understand him more simply, he tells us, while talking about mercy, that in the next world when he judges us, he will say? For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you

The cross is the kenosis of Christ. Its self-emptying constitutes a remarkable moment of meaning for human beings.

gave me drink? And they will ask him? Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?? And he will tell them? As long as you did it to each one of my least brethren next to you, you did it to me.? (Mt 25:35-40). The very action of mercy by Christ is the same action by men. Reciprocally, the action of men, insofar as Christians, is identical to the very life of Christ.

In every age people are weak and need kindness. God gives us the time "to be merciful as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). The basic human response to God's offer of love (cf. 1 Jn. 4:9-19; Jn. 3:16) is not the return of love to God alone but also love for one's fellow human beings (cf. Mt. 19:16-19).

Our God is a God of life and love, of joy and goodness. This is the faith of the New Testament: Jesus Christ has risen; and he is the Lord of mercy.

Excesses in God's Name: Evaluation Vinod Victor's Outlook Article

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“When all that was local was ‘pagan’ and those unpalatable for the invaders ‘heresy’, conversions became a tool for subjugation.”

The history of the world reveals many calamities, destructions and annihilation of creation; adding to these we have umpteen cases of human caused calamities and destructions. And many of these human made calamities caused in the name of God and religion. The author of the Outlook article, Vinod Victor, points out how people (invaders) looted land, killed ancestors, destroyed cultures, annihilated a people—all in the name of God.

Whatever was local was considered pagan and any belief or thought against the dominant group was considered heresy. These were weapons used to dominate, control, subjugate, occupy and possess land and property. The religious outlook was a great consoling means to justify the wrong doings. When things happen so many people would begin to think, what is happening to God!

The words of Helen Ellerbe In her book, *The Dark Side of Christian History: The Inquisition and Slavery*, summarises to a great extent the horrifying story of religion. There has been no more organized effort by a religion to control people and contain their spirituality than the Christian Inquisition. Developed within the Church's own legal framework, the Inquisition attempted to

terrify people into obedience. As the Inquisitor Francesco Pena stated in 1578, "We must remember that the main purpose of the trial and execution is not to save the soul of the accused but to achieve the public good and put fear into others." The Inquisition took countless human lives in Europe and around the world as it followed in the wake of missionaries. And along with the tyranny of the Inquisition, churchmen also brought religious justification for the practice of slavery.

These and several other factors have affected the faith of the people of all faiths all over the world. A lot of people have turned away from God and religion. Even today we have many situations of refugees created by religion, in fact not by religion but by the fundamentalist believers of religion. When will they spare God from their selfish and clandestine de-

Can we think that if religion is so inhuman, can atheistic humanism be a solution so that situation may change for the better?

sign? If God is God of love how can he/she be a god of hatred and war? Unfortunately this figure of God has been depicted several times in the earlier times and it continues even today. God was depicted as one who favoured some people and they flourished in life having plenty of wealth and making profit. In the process the poor was left uncared for, made to believe that their earthly struggle was transient and they would receive eternal reward. Together with these the killings of people in different places were gloriously justified for the sake of the Kingdom of God. As early as 1431, the burning at stake of Joan of Arc and in 1633 the killing of Galileo, were justified as divine acts.

During the crusades women dressed like men marched to Jerusalem to conquer the land; even children were not spared from taking part in crusades. The colonising and propagation of mission were two great attempts of cultural invasion leading to

the annihilation of the so called pagans and heretics.

Can we think that if religion is so inhuman, can atheistic humanism be a solution so that situation may change for the better? They are trying to be different from their aggressive forefathers and are trying to wear a new kind, gentle and humanist face. How far can they succeed is the question. Their assumption is that human nature is essentially good and so success may be achieved. In such a perspective we need not have the fear of God or need of God. Science is the solution for problems that crop up. Can we really say that humanism and science solve all problems? So far we have not succeeded in doing that. History is the real example to it. Can we human beings determine what is right and wrong? In order to determine what is right and wrong one has to first define what is right and wrong. If we deny God then we are left with human bias. This will lead to moral rela-

For those who believe in Christ can objectively measure the morality of actions and thoughts.

tivism and each person will be free to determine what is right and wrong. The result will be chaotic. Another danger to this way of dealing is the rationalization of “end justifying means” as Machiavelli says.

If human beings rationalize all evils leading to some kind of benefit for future generations then there will be severe problems in the world. If we allow such things to prevail, all kinds of devious actions can be allowed. Nietzsche argued that “god is dead”. According to my understanding he meant, the moment human beings turned away from god there was no more a frame of reference for good and evil. Everything becomes subjective and opinions cannot be substantiated. For those who believe in Christ can objectively measure the morality of actions and thoughts. In other words it is necessary that we have faith in the Divine. That is where the difficulty arises for the atheists. We cannot deny that religion is related to our emotions. Bertrand

Russell in, The Emotional factor says that human beings in time of need like to believe in some divine being up there who loves and cares for us. If we feel loved and cared for, we would not do anything to harm others and we most likely wouldn't do any immoral acts.

Though religion has done great harm to humanity and civilization, religion inspires people to accept life, to have hope, to endure life's struggles and problems and not to give up. I do not doubt in saying that believing in God actually gives people hope to confront the difficulties they face in life. At times of course because of fear, that there is a great figure watching them and judging them, or they will go to hell for doing evil, but it also helps in keeping order in a society. I admit that religion and God or Divine is an essential factor in human life.

