

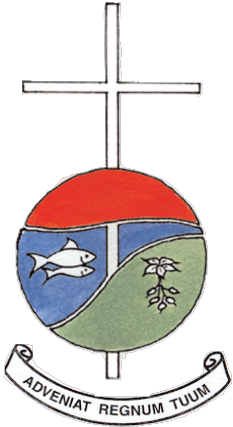
Caring for our God-given world
and for each other
Bishop Robert Ellison's message for 2015



Volume 39 No 1

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2015

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Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

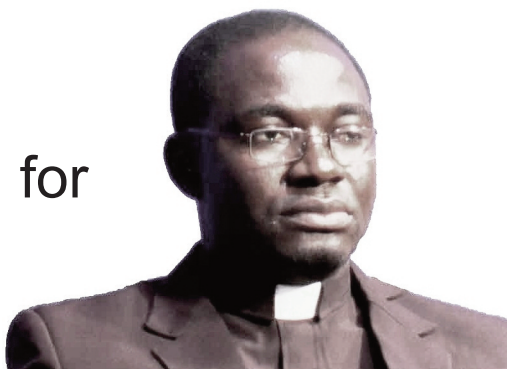
Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter



What does the Catholic
community ask of us,
this Lent?



Rejoice!
Two new priests for
the diocese



Our nation's fifty years
of Independence

Reflections, prayers and readings
for Ash Wednesday
and the first five Sundays of Lent





Looking forward as one nation



FIFTY years ago our country took its rightful place in the family of nations, and Wednesday 18th February is the Golden Jubilee of Gambian Independence.

In this country's history as a sovereign state there have of course been ups and downs. But we can give hearty thanks that The Gambia has maintained its territorial integrity, social stability and its pride in nationhood.

Gambians have a sense of 'family'. This is something to which Catholics especially respond. We know that though we are important as individuals, we belong to the family of the nation, the Church and the world.

In our country, Catholics are a minority, but we seek always to maintain and extend the respect and co-operation between Christians and Muslims which is such a marked and valued feature of our national life.

The Catholic Mission, along with other Christian missions, has continued since Independence to contribute considerably to national development, notably in the spheres of education and health.

By pooling their patriotism, talents and faith in the Creator, all Gambians can contribute to the further building-up of the nation and the good of all our people.

On 18th February we rejoice in our nationhood, give thanks for all those Gambians now at rest who have contributed to the well-being of our country, and pray for the President and his government, that we shall all go forward together, 'to The Gambia ever true'.

Wednesday 18th February is also Ash Wednesday, when Christians begin a 40-day reflection on their faith, seeking to nurture and deepen it. Because our religion teaches us to serve God in our neighbours, we must humbly pray that our expression of charity in our beloved country, day by day, will effectively contribute to the common good.






Diocese of Banjul Food Campaign

Support The Church and Feed The Hungry







APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

Jalokoto Community in CRR North

*With 100 Catholic Families experiencing food shortages
due to failed crops and poor harvests*

D1,250.00 per Bag of Rice

(will help one compound - 10 Persons per month for the next six months)

Donate now to feed the hungry

Contact: Diocesan Secretariat - 4390767 or catholicsec@qanet.gm

By way of introduction

We can deceive ourselves about Lent...



FOR many people, the season of Lent is a time when they put away their bad habits - only to go back to them after Easter.

During Lent, attendance at weekday Mass goes up, prayer meetings are well-attended, and people generally are more willing to help others. But Lent can subtly tempt us to tell ourselves lies, so as to feel virtuous. Suppose I attend Mass every day from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday? If I stop arguing with a certain person during Lent, perhaps it won't matter what I say to that person at other times. Yes, in many ways I can tell myself, 'I'm doing the right things during Lent, so it doesn't matter so much what I do during the rest of the year.' But what really matters is not what I do during Lent, but what I do the whole year round.

This doesn't mean that we should up on Lent. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving - the works of mercy - remain the classic Lenten practices. Each of them, however, can have its counterfeits. According to Jesus, the Pharisee who prayed at the front of the Temple wasn't really praying. His 'prayer' was more about praising himself than about being open to God's grace. (Luke 18:9-14)

We will grow as Jesus' disciples to the extent that we accept what Jesus tells us about how goodness and truth are connected to everyday life. We do not strive to do good only during a season, but each day. Our national anthem says 'We

strive and work and pray that all may live in unity, freedom and peace each day' - it does not say 'some day!'

The good news is this: the more we live in the truth about God, ourselves and others, the more genuine will our prayer, fasting and works of mercy become, the more they will represent who we truly are before God. This is the path to true freedom. Sincerity with ourselves and with God gives us the freedom to worship him in spirit and in truth.

During his visit to Poland in 2007 Pope Benedict XVI said: 'Faith does not mean accepting a certain number of abstract truths about the mysteries of God, of man, of life and death, of future realities. Faith consists in an intimate relationship with Christ, a relationship based on love of him who loved us first, even to the total offering of himself.' (1 John 4:11)

Our relationship with God should be based on sincerity and love. Let our prayer, fasting and almsgiving be sincere and from a genuine heart.

If we are faithful to our prayer during these forty days, a change will take place in us. We rid ourselves of selfishness, we become kinder, we are less judgmental, we become more trusting. We will pay more attention to others who are in need: the poor, the hungry and the lonely. We often don't see them or want to see them. Prayer will help us clean the windows of our souls so we will not only see them, but reach out to them.

Fr Peter S. Lopez

Via Crucis

*The Way
of the Cross*

page 26



**41 years of
women's endeavour**

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Diocese of Banjul NEWSLETTER

Incorporating The Catholic Newsletter

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2015 Volume 39 No. 1

Published by The Gambia Pastoral Institute

33 Kairaba Avenue

PMB 296 Serrekunda, The Gambia, West Africa

Telephone 4394847 Email info@gpi.gm

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Is the Church too easy-going about Lent?

LOOKING at what the Church asks of us this Lent, some might say 'not very much'. In earlier times, it was different: Give up this. Don't do that. Yet today the Church doesn't ask us for much actual fasting and rather little self-denying abstinence.

But think again. Perhaps the Church asks more of us than before. Rather than simply following pious rules, we are each asked, as mature Christians, to consider in what ways we may make good use of Lent.

We are expected to make choices, to set goals, to decide on priorities – in fact, to take our religion *seriously*.

Why Lent?

The first question is, 'What is Lent for; what's it about?'

In plain terms, Lent is the preparation we make, as individuals and a community, to celebrate the Easter Triduum – those three days at the heart of the Christian calendar when we identify ourselves with the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.

If there's no Easter, there's no valid Christianity, as St Paul makes clear:

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Corinthians 15: 17 & 19)

Why fast? Why abstain?

Outside Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, is fasting now considered unnecessary by the Church?

That cannot be, because Christ himself prepared for his ministry by forty days of fasting in the wilderness (Luke 4: 1-10).

Fasting, in our religion and others, is a way of putting God before creature comfort. Abstinence, too - the giving up of certain foods or habits – is useful in reminding us that 'the things of this world' are less important than the things of God. So we do well to incorporate elements of fasting and abstinence in our Lent. But we shouldn't fast or abstain from this or that simply to impress others.

Praying more

A positive way of keeping Lent is to increase and deepen the time we give to private prayer and praying with others.

If our own daily prayers are perfunctory (or non-existent!) there's no time better than Lent to try to do better. And to prepare more carefully for Sunday Mass.

The readings at Mass for Sundays in Lent (and hopefully the sermons, too) are presented by the Church to draw us more deeply into the mystery of the crucified and risen Christ.



During the week

Why stop at Sunday Mass? Many of us are able to take part in weekday Masses, too. And almost certainly our local church will provide other 'Lent exercises' in which we can join: the Stations of the Cross, especially (*see page 26*).

Helping others

Christ tells us that if we care for others, we care for him.

Read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). Or read Christ's assurance that he will say to those who succour the sick, the outcast and the forgotten, 'Just as you did it to the least of my brothers, you did it to me' (Matthew 25: 31-46).

We are most Christ-like when we look upon everyone as a brother or sister, even those whom people generally ignore, despise or shun: the misfits, the malcontents, the poor, the maimed, those who seem to have nothing to offer the world.

Going out of our way to help such people can be difficult. Yet it is what Christ expects of us.



Looking more closely at Scripture

At the same time as deepening our prayer-life we can profit by extending our understanding of Scripture. This Lent, why not read, systematically and thoughtfully, the Gospel of St John, or some other book of the Bible?

We may be able to do this along with one or two others: the prayer and discussion that follow Bible reading with others can be enlightening and stimulating.

Here's an ancient collect:

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may so hear them, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Neglected sacrament

Whatever the state of our religious life, we are indeed fortunate to have recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession.

Confession is so much more than an 'optional extra' in Catholic life. Yet many have drifted into becoming strangers to this sacrament.

Let this Lent see a positive change!





Easy-going?

So - do we really think that the Church's guidelines for the observance of Lent are easy-going? *They are certainly not!*

Lent is a time to think about what kind of Christian disciples we are.

Is our Christian faith at the back of our minds most of the time?

Are we just 'Sunday Christians', people who imagine that not missing Sunday Mass is all that we need to be sure of?

Or - worse - are we people who parade the outward show of Christianity, the ritual observances, the cultural practices, as though they make us somehow superior to others?

In Christ's day, such people were the Pharisees. And Christ openly condemned them on many occasions.

If we're honest with ourselves, we may have to acknowledge that our Christianity is the easy type. We say the creed, but we don't live the creed. We want to make the most of this world and hold back from committing too much of ourselves to Christ. We may even be embarrassed to talk seriously about being a disciple of Christ and what it entails.

Let this Lent be a time of decision. We are on a pilgrimage.

Do we want to move forward?

*Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
Ever constant by your side,
That with you we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.*

Customs concerning the 40 days of Lent



LENT has been observed since apostolic times.

The rules for fasting and abstinence used to be strict. One meal a day was allowed in the evening, and meat, fish, eggs and butter were forbidden.

These rules have progressively been relaxed. In the Western Church, only **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday** are now regarded as obligatory days of fasting. The Eastern churches keep stricter rules.

The day before Ash Wednesday is sometimes called **Shrove Tuesday**, when it was customary to attend confession. To be 'shriven' means to be granted forgiveness in the confessional.

Shrove Tuesday is also known as **Mardi Gras** (Fat Tuesday), a day of carnival before the onset of Lent. 'Carnival' means 'putting away meat' or 'farewell to meat'.

The use of ashes on Ash Wednesday derives from ancient tradition among the Hebrews and others. Smearing oneself or one's clothing with ashes is a sign of mourning or repentance. In Jonah 42: 6, for example, the King of Nineveh seeks to

avert God's anger by wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes. Job repents 'in dust and ashes'. Daniel writes (9:3): 'Then I turned to the Lord God to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.'

A popular Friday devotion in church throughout Lent is the **Stations of the Cross** (see page 26)

During Lent the colour at the altar and for the priest's vestments is purple, which denotes penance.

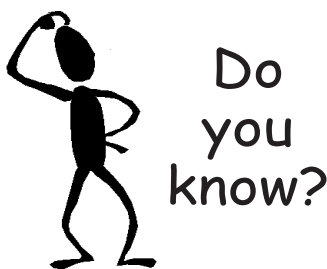
The *Gloria in Excelsis* is not used at Sunday Mass, and the joyful exclamation, *Alleluia!* is not used on any day in Lent. Then, at Easter, *Alleluia!* will resound again throughout the Church.

In many churches during Lent, altars and shrines are not decorated with flowers (except on the Fourth Sunday), and the organ, drums and other musical instruments are not used. Then, when Easter comes, flowers and music denote our joy.

Would you like to say **Morning** and **Evening Prayer** every day, in company with priests and lay-people throughout the world?



Go to **Universalis** website and click on **Morning Prayer**, or **Mass**, or **Vespers** – as you wish – and you will find the complete Office



Do
you
know?

- 1 When Adam and Eve 'heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,' what did they do?
- 2 Which church is the oldest in Banjul?
- 3 The shortest sentence in the Bible is said to be, 'Jesus wept.' What occasion does this refer to?
- 4 Which Christian communion is, after the Roman Catholic Church, the largest in the world?
- 5 What, after a priest's name, do the letters MSP mean?
- 6 Name the church vessel shown on the right.

Answers on page 34



Here & there

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

Rejoicing as two new priests are ordained



REJOICING at Lamin and throughout the diocese marked the priestly ordination by Bishop Robert Ellison on Saturday 24th January of two young Gambian deacons, James Mendy and Tanislas Ndecky.

The ordination, followed by the usual festivities, was held at St Peter's Senior Technical Secondary School Lamin on the feast day of St Francis de Sales.

The rite of ordination is what 'makes' a priest, having already been a deacon. The rite occurs within the Mass.

After being called forward and presented to the assembly, the candidates, James Mendy and Tanislas Ndecky, were questioned. Each promised to diligently perform the duties of the priesthood and to respect and obey his bishop. Then the candidates lay prostrate while the faithful sang the Litany of the Saints.

The laying on of hands

Bishop Ellison silently laid his hands upon the candidates, followed by all the priests present. Then the Bishop offered the consecratory prayer, invoking the power of the Holy Spirit upon the two men being ordained. After this prayer, the two newly-ordained priests were vested with the stole and chasuble, and the Bishop anointed their hands with chrism before presenting them with the chalice and paten.

Next, the gifts of bread and wine were brought forward by the people and given to the new priests. All the priests present concelebrated the Eucharist, with the two newly-ordained taking the place of honour at the right of the Bishop.

Father James Mendy

James Mendy, second son of Louie Mendy and Marie Mendy, was born in Talinding. He attended St Charles Lwanga Primary School, Fajikunda, St Therese's Junior Secondary School, Kanifing, and Gambia Senior Secondary School, which he completed in 2003.



James enrolled for a year at St Kizito's Pre-Major Seminary at Kenema, in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. The following year he joined St Paul's Major Seminary in Freetown, where he underwent his spiritual and academic formation from 2006 to 2014.

In September 2010 he began a year of pastoral experience in the Parish of St Francis at Kunkujang Mariama.

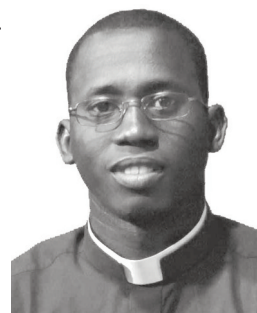
James Mendy returned to the seminary in September 2011. After graduating in philosophy and theology, he was ordained deacon on 19th March 2014, the Feast of St Joseph, by the Rt Revd Charles Campbell, Bishop of Bo.

The Revd James Mendy returned to The Gambia and was appointed as deacon to the Parish of the Resurrection, Brikama.

Fr James Mendy celebrated his first Mass at the Church of St Charles Lwanga, Fajikunda, on Sunday 25th January.

Father Tanislas Ndecky

Tanislas Ndecky, second son of Albino Ndecky and Christine Cabral, was born in Fajikunda, where he spent his childhood until his parents moved to Brikama. He attended St Charles Lwanga Primary School Fajikunda, Brikama Primary School, Brikama Secondary School and St Peter's Senior Technical Secondary School.



From 2003 to 2004 Tanislas experienced what he considers 'an indescribable desire' to become a priest. On 23rd December 2005 he began his journey to the priesthood at St Kizito's Pre-Major Seminary, Kenema. He completed his spiritual year in 2006 and began four years of study at St Paul's Major Seminary.

After philosophical studies, Tanislas undertook a year of pastoral experience at the Cathedral in Banjul. He returned to the seminary in 2011.

Fr Ndecky was ordained deacon on 19th March 2014, along with Fr James Mendy.

Fr Tanislas Ndecky celebrated his first Mass at the Church of the Resurrection, Brikama, on Sunday 25th January.

Towards a self-reliant local church...

The present Catholic Mission in The Gambia was begun in 1848 by two priests - one from Belgium, the other from France. Priests from France and elsewhere in Europe served the mission until the early 1900s. From then until recently the mission was largely staffed and extended by missionary priests of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans), though there were a few Gambian priests, including Fr Gabriel Sanneh, Fr Charles Mendy and Fr Thomas Jobe.

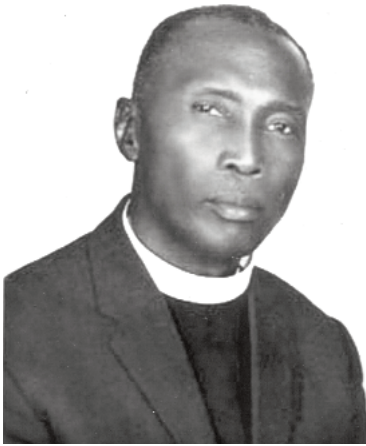
In 1985 Fr Antony Gabisi and Fr Peter Gomez were ordained by Bishop Michael Cleary, and since then he and Bishop Robert Ellison have between them ordained 22 diocesan priests and four Gambian Spiritan priests.