"God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas but for scars." — Elbert Hubbard

"The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends." — Friedrich Nietzsche

"Trees are poems the earth writes upon the sky, We fell them down and turn them into paper, That we may record our emptiness." — Kahlil Gibran

"He who knows all the answers has not been asked all the questions." — Confucius

"The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise." — Maya Angelou

Interview with His Grace Archbishop Anil Couto

(Conducted by Francis Gonsalves, SJ)

Dear Archbishop Anil-ji, thank you for giving so much of your precious time for this interview. Let me begin ... Your request for prayer for India has become a 'political issue' blown out of proportion. What do you think of this issue?

My request for prayer for India was not meant to be a political issue. Certain vested interests deliberately made it into a political issue through the media. I was only echoing the sentiments of a large number of clergy, religious and laity of the Archdiocese of Delhi who had requested me for such a prayer campaign to be organized in our Archdiocese for a year before the general elections. This was also intended to coincide with the anniversary of the apparitions of Our Blessed Mother Mary at Fatima, i.e., May 13, 2018 to May 13, 2019. However, let me reiterate that I firmly believe that the entire Christian community and all Christians—and I, as bishop within the Church—are citizens of India. We have the constitutionally guaranteed right to express our views and to pray for our nation and its leaders. Nobody can suppress this fundamental right as long as it doesn't violate the Law of the land.

What is the political and social role of the Church in nation building, especially in the context of present-day India?

Through her singular service to human society in so many fields—the most well-known among them being education and health care—the Church in India has been engaged in the task of nation building for the past nearly 2000 years or so. Undoubtedly, nobody can deny this fact. Nothing that pertains to the human

person as created “in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26-27) is outside the realm of the mission of the Church.

Imbued with the vision of the ‘Kingdom of God’ or ‘Reign of God’ as preached and practised by Our Lord Jesus Christ and rooted in his Gospel, the Church, His Mystical Body, has to be in the forefront of building up a society where there is justice, equality, peace, where human rights are respected and nobody feels exploited and oppressed. The Church has been doing this since centuries. But, we must humbly admit that we, as Church, have also failed at times, especially when we have not been able to eradicate unjust systems like the caste system but have fallen prey to it. The struggle for a new society is inevitably a political struggle (much as it is a religious, social, moral and ethical one); and the Church has to be fully involved in it. However, the ordained ministers of the Church cannot be involved in partisan politics. It is the task of the lay faithful who are very adept at handling such matters and are very experienced in their own fields of involvement in national life.

His Mystical Body, has to be in the forefront of building up a society

Do you think that the Church—especially the church leaders—are sufficiently equipped to face the challenges posed by forces which are inimical to Indian Christians and to Christianity?

No, I don’t think that we are sufficiently enlightened and equipped to face the challenges posed to the secular and democratic structure of our Constitution. All of us, Christians—and, especially the leaders of the church and laity in responsible positions—need to know the Constitution of India more thoroughly. We really must be fully aware of the forces that are working insidiously to change the Constitution. The danger is not only to Christianity but to the nation as such and to the very idea of our nation as laid down in our Constitution.

What is your suggestion for priests and Christian leaders in India?

All of us, priests, Christian leaders, and all Christians all over the world, have a 'prophetic role' to play by virtue of our baptism and our Christian calling. We should always be conscious of our prophetic role and make other Christians aware of it, as well. We can play this prophetic role with the help of the Holy Spirit given to all of us through the sacraments. Hence, besides animating the liturgy and celebrating the sacraments, we should all be 'conscientizers' and 'awareness builders' in society, at large.

What is your advice to young seminarians, especially during their formation time?

Seminarians should realize that the time of their formation is a precious gift of God to them. This time of seminary formation is a once-in-lifetime opportunity to develop the many gifts and talents that God has given them. The document 'Ratio Fundamentalís' speaks of the 'Gift' of priestly vocation and has four areas of growth, namely, spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral. Each of these is very important. It could happen that one only studies in order to score high marks but is not interested in prayer life and pastoral activity. Or, someone else could aspire to excel in music, sports, public speaking, etc., but only to boost his ego. A good seminarian and priest is one who strives to be 'another Christ'. Thus, all seminarians must develop their God-given gifts in view of their future ministry. They must pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be conformed to the Eternal High Priest in his three-fold ministry of being shepherd, priest and prophet.

You are in a privileged place, being in New Delhi, the capital of India. How would you evaluate the general political and cultural situation of India?

Delhi is definitely a "privileged" place because it is the national capital and the political 'nerve centre' of the country.

Whatever happens in Delhi becomes news immediately. On the one hand, because of its unique position, Delhi can boast of some of the best institutions in the country; e.g. AIIMS for medical care; JNU and St. Stephen's College, for education; Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Institute for Economic Growth (IEG), for social issues, besides, of course other legal, political, cultural establishments. But, on the other hand, Delhi is also "not so privileged" as it is the most polluted city in the country and one of the most polluted in the world. Moreover, it is also regarded as the "crime capital of India". Worse still, the political situation in our country, as somebody has mentioned, is not only "turbulent" but "frightening" if we go by some of the events and happenings in our country during the last four years. The trend towards mono-culturalism poses a danger to our Constitution.

How can we be messengers of Peace and Joy, as Pope Francis has been exhorting us, in our times—and, especially in an inter-faith context like ours?

Christ is the "prince of peace" and the "herald of good news". Our Lord has taught us how to bring peace and joy to the world by his word in Scripture and by his whole lifestyle, death and resurrection. To be messengers of peace and joy is the mission of not only individual Christians, but of the whole Church, collectively. If we remain faithful to Jesus and his Gospel of love, justice and peace, then joy will automatically flow in overwhelming torrents in this world. In the fulfillment of her mission the Church is called upon to join hands with all people of goodwill who seek the truth and in whose hearts the Holy Spirit is also at work to bring God's plan to fulfillment in our world.