With the ordination of Fr James Mendy and Fr Tanislas Ndecky, 22 Gambians are now serving as diocesan priests. In addition, three Gambian Spiritans are working in the diocese, and one is teaching at the Spiritan seminary in Nigeria.

Reverend Sisters in various Orders have served the Catholic mission for well over 150 years. Now, the majority are Gambians.

What is a Catholic priest? page 8

Recalling a Gambian Anglican priest, educationalist and politician



A BIOGRAPHY of John Colley Faye, the Anglican priest, educationalist and politician, was launched on Friday 12th December, almost 30 years after his death.

The launching of 'The Very Reverend J.C. Faye: His Life and Times' by Jeggan C. Senghor was held at the SunSwing Beach Resort, Cape Point.

Among those taking part were Dr Senghor, Marcel Thomasi, Felix Downes-Thomas and Roddie Cole. The chairman was Georgie Thomas, and a musical interlude was provided by Burang Goree-Njie. Entertainment was by Effry Mbye and a Serer Cultural Group.

A service of thanksgiving for the Very Revd J.C. Faye was held on Sunday 7th December at St Mary's Anglican Cathedral, Banjul, followed by a parade with the scout band, family and friends to the J.C Faye Memorial School.

Multi-faceted career

John Colley Faye was born at Banjul in 1907 of a Serer father and a Wolof mother. He attended the Methodist Boy's School before becoming a teacher in the 1930s. Following training in England at Southampton, he was appointed Headmaster at St Mary's School Banjul in 1930. In 1942 he became the first Headmaster of the newly-established Anglican mission school at Kristikunda in the Upper River Region, and two years later assumed full control of the mission.

In 1947 J.C. Faye became the first Gambian to be ordained as an Anglican deacon. After serving his curacy at Kristikunda, he returned to Banjul in 1949 as Curate at St Mary's Anglican Pro-Cathedral.

It was in recognition of his educational work, which had brought him an MBE, that in 1947 J.C. Faye was appointed to the Executive Council of The Gambia by the Governor, Sir Andrew Wright, on the advice of the Commissioner of the URR.

Having already served on the Banjul Advisory Council in the early 1940s, he became involved again in local politics following his return from Kristikunda to Banjul.

J.C. Faye pioneered the Motor Drivers' and Mechanics' Union. In 1951 he became leader of The Gambia's first political party, the Gambia Democratic Party. He topped the poll in the 1951 Legislative Council election, and was appointed a 'member of the government'. In 1954 he was re-elected, and pressed forcibly for constitutional reform.

Party Leader

By the 1960 election J.C. Faye had become leader of the DCA – the Democratic Congress Alliance, an amalgamation of two political parties. Under the new constitution, people in the Protectorate had for the first time been given voting rights. J.C. Faye was unsuccessful in the election (standing for

Kombo West). In the 1962 election, when the DCA entered into a pact against the United Party with the PPP, he was again unsuccessful.

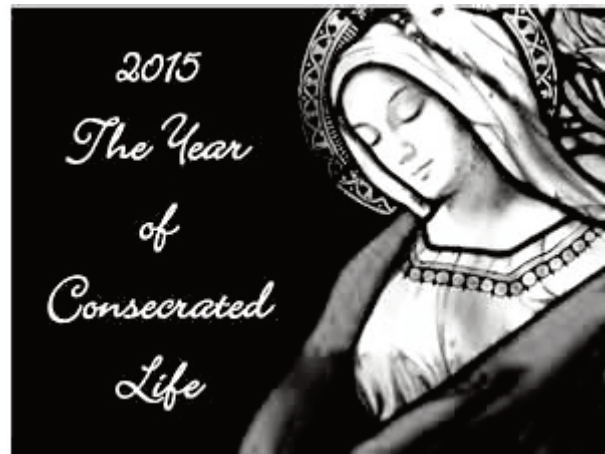
J.C. Faye was ordained an Anglican priest in 1973, and thereafter concentrated on his many educational and church activities until his death in December 1985.

Bishop Robert Ellison paid tribute to J.C. Faye in his New Year message (page 28).

'The Very Reverend J.C. Faye: His Life and Times' is available at Timbooktoo Bookshop, Fajara, price D600.

A review of the book will appear in the Newsletter for April/May.

Candlelight procession opens Year of Consecrated Life



A CANDLELIGHT procession from St Therese's School Kanifing to the church followed by an hour's adoration of the Blessed Sacrament inaugurated the Year of Consecrated Life on Saturday 29th November.

Pope Francis instituted the Year of Consecrated Life to be celebrated throughout the Catholic Church from 30th November 2014 to 2nd February 2016.

In the Diocese of Banjul, events so far have included an opening Mass on Saturday 6th December during the pilgrimage to Kunkujang Mariama, and radio and television programmes about vocations in January.

A workshop on the consecrated life is to be led by Sr Madeline SJC on Monday 2nd February.

A workshop on feminine religious will be led by St Cecilia from Togo on Friday 24th April, and another on *Perfecte Caritas* on Friday 8th May.

A symposium will feature among other events, as well as a retreat for religious and a Fatima procession.

St Edward's come top

ST EDWARD'S Lower Basic School Bwiam were the winners of the Bible Story-Telling competition at GPI on 17th December. The runners-up were St Matthew's Barra and St Francis' Kunkujang.

Fifteen schools took part in the competition. The judges were Fr Pius Gidi, Fr Antoine Samba, Madeleine Jallow and Anne-Marie Jawo.

The winning teams were awarded class materials, with consolation prizes for all the competitors.

Meditation for priests

MEDITATION was at the heart of this year's retreat for priests held at Shalom Retreat House in Fajara from 5th to 9th January.

Four times each day, following a brief introduction, the priests undertook meditation based on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus. The retreat was directed by Professor Wilfred Okambawa SJ, from Benin, who teaches in Senegal.

Among those taking part in the retreat were Bishop Robert Ellison and Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary.

Spiritual Exercises



The Spiritual Exercises grew out of the personal experience of St Ignatius Loyola, who in the 17th century founded the Jesuit Order.

Ignatius sought to grow in union with God and to discern God's will. As he gained insight and deepened his spiritual experience, he kept a journal.

He gathered prayers, meditations and reflections into the framework of a retreat, which he called 'Spiritual Exercises'.

Meditation, contemplation

The two primary forms of praying in the Exercises are meditation and contemplation.

In meditation, the mind ponders the basic principles that guide life in words, images and ideas. Contemplation concerns feeling rather than thinking - for example, in a setting from the Gospels.

Women's Day of Prayer

WOMEN'S World Day of Prayer is to be celebrated this year on Friday 6th March by women in over 170 countries. In The Gambia, prayers will be offered at St Anthony's Church Kololi.

The movement brings together women of various races, cultures and traditions. Since 1927 the day has been known as Women's World Day of Prayer. Catholic women joined after the Second Vatican Council.

Through the Day of Prayer women are encouraged to become aware of other countries and cultures and to show that prayer and action are inseparable, and have immeasurable influence in the world.

Every year, the Women's Day of Prayer focuses on a different country and a specific theme. This year, materials have been provided by women in the Bahamas.



IN BRIEF

Catechists' retreat

FR LOUIS MENDY CSSp was the co-ordinator of the annual retreat of the catechists of the Diocese of Banjul at GPI from Monday 12th to Friday 16th January. About 28 catechists took part.

Praying for unity

Services to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian unity were held at Christ Church Serrekunda on Sunday 17th January and at Star of the Sea Bakau on Friday 23rd January.

Schools drama

THE NOVA SCOTIA-GAMBIA ASSOCIATION held an inter-school drama completion on HIV/Aids and 'life skills' on 21st December at the B.O. Semega-Janneh Memorial Hall, Talinding.

Parish feast

HOLY Spirit Banjul held its parish feast on 30th November, the First Sunday of Advent.

What is a Catholic priest?

THE MINISTERIAL orders of the Catholic Church are those of bishop, presbyter (more commonly called priest) and deacon.

The New Testament depicts Jesus as the High Priest of the New Covenant who, instead of offering the ritual sacrifices prescribed by the Jewish Law, offers himself on the cross as the true and perfect sacrifice. The Catholic priesthood is a participation in this priesthood of Christ, and therefore traces its origins to Jesus Christ himself.

The priesthood involves the consecration of a man to Christ through the Sacrament of Orders so that he can act in the person of Christ for the sake of the Christian faithful, above all in dispensing the sacraments. It began at the Last Supper, when Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist in the presence of the twelve apostles, commanding them to 'do this in memory of me'. The apostles in turn selected other men to succeed them as bishops (*episkopoi*, Greek for 'overseers') with whom were associated presbyters (*presbyteroi*, Greek for 'elders') and deacons (*diakonoi*, Greek for 'servants').

As communities multiplied and grew, bishops appointed more presbyters to preside at the Eucharist in their place.

Canon Law decrees that the priesthood is a permanent vocational state, not just a profession. Formation aims to enable the future priest to effectively serve his ministry. As a rule, education lasts at least five or six years. Formation includes not only academic but also human, social, spiritual and pastoral elements.

The purpose of seminary education is to prepare men to be pastors of souls. Each individual bishop is responsible for the official call to priesthood, and only a bishop may ordain.





Sri Lanka's first saint

ON 14th January, during his pastoral visit to Sri Lanka, the Holy Father canonised Blessed Joseph Vaz, who is now the country's first saint.

Joseph Vaz was born in Goa, India, in 1651. In 1676 he was ordained and volunteered to go

to Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon), where the Dutch colonialists were persecuting Catholics, and priests were banned. He was told not to go, or he would face certain death.

In 1681 Fr Vaz was sent to rescue the almost extinct mission in Kanara (present-day Karnataka) in India. He rebuilt churches in Mangalore and Kanara, established missions, tended the sick, and ransomed prisoners.

In 1684 Fr Vaz returned to Goa and in 1685 founded a religious congregation, the Oratory of St Philip Neri. The following year he left Goa secretly and set out for Sri Lanka, where in the Tamil area he worked in disguise.

In 1691 he was almost captured by the Dutch and was advised to go to Kandy, where the Buddhist King imprisoned him as a Portuguese spy.

In 1693 Fr Vaz worked a miracle of rain during a drought. The King released him, and gave him freedom to preach.

As in Goa and Mangalore, Fr Vaz was often seen in ecstasy in prayer. The people called him *Sammana Swami* - Angelic Father.

In 1697 Fr Vaz was joined by three of his Indian Oratorians from Goa. During a smallpox epidemic in Kandy, the King and many people fled. Fr Vaz tended to the sick and dying for almost two years.

In 1705 Fr Vaz dedicated the Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu.

In January 1711 he died in Kandy after 23 years of arduous missionary work in Sri Lanka.

The church Fr Vaz re-founded in Sri Lanka was persecuted and survived isolation from Rome for 140 years.

Joseph Vaz was declared 'Blessed' by Pope St John Paul II during a visit to Sri Lanka in 1995.



Beyond the ashes - the sure and certain hope

IN Western countries, the most common method of disposing of the dead is cremation: burning.

In the fierce flames of the oven a corpse is soon reduced to ashes. It's a sobering thought. As the poet T.S. Eliot wrote, 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust.'

The commercial value of a human body is negligible. We are just water and a few chemicals and minerals. Dead, our dust is worth even less. But as a creation of God, with an immortal soul, each of us is infinitely precious.

At the same time, our mortal life is finite. Whatever we think of this life - its joys, its sorrows, its triumphs, its disappointments, its comforts, its frustrations - it's certain that each one of us is going to die.

On Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, worshippers' foreheads are smeared with ashes. As he imposes the ashes on each penitent, the priest may say, 'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return.'

The attitude of the atheist and the agnostic may be, 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' But the Christian, too, lives each day as though it is his or her last. The Christian should make the most of every day, thanking God for his blessings and endeavouring to serve others.

Useful reminder

Lent can usefully remind us that this life is a pilgrimage, a journey towards God.

Just as the Hebrews journeyed for 40 years through the wilderness towards the Promised Land, so Christians spend 40 days preparing for the great feast of Eternal Life: Easter Sunday, the Day of Resurrection.



The whole of life - not just Lent - is a journey towards our death and resurrection. Thus, the body of a dead person may be buried with the assertion, 'Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.'

St Paul, even after his conversion, experienced struggle and suffering. But he was adamant:

'I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things past, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.' (Romans 8: 38).

We receive the ashes on Ash Wednesday as a reminder of our mortality. But the ashes are also a sign that we are sinners who do not sufficiently recognise each day as a precious gift of God, with heaven as our goal. So we should use this Lent to become more faithful pilgrims.

family circle



Always in season

There was a time when eating eggs was forbidden in Lent. But nowadays the humble but nutritious egg is an all-the-year round favourite. Older people may tell you that in their young days far fewer Gambians ate eggs. But for many years in this country, eggs have been increasingly popular.

Eggs are always in season, and are one of the most versatile and valuable foods. They can be prepared as a snack, and are used in all kinds of dishes.

Some people prefer brown eggs to white ones. But all eggs taste the same. Just make sure that you only buy eggs that are not cracked.

Don't buy too many eggs at a time. The fresher the egg the better. If you want to test an egg, immerse it in cold water. A new-laid egg will lie flat. An older egg is more buoyant, and will tilt or even stand upright in the water. If an egg floats to the surface it is too old, and should really be thrown away.

Eggs are best kept at a constant cool temperature. If you have a refrigerator, store your eggs in the least cold part.

Always let eggs come to room temperature before using them.

Separated egg whites, if tightly covered, may be kept in the refrigerator for up to a week. Eggs yolks can be kept in the fridge for a day or two only (after which they start to dry out).

Just on the boil

Here's a little know-how concerning the simplest of all cooking: boiling an egg. Boiled eggs should actually be simmered, not boiled. Boiling toughens the whites, and rattling around in a pan might crack the shells. If you salt the water it stops the white leaking out if the shell should crack. The best way to boil eggs is to put them into a pan of shimmering water, bring the water to the boil, then immediately lower the heat so that it returns to the shimmer and cook for the required time. Start timing from the moment the eggs go into the water.

A **soft-boiled egg** (white set firm enough to hold the yolk, and soft yolk) will take 3 to 4 minutes.

An **oeuf mollet** (as the French call it) is boiled for longer. The white is firm and the yolk almost set, but runny in the middle. This will take 5 to 8 minutes.

A **hard-boiled egg** (white and yolk set) will take around 10 minutes. Cook it any longer, and your hard-boiled egg will be rubbery and the yoke crumbly with a khaki ring round it.

As soon as you take hard-boiled eggs from the pan, plunge them into cold water, or rinse them under running tap water.

Making the most of seeing your doctor

YOUR doctor is trained to diagnose and treat many diseases and disorders.

When you see him or her about a particular problem, you'll find that the consultation consists of two parts.



* The first is history-taking, in which the doctor asks you a series of questions to build up a picture of your problem.

* The second is a physical examination, which confirms or corrects your doctor's first impressions.

Before you go the doctor, check in your own mind just why it is that you want to see him, and what questions you want to ask.

If your mind tends to go blank before you enter the surgery, write down your symptoms before you go and use it while you're with the doctor to check that you have not missed anything out.

Be clear. Be specific.

Your doctor is likely to begin by asking you a few questions about your general health. When he comes to your reason for seeing him, relate your symptoms as simply and clearly as possible. Be specific. The more clues you give your doctor the easier he will find it to diagnose your problem.

While you're relating your symptoms, the doctor will be seeing whether your appearance gives any clues to your state of health - for example, whether you look generally fit and relaxed, or seem tired or worried, whether your skin, eyes, hair and teeth look healthy and whether you are noticeably underweight or overweight.

Your doctor may make notes on the symptoms you describe; then he will ask questions about these symptoms. He will also ask you questions about your previous health record and the medical history of members of your family.

The doctor may ask you questions about your everyday health and lifestyle.

Physical examination

Your doctor may then perform a physical examination. The part or parts of the body he examines will depend on the symptoms you have described. He may also take your temperature, measure your blood pressure, take your pulse and weigh you.

In some cases, your doctor may tell you what further tests are necessary before a diagnosis can be made or confirmed.

He may ask you to supply a sample of urine, take a blood sample or a throat swab which will be sent to a laboratory for various types of analysis.

Further tests?