Christ is the "prince of peace" and the "herald of good news".

Thanks, so much, for your words of wisdom, dear Archbishop Anil!

Papal Seminary Completes 125 Years

Rt. Rev. Thomas Dabre
Bishop of Poona

The Papal Seminary which completed 125 years this year has had a steady progress with remarkable stability. Pope Leo XIII with an evangelical confidence said “Your own sons shall be the ministers of your salvation, O INDIA”

His prophetic assurance has proved true in the power of Christ. Today all the Bishops of India are Indians. Almost all priests are Indians and so also the Religious men and women.

The Papal Seminary as a single House of Formation has made the greatest has made the greatest contribution to such a phenomenal growth of the Church in India. So the Papal Seminary has been a huge success as a House of Formation.

“Your own sons shall be the ministers of your salvation, O INDIA”

So this historic occasion is to thank and praise God for the marvels He has done through our Beloved Home of Love, the Papal Seminary.

With all humility I personally thank God that I was privileged to be in the Seminary as a seminarian and then immediately to be a member of the staff. I am also aware that

what I say about the seminary is EQUALLY True of Jnana-Deepa Vidayapeeth JDV, because for us EXISTENTIALLY the SEMINARY and the JDV are identified. I am also aware that INSTITUTIONALLY the two are distinct for OBVIOUS REASONS.

The MISSION of the seminary is to train you Beloved Seminarians to become priests and to equip you for the priestly ministry.

Thus you are the soul, the life-blood of the seminary. You are the FIRST, the CENTRE, the staff and all others and everything in the seminary is at your SERVICE. Why is all this? That you may become Holy Priests. That is all.!

In truth, as the letter to the Hebrews teaches us that there is only one PRIEST, one HIGH PRIEST, JESUS CHRIST. There is only ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE, the sacrifice of JESUS on the CROSS in union with LAST SUPPER.

So we all have to realize that on our own and by OURSELVES we are nothing. We are priests because we share in the ONE UNIQUE PRIESTHOOD of CHRIST, and our DAILY celebration of the Eucharist is a repetition, a memorial, a PERFECT REFLECTION of CHRIST one SACRIFICE and one Eucharist.

“I am the Vine, you are the BRANCHES, he who sees you sees ME”.

AND this Exalted DIGNITY. This is our IDENTITY. ALL other posts, positions, honours should not go to our head, nor should we aspire for them.

As priests in JESUS, we like JESUS, we are PREACHERS PROCLAIMERS of the Word of God.

Secondly we are to be CELEBRANTS, Ministers of the SACRAMENTS and worship and thirdly we are SHEPHERDS of our people and our community.

We will be authentic PREACHERS, CELEBRANTS and SHEPHERDS, LEADERS only if we are intimately united to Jesus in mind, in heart in BODY and in day to day life. This is what Jesus means “I am the Vine, you are the BRANCHES, he who sees you sees ME”.

St. Paul says “I do not live, CHRIST lives in me.” For me, St. Paul said “life is Christ and death is gain. I count all as rubbish. I only want to be found in Christ and to know Him.”

For this we must be DISCIPLES of Jesus and be configured to Him as the document on Priestly Formation emphasizes.

Therefore everything in the seminary; our worship, our studies, our community life, Eating and Drinking in the DINING HALL, Recreations, Games, Annual EVENTS, celebrations all this should help us to be Christ’s disciples, to be configured to Him. To be PRIESTS in Christ according to His mind and heart.

Then as Pope Francis teaches us, we shall be JOYFUL, MISSIONARIES giving to the PERIPHERIES.

We are aware that all this is not smooth sailing. It is full of challenges, demands of problems, ups and downs. This was the life experience of JESUS, the only Priest.

But as we joyfully thank Jesus, let us also trust in Him. For He assures us “Fear NOT. I am with you unto the end of the ages”

Homily Notes

July 1, 2018: XIII Sunday of the Year

Peter's Pence Sunday

Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24; 2 Cor 8:7,9,13-15; Mk 5:21-43.

Hope (the last tool)

Today's liturgy of the word clearly shows that our Loving God is a gracious generous giver. In the gospel reading we can see the humble touch with deep faith of a woman—suffering from haemorrhages—to her healer. Woman is suffering from physical illness (haemorrhages), social illness (rejection and cannot approach Jesus directly) and psychological suppression (Mk 5:26). Now all that she has after spending everything is little hope. Hope is almost extinguishing. Last attempt is to get healed by divine healer. Her hope moves her to touch the fringe of Jesus' cloth. That humble touch with deep faith made her to experience the complete healing.

In the second part of the gospel we see the divine touch—with power and authority—of Jesus gives life to a little girl. Here we the subject is completely nil of faith and hope, at that moment others can always lit the hope of the subject through theirs. By the powerful request of Jairus, the hope and faith of a little girl is made to shine again.

All these 'gracious acts of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1Cor 8:9a) should remind us each and every moment of our existence that 'God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living' (Wis 1:13).

Now the final question is do I have hope shining in me? Am I sharing the hope for someone else? May the shining Hope of every one—Jesus Christ—give us the grace to be hopeful in all the situations of lives.

Joseph Madalai Muthu

**July 8, 2018: XIV Sunday of the Year
Ezek 2:2-5; 2Cor 12: 7-10; Mark 6:1-6**

From Slavery to Freedom

The most severe critics are often people very familiar to us, a member of our family, a relative, or neighbor we rub shoulders with on a regular basis. Jesus faced a severe testing when he returned to his home town, not simply as the carpenter's son, but now as a rabbi with disciples. It would have been customary for Jesus to go to the synagogue each week during the Sabbath, and when his turn came, to read from the scriptures during the Sabbath service. His hometown folks listened with spellbound attention on this occasion because they had heard about the miracles he had performed in other towns. What sign would he do in his hometown? Jesus startled them with a seeming rebuke that no prophet or servant of God can receive honor among his own people. The people of Nazareth took offense at him and refused to listen to what he had to say. They despised his preaching because he was a workingman, a carpenter, a mere layman and they despised him because of his family. Jesus could do no mighty works in their midst because they were closed and disbelieving towards him. If people have come together to hate and to refuse to understand, then they will see no other point of view than their own and they will refuse to love and accept others. Do you easily take offense at others?

Jesus came to set people free from the worst tyranny possible, such as the tyranny of slavery to sin and the fear of death,

and the destruction of both body and soul. God's power alone can save us from emptiness and poverty of spirit, from confusion and error, and from the fear of death and hopelessness. The gospel of salvation is "good news" for us today. Let us try to hear and practice the word of God.

Pious George Koonan

July 15, 2018: XV Sunday of the Year

Amos 7: 12-15; Eph 1: 3-14; Mk 6: 7-13

Walking with the Lord; Standing for Justice;

Detachment from the world

St. Francis of Assisi, born in a rich family, heard God's call, gave up everything and went house to house begging and preaching the word of God. Mother Theresa of Calcutta, had a call within a call. She gave up everything and stood for Justice, Truth and Christ. Dear friends. today's readings remind us and speak about the characteristics of a missionary and the principles of discipleship.

The first reading from the Book of Prophet Amos portrays a tussle between Prophet Amos who belongs to southern kingdom and the Priest Amaziah who belongs to the northern kingdom. Here we see a difference between Prophet, Pilgrim, Missionary, on the one hand, and Manager, Priest and Pastor, on the other hand. Amos being a prophet, missionary, pilgrim is always led by the power of the Holy Spirit. But the other, Amaziah, who is a priest, pastor and manager succumbed to the hierarchy and spoke in favour of them.

Today's first reading reminds us to be like prophet Amos who stood for justice, truth and who bravely spoke against injustice done by the king of Amaziah. This also reminds us, how God chooses the weak for his work as he chose Amos who was a herdsmen and dresser of sycamore trees.

Today's Gospel speaks about the missionary work of the disciples. Jesus instructs them not to carry anything with them: by saying this Jesus reminds them to be detached from the world and to stay away from all worldly pleasures.

Jesus asked them to carry a staff, which reminds them to be like shepherds for the people and sandals which reminds them to be like protectors from all kinds of evil and wicked snares .

In today's reading, Jesus specially gives authority to disciples: for instituting the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Friends, as Yahweh selected poor Amos, Jesus selected the 12 disciples who are weak; and he made them strong. As they stood for justice and Truth we are reminded to stand for justice and truth.

As St. Paul, in his letter to Ephesians thanked, for all the gifts received from Christ and Holy Spirit. We need to use these gifts to become the mouth piece of God like Amos and the 12 Disciples.

As Jesuit novices and pilgrims go on foot begging, witnessing to Christ during a pilgrimage, so also Sadhu Sunder Singh, went from home to home, begging and preaching word of God. As Peter and Paul said in Acts 4: 20: For We Cannot Stop Speaking about What We Have Seen and Heard. We are all invited to become vigilant prophets.

Finally, the situation of today challenges each and every one to be a Prophet, Pilgrim, and Missionary in proclaiming Christ vigorously as Archbishop Thomas Macwan and Archbishop Anil Couto who stood for truth, justice and became a mouth piece of God. Let us ask God in this Eucharistic Celebration to make us Prophet, Pilgrim and Missionary.

Bro. Marianand-2nd B.Th.

July 22, 2018: XVI Sunday of the Year
Jer 23:1-6; Eph 2:13-18; Mk 6: 30-34.

Pray, Serve, and Give All Glory to God

Once when St. Mother Theresa was asked from where she got the courage, strength and inspiration to serve the poor and bandage their wounds, she replied that the source of her strength was from the Eucharistic Lord.

Today in the Gospel reading we see the enthusiasm and excitement of the apostles to share with Jesus, their master about what they had been able to do when they were sent out on a mission. They were very glad to inform him that they were able to cast out demons and cure the sick. On the contrary, we see Jesus trying to teach his apostles to be more humble and give all glory to God by asking them to move to a deserted place where they could rest a while and spent time in silence to thank the Lord for the gifts bestowed upon them. He himself even sets an example to be a good shepherd who is ready to lay down his life for his flock and be compassionate towards them when he recognized the people who came to him in large crowds as sheep wandering without a shepherd.

Let us look inwardly and ask ourselves, “Do we give all glory to God alone or still remain in the state of pride through our daily activities? Are we able to serve others unceasingly and unconditionally adapting ourselves to cater the needs of others?

May God bless us and give us the strength to be the good shepherds for his flock and become true disciples of Christ witnessing him in our lives.

Shebin C.S

July 29, 2018: XVII Sunday of the Year
2-Kings 4:42-44, Eph 4:1-6; Jn 6:1-15

God Becomes Food For Humans

No man is an island is the famous quote which describes the nature and purposes of human. He is a social being. Today's liturgy of the word show the important aspect of a social being that is sharing with care and love. Jesus compassion moves him to do the miracle of multiplication of the loaves.