In some cases your doctor will refer you to a hospital for further analysis or tests.

Once your condition has been diagnosed, an appropriate

course of treatment can be recommended.

Do make sure that you act on the doctor's advice, and carefully follow the treatment he prescribes.

EBOLA: *be aware, be alert.*
Information: telephone 1025

'Nightmarish disease... suffering personified'



FELICITY FITZGERALD qualified as a doctor in 2006. She is a paediatrician studying for a doctorate in infectious diseases at the Institute of Child Health at University College London. She volunteered to work in Freetown at the Connaught Hospital Ebola Isolation Unit.

Here is one of her dispatches.

I REEK of chlorine. Chlorine is the first thing I smell when I wake up and when I move... I'm beginning to wonder if I'll ever smell of anything else.

Chlorine is now a way of life in Sierra Leone – not only for those working directly with ebola patients, but at the door of every shop and café, even at road blocks. In fact, pretty much the whole of Freetown now smells of chlorine.

In the Isolation Unit at Connaught Hospital the odour almost overpowers all the less sanitary smells that go with such sick patients.

I have been learning the complicated and disciplined dance of donning and doffing personal protective equipment, during which your hands get dunked in chlorine at least ten times and often more frequently if you're feeling paranoid. Each dunking feels like an added layer of protection against any lurking particles that might be lingering on your gloves – but chlorine burns are an unexpected occupational hazard of the job.

Another unexpected hurdle has been how hard I've found it adjusting to having no physical contact with anyone.

When I first arrived, and even now when I instinctively move towards someone to shake hands, or touch them on the elbow, welcoming smiles become slightly-fixed grimaces and people ever-so-slightly recoil.

Some bolder types have worked around this by knocking elbows – a greeting termed an 'elbowla'.

Dark humour is a saving grace here.

Privilege

It is that humour and positivity that changes the world in the Isolation Unit from one of horrors to one in which I feel it is a privilege to work.

I have been welcomed as a 'pikin doctor' (paediatrician) with smiles and laughter; and cries of 'Hey, pikin doctor!' follow me through the hospital grounds.

The enthusiasm of the welcome is a little unnerving.

Yes, I am a paediatrician, but before arriving here my experience of managing children with ebola was minimal. That said, we are all, as a community of health care workers, working out how best to manage this disease, so I'm in good company.

And working we certainly are.

The gruelling physicality of shifts in the unit would put to any boot-camp to shame, and time off is mostly spent in writing protocols, making plans, debating what is and isn't feasible in a setting such as ours, and reminding ourselves that we really should talk about something other than ebola.

I've only been here a few days and am pretty tired: my admiration is enormous for the local workers and those who've been in Freetown since the outbreak began.

Horror

You only have to see one patient with ebola to understand exactly why. It is a nightmarish disease altogether, but what will always haunt me is the expressions of extreme terror of those dying of the disease. I've never seen anything like it before. They are suffering personified.

Anything we can do to try to mitigate the horrors justifies any amount of sweat, toil and burnt hands.

Ebola up-date

THE DISTRICT of Pujehun, in south-eastern Sierra Leone, was in January declared ebola-free, having not had a recorded case of ebola since 26th November.

Hopes are high that the disease is on the retreat in eastern Sierra Leone; but there remains a high risk that a new case could come from a neighbouring district.

Schools in Sierra Leone are to re-open in March.

Schools in Liberia and Guinea have already re-opened.

The GPI Communications Unit offers digital video production, DVDs and VCDs, documentaries, dramas, weddings, funerals, special occasions, camera hire, digital editing (video & audio). **Telephone 4376617**

from beyond the diocese

Francis names 20 new cardinals

POPE Francis on 4th January named 20 new cardinals - the majority being from Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are to be installed on Sunday 15th February.

Fifteen of the new cardinals are under 80, and eligible to join the conclave which will elect the Pope's successor.

Pope Francis pointed out that the new cardinals come from 14 countries from every continent, showing the indissoluble links between the Church of Rome and churches around the world.

The new cardinals include three from Africa and five from Latin America, as well as a five from Asia and the Pacific.

Bishop Soane Patita Paini Mafi of Tonga becomes the first cardinal from Polynesia. At 53, he is also the youngest.

The Pope's choice of a Haitian cardinal was also a first.



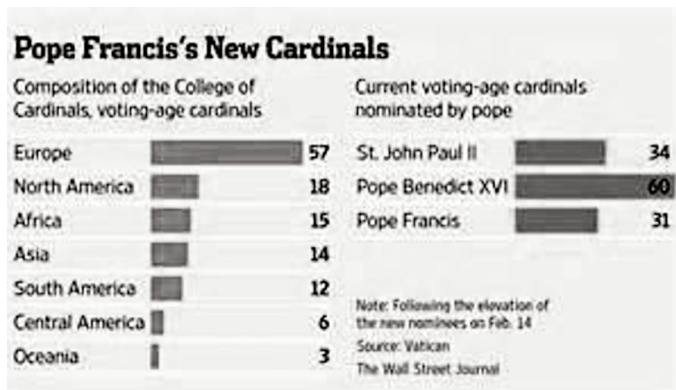
Europeans still dominate

The Pope has undertaken a reform of the Curia, the Vatican's administrative body, and has named only one cardinal from within it: Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, a Frenchman, a former Vatican foreign minister.

When the new cardinals are officially installed there will be 228 members, including 125 who can vote in conclaves.

During the past century there has been a change in Church demographics, with a shift towards Africa, Latin America and Asia. In 1910, about 65 per cent of the world's Catholics lived in Europe, with 24 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. By 2010, Latin America accounted for 39 per cent of Catholics, while 16 per cent were in Africa and 24 per cent in Europe.

Despite the new nominations, the overwhelming number of cardinals named by Pope Francis and his predecessors, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope St John Paul II have been Europeans: 57 from Europe, 19 from Latin America, 15 from Africa, 14 from Asia and three from the Pacific.



The new cardinals

Africa

Bishop **Arlindo Gomes Furtado**, Cape Verde

Bishop Emeritus **Julio Duarte Langa**, Mozambique (non-voting)

Archbishop **Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel**, Ethiopia

Europe

Archbishop **Dominique Mamberti**, France

Archbishop **Francesco Montenegro**, Italy

Archbishop **Luigi De Magistris**, Italy (non-voting)

Archbishop **Ricardo Blazquez Perez**, Spain

Archbishop **Karl-Joseph Rauber**, Germany (non-voting)

Archbishop **Edoardo Menichelli**, Italy

Archbishop **Manuel Jose Macario do Nascimento Clemente**, Portugal

Asia/Pacific

Archbishop **Charles Maung Bo**, Myanmar

Archbishop **John Atcherley Dew**, New Zealand

Archbishop **Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij**, Thailand

Bishop **Soane Patita Paini Mafi**, Tonga

Archbishop **Pierre Nguyen Van Nhon**, Hanoi

Latin America

Archbishop **Daniel Fernando Sturla Berhouet**, Uruguay

Archbishop **Alberto Suarez Inda**, Mexico

Bishop **Jose Luis Lacunza Maestrojuan**, Panama

Archbishop **Jose de Jesus Pimiento Rodriguez**, Colombia (non-voting)

Archbishop Emeritus **Luis Hector Villaba**, Argentina (non-voting)

The three new African cardinals

Three of the newly-named cardinals are from Africa: the Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, 66; the Bishop of Santiago de Cabo Verde, Arlindo Gomes Furtado, 65; and the Emeritus Bishop Julio Duarte Langa of Xai-Xai (pronounced 'Shy-Shy'), Madagascar (non-voting).



**Archbishop
Berhaneyesus Souraphiel**



**Bishop
Arlindo Furtado**

When in 1976 Vatican Radio spoke to Bishop Langa about what it felt like to be named a bishop, he remarked, 'I think the Holy Father at the time was looking for someone better, and not finding anyone exceptional he just settled for what was available - that's how they chose me!' He would go on to become a much-loved bishop for 28 years.

The Cape Verdean, Bishop Furtado, is praised for his pastoral zeal and his keen interest in the welfare of Cape Verde

communities elsewhere. It is said that he lives up to his episcopal motto, 'Jesus, the Good Shepherd'.

The best-known of the new African cardinals is the Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, an engaging speaker with a sense of humour. When East Africans find his Ethiopian name too cumbersome, they simply call him *Bwana Yesu* - Swahili for 'Lord Jesus'. He laughs heartily at this, and when in East Africa introduces himself as such.