By this miracle Jesus is promising the providential care of the Father and His compassionate care to humankind. This multiplication act is indeed the Eucharist gesture. Not only 2000 years ago Jesus "took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated" (Jn. 6; 11), but even now in the each Eucharist celebration, Jesus does the same act of multiplication. This miracle of feeding the five thousand was really a pre experience of the Eucharist instituted at the last supper. Through this feeding with the ordinary bread, Jesus gives the fore taste of the feeding with His own body and blood. Jesus asserts that He can self-empty Himself to the level of a small piece of bread to give life and life in abundance to us. The asking of bread from the people shows that God invites the human beings to participate in the salvific work continued through the church with the grace of the Holy Spirit. No one asked Jesus to give food but, Jesus understands the pain and the need of the people and does the needful. This encourages us to live with hope and complete trust on God.

"But, strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well". (Mt.6:33). Jesus, the Immanuel is with us always in the form of Eucharist, journeying with us giving strength. Do we value and recognise His presence?

August 5, 2018: XVIII Sunday of the Year
Ex. 16:2-4,12-15; Eph: 4:17,20-24; Jn. 6: 24-35.

To Become the Bread of Life

I am the bread of life, He who comes to me will not hunger,
He who believes in me shall not thirst (Jn. 6: 35).

There was a drunkard who had a family. His wife and kids were suffering from his drinking habits. He used to spend all the money on drinks and friends. One day his wife happened to take him for a retreat from then he was a changed person. He came to know more about Jesus life and gave up his drinks. Later few months, while walking on a busy road, he met his old drinking companion. He said to him, why he is not coming at usual drinking joints? The man replied, I have met Jesus and I believe in him. I stopped drinking. So his companion laughed at him and said Oh! You have started believing Jesus and all that crap- I remember that he changed water into wine at Cana. Then humorously the man replied, I have not seen Jesus changing water into wine but, he changed beer and liquor in my life into bread and clothing to my kids and wife.

By pondering on today's gospel reading, let us ask ourselves, why does Jesus preach? Why does he perform his works – miracles –signs? Why does he feed the five thousand? Yes, these works are expressions of his compassion. But his intention is not merely to solve problems. In fact, he didn't manage to solve all the problems of the human condition. He also declares, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger. And he who believes in me shall never thirst." He even refuses to offer food when people ask for it, as in the gospel narrative of today. He tells them rather bluntly: "You are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat" (Jn. 6:26).

Jesus' works have one sole end: that we might build an intimate relationship with him and in so doing become one with the Father. It is this intimacy that is captured in the symbol of bread. Bread basically does three functions to life: Bread nourishes human life. It makes us to work and play, sing and dance. It's the crucial ingredient of life. Secondly, Bread manifests life. Thirdly, it also perpetuates life. And all these functions of bread are appropriated to Jesus. It is this depth of relationship that is powerfully expressed in the Eucharist. What I eat becomes part of me. This is "the kind of food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you" (Jn. 6:27). And I conclude again by quote; "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst" (Jn. 6:35). It is He whom we seek. As we will offer body and blood of Jesus on the sacred altar, Let us ask his Grace upon each one of us. Amen.

Roger Lenny Fernandes

August 12, 2018: Prison Ministry Sunday
1Kings19:4-8; Eph 4:30-5:2; John: 6:41-51

Hope in Jesus, the Saviour

Dear friends in Christ Jesus, in today's reading Jesus is inviting us to have a focus on Jesus who continues to bring us towards himself. Hence, all the readings are very much related to each other and that leads us to Christ who is the bread of life. It is journey to perfection. Whenever we go long journey, we have to think about all the things we need to hold with. May be on the time journey we could think of that what kind of things should we take with us? In the same way Elijah should have done the same. When he went on his long journey to Horeb. Elijah was a prophet, he was called to give God's word to his people at a time when they had turned their backs on God, and so he wasn't always very popular.

God who is full of mercy and compassion will never leave us without food. We much have the heart of gratitude towards God. Whereby, we remained in today's gospel. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." Dear friends, we much ask ourselves, that how does Jesus show himself as bread to us in this service? However, we believe that, the Eucharist is the way Jesus shows us that he is 'the bread of life that came down from heaven, whoever eats this bread will have eternal life.'

Humanly speaking, every time we eat we are reminded that we never alone, no matter how big or long our journey is. Every time we are reminded that God loves and cares for us.

Dear friends, Jesus promises us today that he is the bread we need, not just to keep us going for a journey like Elijah's, but to keep us going in our journey through our whole lives, forever. Jesus is the food we need for the true life that God has for us.

Let's pray and trust in the bread of life that God has prepared for our spiritual nourishment. God is the center of our whole being. We need to deepen our faith as true Disciples of Christ. Hence, then we are able to project ourselves as an authentic spiritual person for his people by braking ourselves to His people.

August 19, 2018: Justice Sunday
Prov. 9:1-6; Eph 5:15-20; Jn. 6:51-58.

God Becoming Bread

Today's readings point to the idea of God becoming bread to give life to the humans. God who took the form of a human being in Jesus divides His body and shares His blood so that we may have life and life in abundance.

The Gospel episode from Jn. 51-58 reveals the mystery of the holy qurbana and the fruits of receiving Jesus' body and

blood. We participate in Holy Mass for many years. How many of us have really understood the mystery of Qurbana? How many of us really experience the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and live in that experience in our everyday lives?

When Jesus spoke about giving his body as the life giving bread, the Jewish people also could not understand it. But Jesus revealed those after the two miracles – the feeding the five thousand and walking on the waters. Through this, he revealed that he has control over the nature and matter. It reveals that Jesus has the power to transform His body into the form of a bread.