Funding running out

FUNDING to feed and house thousands of Iraqi Christians sheltering in Jordan will soon run out.

Fr Noor Alqasmosa, a Syriac Catholic priest charged with helping the refugees, has told Catholic News Service that the funding situation is desperate, and that chances for refugees to start a new life are dimmer than ever. Many Iraqi Christians will not be able to seek resettlement in the USA or other Western countries because they are giving priority to Syrians fleeing their own four-year conflict.

Fr Noor said, 'We had everything in Mosul, and left with nothing... We have Caritas funding lasting just until the end of February to help the 7,000 Iraqi Christians in Jordan... There is no hope among the people. They believe the world has abandoned them and is leaving them to die.'

Most international assistance for displaced Iraqi Christians and other minorities is going to northern Iraq, which Iraqi Christians have called home for the past 16 centuries. It is unclear how many Christians are among the two million internally-displaced in Iraq, because the UN does not keep figures for religious minorities.

Church authorities would prefer Christians to remain in Iraq, their historic homeland. Fr Noor says that the more Christians flee from Iraq, the smaller the community will become and the less weight it will carry in comparison to other groups.

His main concern is how to keep Christians in Jordan fed and sheltered. Church agencies in the US and Germany are aiding Caritas Jordan. 'But there has been no other assistance from the international community. Caritas is facing great difficulty in providing for the refugees.'

Over six million attend biggest Mass in history

OVER 6,000,000 in Manila, capital of the Philippines, have attended what is thought to be the largest papal Mass in history.

The Filipino authorities estimate that between six and seven million attended the Mass in Rizal Park on Sunday 18th January, the last full day of the Pope's pastoral visit to Asia's largest Catholic nation.

The Mass celebrated the feast of the *Santo Niño*, or the Holy Child, whom Francis described as 'the protector of this great country'. 'Sadly, in our day, the family all too often needs to be protected against insidious attacks and programmes contrary to all that we hold true and sacred, all that is most beautiful and noble in our culture.'

Reconciliation and rebuilding

Six days earlier, on a visit to Sri Lanka, the Pope called for 'reconciliation and rebuilding'.

Referring to the civil war between the minority Tamils and

the majority Sinhalese from 1983 to 2009, the Pope said: Sri Lanka for many years knew the horrors of civil strife, and is now seeking to consolidate peace and to heal the scars of those years... I am convinced that the followers of the various religious traditions have an essential role to play in the delicate process of reconciliation and rebuilding which is taking place in this country. For that process to succeed, all members of society must work together.'

Niger: 'The Church will rebuild'

AN ARCHBISHOP in Niger has said that the Church will rebuild after rioters destroyed its places of worship during protests over cartoons in the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

'Archbishop Michel Cartagey of Niamey praised local Muslims who sheltered Christians from the violence, and imams who spoke against it. 'We now have to reconstruct hearts and minds deeply scarred by these events and renew the friendly ties we always had with the Muslim community,' he told Catholic News Service. He spoke of his belief that the Paris cartoons had only been a pretext for the riots, in which Catholic schools, orphanages and shops were burned in Niamey, Maradi and Zinder.

At least 10 people were killed, more than 200 injured and 45 Catholic and Protestant churches set ablaze during riots on 16th-17th January. Local media said that the police had fought to save the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Niamey, but that six of the city's eight Catholic parishes had been wrecked. The archbishop said that the Church hopes to reopen Catholic offices and schools in Niamey by late January, adding that he had met and prayed with local Muslim imams, who had all condemned the violence.

'They told me that the Prophet Muhammad protected Christians in his day, and pledged to follow his example by helping Christians in danger now. We know that some local Muslims, young included, showed courage and solidarity by sheltering Christians in their family homes. Some also stood in our church doorways saying the rioters would have to kill them as well.'

Niger's 25,000 Catholics are a small fraction of its mostly Muslim population of 18 million. Catholics include immigrants from Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

In a national message on 17th January President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger declared three days of mourning for victims of the violence and said that the rioters had 'understood nothing about Islam'.

He, too, paid tribute to Muslims who helped shelter Christians and protect churches.

The Niger government has announced a programme to rebuild destroyed churches.



Recent rioting in Niger



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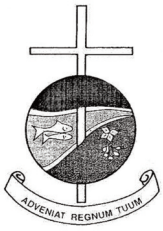
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Diocese of Banjul

Collections for the Pope's Missionary Societies

October 1st 2013 to 30th September 2014



Church	Mission Sunday	Missionary Childhood	Holy Land	Catechists	Vocations	Peter's Pence
1 Cathedral Parish, Banjul	936.00	2,372.00	780.00	996.00	1,698.00	668.50
2 Holy Spirit, Banjul	300.00	819.00	691.50	818.00	677.50	
3 Star of Sea, Bakau						
4 St Therese, Kanifing	4,260.00	4,794.00	3,341.00	4,062.25	2,841.50	
5 Blessed Sacrament	1,506.50	1,565.00	1,745.00	2,650.00	3,125.00	2,150.00
6 St Charles Lwanga	2,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	
7 St. Kizito, Bakoteh	2,000.00			4,135.50		
8 St Anthony, Kololi	1,413.50	2,016.00	1,437.50	818.50	1,150.00	2,697.50
9 Holy Cross, Brusubi	2,473.00	3,223.00	1,000.00	100.00	3,308.50	
10 St Peter's, Lamin						
11 St. Francis, Kunkujang	156.50	357.00	290.00	100.00	370.00	
12 Resurrection, Brikama	3,021.00			3,200.00		
13 St Patrick, Darsilami	514.00			405.50		
14 St Michael, Njongon	500.00	500.00	400.00	500.00	370.00	570.00
15 Our Lady of Fatima, Bwiam						
16 Mary Mother of God, Soma	226.50	320.00	245.00	255.00	270.00	
17 St John Baptist, Farafenni	430.00					
18 St Martin, Kartong				660.00		
19 Sacred Heart, Bansang						
20 St Joseph, Basse				625.00	513.00	
Sub-total	19,737.00	18,966.00	12,930.00	22,325.75	17,323.50	6,086.00

With gratitude to all parishioners who have supported the Holy Father's Missions



Peter's Pence: an ancient custom still alive today

PETER'S Pence is a voluntary, world-wide collection in the Catholic Church on the Sunday nearest to 29th June, the Feast of St Peter & St Paul.

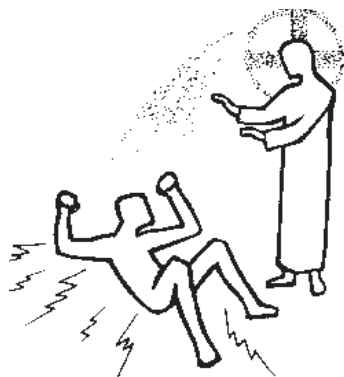
The money raised is sent to the Pope, who applies it for the needs of the Church, including poor dioceses, religious institutions, Catholic education, the poor, children, the elderly, the marginalised, refugees, immigrants, and the victims of war or natural disasters

Benedict XVI called Peter's Pence the 'expression of the participation of all the faithful in the Bishop of Rome's charitable initiatives in favour of the universal Church. The gesture has not only a practical value, but also a strong symbolic one, as a sign of communion with the Pope and attention to the needs of one's brothers.'

The largest sums are raised in the United States and Germany.

Sunday Reflections

Reflections, readings and prayers for 4th - 6th Sundays in Ordinary Time,
Ash Wednesday and the 1st - 5th Sundays of Lent



1st February 2014 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Amazing authority

TODAY'S first reading comes from Deuteronomy, the fifth and last book of the Jewish Law. To us, Deuteronomy may seem ancient and remote. But in Jesus' day, Deuteronomy and

the Psalms were regarded as the most important books of the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament). Jesus quotes Deuteronomy when he is tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11) and when he tells a lawyer about God's greatest commandment (Matthew 22: 34-40).

In today's reading from Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people that God will raise up from among them a prophet like himself. To us, that prophet is Jesus, the fulfilment of the Law and the prophets. He amazes everyone. He speaks and acts with authority. The people sense his sincerity (unlike the teaching of many of the scribes). He embodies compassion and truth. He excites people. They want to tell everyone about him.

Are we excited by Jesus? Do we want to tell everyone about him?

Collect

GRANT us, Lord our God, that we may honour you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart...

Readings: Deuteronomy 18: 15-20. Psalm 94: 1-2, 6-9. Response: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts. 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia...Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children.

Gospel: Mark 1: 21-28

Prayer over the Offerings

O LORD, we bring to your altar these offerings of our service; be pleased to receive them, we pray, and transform them into the Sacrament of our redemption...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the eight Sunday Prefaces provided for use in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

NOURISHED by these redeeming gifts, we pray, O Lord, that through this help to eternal salvation true faith may ever increase...

8th February 2015 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Healing for all

WOULDN'T this life be much more agreeable and understandable if trouble and sickness were reserved for sinners, backsliders and for those who don't believe in God, or don't care about him?

Yet we know that unforeseen and almost unbearable troubles may also afflict good and God-fearing people. In Scripture, a prime example is Job, a man 'blameless and upright'.

Why the innocent suffer is hard to explain and hard to accept. But we know that Jesus Christ, the supremely innocent, suffered and embraced death to save us all. And we know that, as in today's Gospel, he heals everyone he encounters.

This is the reward for all who have come to know Jesus. Whatever may happen to us, Jesus is our consolation and our deliverer.

Collect

KEEP your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection...

Readings: Job 7: 1-4, 6-7. Psalm 146: 1-6. Response: Praise the Lord, who heals the broken-hearted. 1 Corinthians 9: 16-19, 22-23.

Gospel acclamation: He took our sicknesses away, and carried our diseases for us.

Gospel: Mark 1: 29-49

Prayer over the Offerings

O LORD our God, who once established these created things to sustain us in our frailty, grant, we pray, that they may become for us now the Sacrament of eternal life...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the eight Sunday Prefaces provided for use in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

O GOD, who have willed that we be partakers in the one Bread and the one Chalice, grant us, we pray, so to live that, made one in Christ, we may joyfully bear fruit for the salvation of the world...



15th February 2015

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

No-one is an outcast

IT'S a long time ago, now – the early 1980s – when the frightening disease Aids was first identified. Those suffering from Aids were ostracised (and shunning people with Aids is not unknown today). So it was in Old Testament times with the 'loathsome' disease, leprosy. Lepers were outcasts, forced to declare themselves 'unclean' and to live in isolation.

In our day, Government and the Church exhort us not to treat sufferers from Aids as people apart, but to comfort and succour them as best we are able.

Our teacher and guide is Jesus.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is approached by a leper who has faith in Our Lord's ability to heal him. Jesus is 'deeply moved' by the man's condition and by his faith. He heals him: not to advertise his power, but out of compassion. The leper tells everyone about his cure. No wonder people flock to Jesus 'from every quarter'. A man like Jesus, who welcomes and rescues the outcast, is indeed worth knowing.

If we take Jesus as our guide, no-one should be for us an outcast, no-one should be unworthy of our sympathy and help.

Collect

O GOD, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you...

Readings: Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46. Psalm 31: 1-2, 5, 11. Response: You are my refuge, O Lord; you fill me with the joy of salvation. 1 Corinthians 10: 31 - 11: 1.

Gospel acclamation: May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us.

Gospel: Mark 1: 40-45

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY this oblation, O Lord, we pray, cleanse and renew us, and may it become for those who do your will the source of eternal reward...

Preface: *the priest may use any one of the eight Sunday Prefaces provided for use in Ordinary Time.*

Prayer after Communion

HAVING fed on these heavenly delights, we pray, O Lord, that we may always long for that food by which we truly live...

LENT 2015

The colour for Lent is purple or violet

18th February

Ash Wednesday

Ashes, prayer and supplication

TODAY many of our churches will be 'house full'. Why is this? Is it because we want to make a good start to Lent? Or do we feel that the imposition of ashes imparts a special blessing?



The ashes have two symbolic meanings. The first is that each of us will sooner or later leave this world: we are simply dust and ashes. The second is that, since time immemorial, ashes have been a sign of contrition and a yearning for forgiveness. The ashes themselves do not confer forgiveness: our true inner repentance does that, because God is always merciful to a repentant sinner.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus reminds us that it's not to impress others that we fast, pray and give alms. We must offer our fasting, prayer and charity to our Lord God from a penitent heart.

The penitential rite at the beginning of Mass is omitted

Collect

GRANT, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint...

Readings: Joel 2: 12-18. Psalm 50: 3-6, 12-14, 17. Response: Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned. 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2.

Gospel acclamation: Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! A new heart create for me, O God, and give me again the joy of your help.

Gospel: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16, 18

After the Gospel comes the imposition of ashes.

The priest says:

O GOD, who desire not the death of sinners, but their conversion, mercifully hear our prayers, and in your kindness be pleased to bless + these ashes which we intend to receive upon our heads, that we, who acknowledge that we are but ashes and shall return to dust, may, through a steadfast observance of Lent, gain pardon for our sins and newness of life after the likeness of your Risen Son...

The priest may use an alternative prayer of blessing. When he imposes the ashes on all who come forward, he says, Repent, and believe in the Gospel or Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Prayer over the Offerings

AS we solemnly offer the annual sacrifice for the beginning of Lent, we entreat you, O Lord, that, through works of penance and charity we may turn away from harmful pleasures and, cleansed from our sins, may become worthy to celebrate the Passion of your Son...

Preface III of Lent

...for as you will that our self-denial should give you thanks, humble our sinful pride, contribute to the feeding of the poor, and so help us to imitate you in your kindness...

Alternatively, the priest may use Preface IV of Lent:

...for through bodily fasting you restrain our thoughts, raise up our minds, and bestow both virtue and its rewards...

Prayer after Communion

MAY the Sacrament we have received sustain us, O Lord, that our Lenten fast may be pleasing to you and be for us a healing remedy...

Prayer over the People

POUR out a spirit of compunction, O Lord, on those who bow before your majesty, and by your mercy may they merit the rewards you promise to those who do penance...





22nd February First Sunday of Lent

Our companion through Lent

'IN the beginning' – that is, in the Book of Genesis – we learn of 'Man's first disobedience': his fall from

grace when Adam and Eve act independently of their Creator. But today's First Reading comes from later in Genesis, where we hear of God's great covenant with Noah after the Flood. That covenant assures us of God's continuing care for his people, come what may. In the Second Reading, St Peter, the rock on which the Church is founded, refers to the days of Noah, to God's great patience. He points to the power of Christ's resurrection, freely given to all the baptised.

With the covenant and the resurrection in mind, we hear from Mark's Gospel the short account of Christ's temptation. Hebrews 4: 15 says, '... We have one [Our Lord Jesus Christ] who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.' Christ is one with us. He lived a fully human life among us. If we ask him, he will accompany us throughout Lent. Indeed, he will accompany us throughout our whole life, so that in due time we may attain the joy of our own resurrection.

Collect

GRANT, almighty God, through the yearly observance of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ, and by worthy conduct pursue their effects...

Readings: Genesis 9: 8-15. Psalm 24: 4-9. Response: Your ways, O Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant. 1 Peter 3: 18-22.

Gospel acclamation: Praise be to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory! Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Gospel: Mark 1: 12-15

Prayer over the Offerings

GIVE us the right dispositions, O Lord, we pray, to make these offerings, for with them we celebrate the beginning of this venerable and sacred time...

Preface

...By abstaining forty long days from earthly food, he consecrated through his fast the pattern of our Lenten observance, and, by overturning all the snares of the ancient serpent, taught us to cast out the leaven of malice, so that, celebrating the Paschal Mystery, we might pass over at last to the eternal paschal feast...

Prayer after Communion

MAY bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray, come down upon your people, that hope may grow in tribulation, virtue be strengthened in temptation, and eternal redemption be assured...

Prayer over the People

MAY bountiful blessing, O Lord, we pray, come down upon your people, that hope may grow in tribulation, virtue be strengthened in temptation, and eternal redemption be assured...

1st March Second Sunday of Lent

'My Son, the Beloved'

AT TOBASKI, the Muslim community gives thanks for Abraham's faith and obedience, recounted in the Qu'ran, in being ready to sacrifice own son.

An earlier account of Abraham's exemplary trust in God is given in today's First Reading, from Genesis.

In the Second Reading, St Paul reminds the Romans that God himself 'did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us'. From Mark's Gospel comes an account of one of the most remarkable events in Christ's ministry. Having taken Peter, James and John with him up a high mountain, Jesus is transformed - 'transfigured'. He talks with Moses and Elijah. Then the voice of God himself is heard: 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!'