The evil powers know the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Many of us, the so called traditional Christians are still sceptics towards it. Our lord Jesus Christ took all the suffering and humiliation to become the bread of life.

The world may lead our spirit into a liberation. We can be living dead bodies in which there is no love towards God and the other, and spirit lies inactive. By self-emptying Jesus becomes bread to give new life, an everlasting life. Why we hesitate to receive this life? Do we like to live with a dead humanness without love, concern, compassion for the suffering?

August 26, 2018: XXI Sunday of the Year
Joshua 24: 1-2A,15-17,18B; Eph 5:21-32; Jn 6: 60-69

Why No Response to Eternal Word?

“Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.”
(Jn 6:68)

In today’s reading, we see this response made by Peter when Jesus asked his apostles whether they are also deserting

him after many of his disciples turned their back and stopped following him. When Jesus says that he is the living bread that came from heaven and whoever eats of this bread will live forever; the bread that he will give for the life of the world is his own flesh, the Jews who followed him as his disciples in large crowd could not digest what he was teaching. So they went away from the Lord who spoke to them the words of eternal life.

During some moments in life, haven't we come across such situations where we feel depressed, tensed and the difficulty to digest God's plan in our lives? Most often we feel and ask ourselves, 'where are these sufferings heading to'? It is in these situations we are called to personalize and respond in faith to God even though we undergo intense pain and sufferings.

Many times, after having accompanied Jesus for a long time in our lives considering him as our master, we tend to sacrifice our love for Jesus and the kingdom values when we want to remain in the comfort zone of our lives.

In those situations, let us ask God for the strength and courage to overcome these subtle temptations in life and renew our relationship with God responding to the eternal word as Joshua and the other tribes of Israel gave up worshipping the God of the Amorites and accepted Yahweh as their true God and worshipped him.

Shebin C.S

Book Review

A Call to Commitment: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Deut 10, 12-11, 32 –Thomas Karimundackal, Würzburg: Echter Verlag GmbH, under Forschung zur Bibel series, 2017. Pp. 371, ISBN 978- 3- 429- 04-4008.

Nivedita Antony

This book is an abbreviated version of the author's doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Innsbruck in October 2016 and published in the renowned research series, *Forschung zur Bibel* by the Echter Verlag. This study aims to show the theological significance of Deuteronomy 10:12-11:32 in the larger context of Deuteronomy and its interpretation, tracing the possible connections of the text within the compositional frame of Deuteronomy and to the rest of the Old Testament. The choice of the pericope itself speaks of the author's innovative mind, since, "there is no monograph or hardly any research article on Deut 10:12-11:32, discussing its' various aspects" (p.15). With a meticulous analysis of the text he proves that the unit of his study (Deut 10:12-11:32) is a hermeneutical key to understand and to interpret the theology of Deuteronomy. While the methodology used is mostly synchronic, contextual and theological, the grammatical, syntactical and semantical aspects are also taken into consideration.

The author has divided the book into four chapters. The first chapter (pp.18-67) is an attempt to show that the text un-

der concern (Deut 10:12-11:32) is an independent unit and it is placed meaningfully within the book of Deuteronomy with a theological purpose. The author has succeeded in his attempt as he minutely observes the common elements and motifs which connect the pericope to the rest of Deuteronomy.

The second chapter (pp.68-98) examines the structure of the text and its dynamics. The author identifies the multifaceted dynamics of the text by pointing out the temporal (pp.89-90), spatial (pp.91-93), character (pp.93-95) and thematic (pp.95-96) movements and it is shown that the text is progressively built from one section to the other revealing its forward looking nature. At every section, the author has beautifully summarised the various elements of movements in graphical forms which is indeed a praise - worthy effort from the author.

The structure and dynamics elaborated in the second chapter is carried forward in the third chapter (pp.100-274) in order to interpret the text. Each subunit is taken up separately, examining the literary characteristics from a synchronic perspective. The author's personal observations, perceptions, choices and inter-textual comparisons, and various scholarly approaches and opinions are taken into consideration to serve this purpose.

***At every section, the author
has beautifully summarised the
various elements of movements
in graphical forms***

The final chapter (pp.275- 333) summarises the exegetical and theological findings of the text. The author, with a meticulous literary analysis, shows that various theological motifs of Deuteronomy converge in 10:12-11:32 illustrating it as a summation of Deut 1: 1-10:11 and a link to Deut 12: 1- 34:12 (pp. 275-289). The author, then, identifies certain major themes of the text, such as the incomparability of Yhwh (pp.289-299), the distinctiveness of Israel (pp.301-310), Yhwh's gift of land (pp.311-316), the law

and obedience (pp.317-319), justice (pp.319-321), blessing and curse (pp.321-324), instruction of the Torah (pp.324-326), true worship of Yhwh (pp.326-328) etc. and shows their theological and hermeneutical connections with a theological triangle (p.329).

The author has also looked into the theological actualisation and relevance of the text for us today by extending the triangular theological paradigm (p.329) to humankind and earth as an extension of Israel and the Promised Land (p. 330-333). The extensive Bibliography (pp.336-371) in different languages shows the dedication and hard work put to bring out the uniqueness of this study.

This book, sure, will be of great help to those looking for an exegetical methodology for their work and an incentive for more research in the Old Testament.

“The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.” — Isaac Asimov

“The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” — Socrates

“Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to reform (or pause and reflect).” — Mark Twain

“The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.” — William Shakespeare

“In a good bookroom you feel in some mysterious way that you are absorbing the wisdom contained in all the books through your skin, without even opening them.” — Mark Twain

Review Article

Pope Francis: His Impact and Relevance for the Church and Society

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Pope Francis: His Impact on and Relevance for the Church & Society, Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ (ed), Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune and Christian World Imprints, New Delhi, 2018 ISBN 13: 978-93-5148-277-2 pp. 382+xvi Rs 650/-

Pope Francis has become the conscience of the world. No wonder then, he is the most talked about person in the world today. Wherever he goes he draws a large crowd of people who recognize in him a spiritual leader who epitomizes in his life, and articulates in his words to a great extent, Jesus' vision of being a human in this world. He believes that human beings can experience the true meaning of human existence, and be joyful witnesses of the gospel values of love, justice, freedom, compassion, equality, reconciliation in a society that discriminates between humans on the basis of religion, class, caste, gender and nationality. He pleads with all people of good will to embrace a life of compassion and care for one another, and nature, trusting in a God who embraces everyone with infinite love and compassion. This book, which celebrates five years of his papacy, is a significant Indian contribution to the Universal Church.

The world recognizes Pope Francis as a man of God and a religious leader with great authority to inspire, challenge, and exhort everyone to live a life worthy of their human vocation, and

to demand justice and fairness from governments and political leaders. Considering his advocacy for the poor, the marginalized, the refugee and the migrant, what impact has he on the Church? Certainly, his pastoral approach to vexing problems in the Church is recognized and appreciated by a majority of Church members. His encyclicals, apostolic letters and exhortations breathe a fresh air of pastoral concern, simplicity and intelligibility, that ordinary Christians and people of other religions easily comprehend. His universally acclaimed and widely discussed encyclical *Laudato Si'* is the best example of his clear and lucid articulation of the right relationship of humans with nature, and the responsibility each human being has in caring for the earth. In matters of faith and morals, Pope Francis seems to have adopted a style of articulating his teaching that use easily comprehensible theological terminologies, and avoid theological jargon in-so-far as possible.

He is trying hard to liberate the Church from an ecclesiastical Nestorianism

– a point of view that sees the Church dichotomized as an institution and as a spiritual reality. Simultaneously, Pope Francis is also at-

Pope Francis is also attempting to rescue the modern Church from an ecclesiastical Monophysitism which considers the Church only a spiritual reality.

tempting to rescue the modern Church from an ecclesiastical Monophysitism which considers the Church only a spiritual reality. The Second Vatican Council's openness of the Church to the modern world, and post-Vatican II struggles to make the Church relevant to that same world have found road-blocks as resistance from those who were alarmed with changes hardened. In fact, those who resist any reform are said to be those who directly benefit from the existing system that they desire to preserve. It is very clear that those who would resist any structural changes in the Vatican curia are probably not moved by any spiritual considerations, but by fear of their own loss of power. Those who resist

liturgical reforms, ecumenical efforts toward unity in doctrinal and sacramental matters or inter-religious dialogue, are the very same who fear a loss of security and identity in exclusivism, arrogant absolutism, and static understandings of tradition. They resist maturing from their infantile faith to an adult faith. Those groups include priests, bishops and even cardinals who resist the intentions of Pope Francis to reform the Church as envisioned by the Vatican II Council. Resistance to reform is understandable as some are afraid to let go of a past Church in which they found security and certainty; despite the reality that this past Church no longer has significance.

***The Church is a true
home for all who seek
meaning in their lives***

Pope Francis' training in the school of Ignatian spirituality makes it very important for him to use discernment of the spirits in every decision that affects the

universal life of the Church. The objective criteria of discernment are the Christological and ecclesiological congruity of decisions that affect whether and how Church members become more identified with Jesus Christ, and make Her grow in communion. While concerned about safe-guarding and teaching the living tradition of the Church, he exemplifies the human Jesus in his attitude, lifestyle and relationships. He recaptures and reaffirms the early Church's Christian identity as 'a community of believers with one heart and one soul' whose life witness reveals that Jesus is still alive.

The overwhelmingly positive impact of Pope Francis on the Church's life is seen in his promotion of inclusivity, openness to dialogue with all humans of good will, compassionate pastoral approach to those who are marginalized within the Church and in society, and willingness to listen to all including those who oppose his views. The Holy Father has made clear that the Church is a true home for all who seek meaning in their lives. He has the courage and conviction to authoritatively speak to leaders

of nations, reminding them of their duty to care for the poor, the needy, the refugee and migrant, and for nature. He walks the talk and makes the prophetic mission of Jesus alive - even to virulent critics of the Church who view it only as an institution with enormous power, riches and world-wide influence. Pope Francis reveals the human face of a Church in which one can discover the human face of Christ.

The present volume focuses on the life of Pope Francis and the impact of his papacy on both Church and world. No other global leadership is as frequently discussed as the papal leadership of Pope Francis. With him the world has been once again awakened to look at the Church positively as a community that promotes life and humanizing values.

Our first section is a historical overview. A profile of Pope Francis is first sketched, followed by an article discussing the impact of Pope Francis from reports of the global reception of Pope Francis and his views on the life and mission of the Church in the world of today. This is followed by a second article, which looks at the Pope's role as a "Supreme Bridge-Builder" in engaging other Christians and the larger world.

The next section reflects on his pastoral approach and draws mainly from *Amoris Laetitia*; the apostolic exhortation that has made great impact. These contributions highlight relevance and significant evolutionary changes in Pope Francis' moral and pastoral outlook, and relate how he challenges widespread attitudes that problems are solved by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations in the absence of sufficient reflection and grounding. His "open ear and generous heart" come out forcefully in this exhortation.

The next four articles analyse his "bridge building" capacity and practice of reaching out to the modern world, laity, and

religious. The paper, “Gazing at Our World with God’s Eyes of Mercy: Pope Francis’ Theological Vision” discusses the theological vision of Pope Francis. The author finds striking similarities with St. Francis of Assisi’s love of poverty, enthusiasm to renew the Church, love for nature, and a willingness to dialogue with Muslims; it is Trinitarian both in its origin and end. The article “Embracing the Laity: Te Vision of Pope Francis” describes a new vision for the Church, as projected by Pope Francis through signs and symbols, and words and actions, as expounded in his *Evangeliu Gaudium*. Against the background of that vision, the laity’s role is spelled out by a study of Francis’ writings, interviews, homilies, messages, and discourses.

Pope Francis is an ardent Christian, who tries to practice the primary Christian commitment to God and to our neighbour.

The fourth section, “Dialogue as Way of Life” features Pope Francis’ dialogue with other religions and the

sciences. It talks about the dialogical model of living and believing that is essential for the survival of contemporary humanity. Pope Francis has been at the forefront in dialogue with other religions and disciplines, including both social and natural sciences. Te articles in this section discuss Pope Francis’ involvement with the world of science to show how he is open to learn from the empirical disciplines and at the same time challenges science when it falls short of its commitment to the total welfare of humanity and nature.

The paper also discusses some of the insights from his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, underscoring the need for responsibility in protecting nature, and the urgent need for integrating Science and Faith.

The next section discusses another aspect very close to Pope Francis’ heart: the poor, marginalised, refugees and ostracised. His concern for a just world order, free from exploitation

and violence, clarifies his unambiguous stand for the poor.

This alone makes him a prophet for our times. One criticism, whether he has communist tendencies, is also addressed in the last chapter of this section. Here we show that far from communist leanings, Pope Francis is an ardent Christian, who tries to practice the primary Christian commitment to God and to our neighbour.

The three articles in the sixth section deal with his ecological concerns and are based on his earth-moving encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. The article, "The Trinitarian and Christological Dimensions of Ecology in *Laudato Si'*" explains how Pope Francis develops his theological vision on the essential relationship of humans with God and other humans and its implications for human's relationship with nature based on the Trinitarian and Christic experience of God. The following articles discuss the indirect influence of thinkers like Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger and Max Scheler on the encyclical *Laudato Si'* through Romano Guardini. The foundational philosophical vision of *Laudato Si'* is influenced by the critique of Martin Heidegger on Heidegger's "machinational" interpretation of beings that subjugates humans and commodifies nature, as well as his philosophical insights into a way of overcoming it.

Following the discussion of philosophical influences, we present a description of Francis' leadership style, which is life-affirming and merciful.

Pope Francis: Making a New History of Church Leadership

"Pope Francis: Making a New History of Church Leadership"

explains how Pope Francis' leadership is different from that of his predecessors and how it makes the Church credible in our times. By 'reading the signs of the times' his paradigm shifting exercise of Papal ministry expresses the spirit and vision of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. One article also points out the significance of rationality in his understanding of leadership. The last article

talks of Pope Francis as a game changer, whose communitarian approach to leadership fosters a down-up method of decision making.

The final section talks about the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of his impact and focusses on his mass media attraction. Pope Francis’ influence in both the Church and the world during his five-year period has been enormous. In the midst of numerous crises faced by the recent Church, God has raised up Pope Francis, a prophet for our times, to make the Church a credible witness to the compassionate love of God. His life-style and theological vision, his pastoral heart for those who feel abandoned by the Church because of its laws and regulations, his openness to all things human, and his challenge to the entire Church to make itself the home for the marginalized, make him an authentic Vicar of Christ. Pope Francis’ ministers with a leadership and true authority that challenges and devalues all forms of power and power structures that enslave and dehumanize. His life is his mission and is the reflection of incredible witness to Jesus Christ and his Kingdom values. We believe that the Holy Father would agree that his impact is due primarily to his message. That clarion message of joy, peace, forgiveness and mercy, drawn deeply from Jesus’ experience of a merciful God, is highly relevant for our times! We have titled this book “Pope Francis: His Impact on and Relevance for the Church & Society,” These sentiments form the basic persona and practice of Pope Francis: Compassion for the poor based on our experience of God, Commitment to God’s people and His Kingdom, and Collaboration with ALL people of good will – from theist to atheist, from artist to scientist. It is our firm conviction that only by collectively committing ourselves to all people in compassion (or mercy) and collaborating with each other, can we make this world, “Our Common Home,” a heaven on earth, a place of joy, an abode of hope and freedom!

On the whole, this book is both academic and relevant.

It is scholarly and creative. The book is highly recommended for anyone interested in the contemporary Church and papacy.



“Mercy Has a Youthful Face”

“Knowing your enthusiasm for mission, I repeat: mercy always has a youthful face! Because a merciful heart is motivated to move beyond its comfort zone. A merciful heart can go out and meet others; it is ready to embrace everyone. A merciful heart is able to be a place of refuge for those who are without a home or have lost their home; it is able to build a home and a family for those forced to emigrate; it knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion. A merciful heart can share its bread with the hungry and welcome refugees and migrants. To say the word ‘mercy’ along with you is to speak of opportunity, future, commitment, trust, openness, hospitality, compassion and dreams. But are you able to dream? When the heart is open and able to dream, there is room for mercy, there is room to caress those who suffer, there is room to draw close to those who have no peace of heart or who do not have the bare necessities to live, or who do not have the most beautiful thing of all: the faith. Mercy. Let us together repeat this word: mercy. All of you! And once more, so the whole world can hear you!” -- Address to young people at World Youth Day, Blonia Park, Krakow, Poland, July 29, 2016