During Lent we seek to deepen our faith. At the heart of the faith is an insistence that Jesus Christ is indeed God's Only-Begotten Son, true God and true man. Were this not so, Jesus' death on Calvary could not have redeemed mankind. But because he is God, his unique sacrificial death has opened the gate of paradise for us all. So we must indeed listen to him.

Collect

O GOD, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory...

Readings: Genesis 21: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18. Psalm 115: 10, 15-19. I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living. Romans 8: 31-34.

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! From the bright cloud, the Father's voice was heard: 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!'

Gospel: John 13-25.

Prayer over the Offerings

MAY this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, cleanse us of our faults, and sanctify your faithful in body and mind for the celebration of the paschal festivities....

Preface

...for after he had told his disciples of his coming Death, on the holy mountain he manifested to them his glory, even to show by the testimony of the law and the prophets, that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection...

Prayer after Communion

AS we receive these glorious mysteries, we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for allowing us while still on earth to be partakers even now of the things of heaven...

Prayer over the People

Bless your faithful, we pray, O Lord, with a blessing that endures for ever, and keep them faithful to the Gospel of your Only Begotten Son, so that they may always desire and at last attain that beauty he showed in his own body to the amazement of his Apostles....



8th March
Third Sunday of Lent
God has shown us the way

OUR religion is a revealed one, given to us by God himself. Human reason, seeking God, can only get so far. God has met our search for him by his self-revelation in the Scriptures and through the Holy Spirit in the Church.

To Moses the Lord God gave the Ten Commandments. They have never been abrogated: they are still in force. Christ declares: 'Do not think I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one stroke or letter will pass from the law.' (Matthew 5: 17-18) When Jesus visits the Temple in Jerusalem and drives out the stall-keepers, he quotes from Holy Scripture.

God's loving wisdom, St Paul tells us, has been made known – has been revealed – through the crucified Christ. As we learnt last Sunday: 'This is my Son, the beloved. Listen to him!'

Collect

O GOD, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come...

Readings: 2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23. Psalm 136: 1-6.
Response: O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not! Ephesians: 2: 4-10.

Alternative readings: see box on the next page.

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son; everyone who believes in him has eternal life.

Gospel: John 3: 1-14

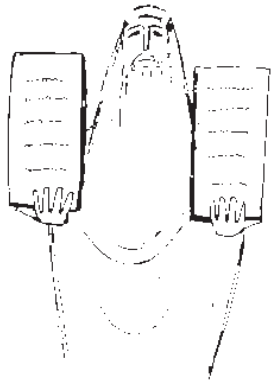
Prayer over the Offerings

WE place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world...

Preface: the priest may use either Preface I or Preface II of Lent (see box below)

Prayer after Communion

O GOD, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world, illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendour of



your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty and love you in all sincerity...

Prayer over the People

LOOK upon those who call to you, O Lord, and sustain the weak; give life to those who walk in the shadow of death, and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil to reach the highest good...

15th March
Fourth Sunday of Lent
Alive with Christ

Instead of violet, rose-coloured vestments may be used on this day, which is known as Lætare Sunday - from the Introit, which begins Lætare, Jerusalem (Rejoice, Jerusalem).

FOR the people of Israel, no structure on earth could compare with the Temple in Jerusalem, originally built about 968 BC by King Solomon. Of the Temple, God himself had declared, 'My name shall be there.' But the Israelites' continued unfaithfulness had resulted, they believed, in the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar. Seventy years later, some Israelites were able to return from captivity to rebuild the Temple (as a much simpler building).



At the time of Jesus, this second Temple was being rebuilt, more magnificently, by King Herod. The Gospels tell us that, while in Jerusalem, Jesus taught in the Temple every day, and healed people there.

But the Temple, however magnificent, was only a building. When Jesus' disciples spoke in wonder at it, Jesus replied, 'Do you see those great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down (Mark 13: 1). Jesus was foretelling the final destruction of the Temple in AD 70 (and it has never been rebuilt).

In contrast to this transient earthly glory, Jesus tells his disciples in today's Gospel reading that in his great love God has given his only Son, and that those who believe in him will not perish [like the Temple] but will have eternal life.

St Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians (today's Second Reading) reminds them - and us - that God's great love is a free gift; God has 'made us alive together with Christ'.

At his trial, Jesus was accused of declaring: 'I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will make another, not made with hands.'

We are approaching Easter, feast of new and eternal life, when Christ shows us what he means. 'We know,' says

Prefaces for 3rd to 5th Sundays of Lent

Preface I: ...for by your gracious gift each year your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts with the joy of minds made pure, so that, more eagerly intent on prayer and on the works of charity, and participating in the mysteries by which they have been reborn, they may be led to the fullness of grace that you bestow on your sons and daughters...

Preface II: ...for you have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying of their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure...

St Paul, 'that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' (2 Corinthians 5: 1)

Collect

O GOD, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come...

Readings: 2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23. Psalm 136: 1-6.

Response: O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not! Ephesians 2: 4-10.

Alternative readings: see box below

Gospel acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ! God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son; everyone who believes in him has eternal life.

Gospel: John 3: 14-21

Prayer over the Offerings

WE place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world...

Preface: *the priest may use either Preface I or Preface II of Lent (see box on page 19)*

Prayer after Communion

O GOD, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world. Illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendour of your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty and love you in all sincerity...

Prayer over the People

LOOK upon those who call to you, O Lord, and sustain the weak; give life by your unfailing light to those who walk in the shadow of death, and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil to reach the highest good...

22nd March Fifth Sunday of Lent

The pain and the glory



From this day until the Easter Vigil (Saturday 4th April) it is customary that crosses, statues and pictures are veiled.

THE FIFTH Sunday of Lent is traditionally the time when we Lenten pilgrims turn our faces resolutely, like Christ, towards Jerusalem, place of passion and glory for all mankind.

The First Reading, from Jeremiah, sets the mood: 'I will make a new covenant... I will put my law within them, and I write it on their hearts... They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.' This 'new covenant' is the covenant in Christ's blood, shed on Calvary, which Hebrews proclaims is 'the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.'

Shortly before the death he knows he must undergo, Jesus declares: The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.' This word, 'glorified' may puzzle us, because what awaits Christ is mockery, humiliation, public disgrace, extreme pain and a horrendous death. Yet Jesus possesses divine glory for all eternity. While on earth, this glory is veiled, showing only in his miracles and in the Transfiguration. Now, through his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus will be glorified – in his body also – as he returns to the Father.

Our own sufferings are nothing compared to those of Jesus. His cross and resurrection embraces us all. Through his incarnation, his teaching, his saving deeds in Judea and Galilee, his death on the cross and his resurrection, Christ is the conqueror of death and Lord of all creation.

Collect

BY your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death...

Readings: Jeremiah 31: 31-34. Psalm 50: 3-4, 12-15. Response: A pure heart create for me, O God. Hebrews 5: 7-9.

Alternative readings: see box below

Gospel acclamation: God to you, O Christ! You are the Word of God! If a man serves me, says the Lord, he must follow me; wherever I am, my servant will be there, too.

Gospel: John 12: 20-30.

Prayer over the Offerings

HEAR us, almighty God, and, having installed in your servants the teachings of the Christian faith, graciously purify them by the working of this sacrifice...

Preface: *the priest may use either Preface I or Preface II of Lent (see box on page 19)*

Prayer after Communion

WE pray, almighty God, that we may always be counted among the members of Christ, in whose Body and Blood we have communion...

Prayer over the People

BLESS, O Lord, your people who long for the gift of your mercy, and grant that what at your prompting they desire, they may receive by your generous gift...

Alternative readings for the Third, Fourth & Fifth Sundays of Lent

ON Sunday 8th, Sunday 16th and Sunday 22nd March the readings for Year B may be replaced by the Readings for Year A, as follows:

Sunday 8th: Exodus 17: 3-7. Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9. Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8. John 4: 5-42.

Sunday 15th: 1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-7, 10-13. Psalm 23: 1-6. Ephesians 5: 8-14. John 9: 1-41.

Sunday 22nd: Ezekiel 37: 12-14. Psalm 130: 1-8. Romans 8: 8-11. John 11: 1-45.

These readings are traditionally used in the preparation of candidates for baptism and confirmation at Easter Time. Each of these Sundays in Year A has its own Preface.

Gambian Christian anniversaries

February and March

85 years ago

On 10th February 1930, the Catholic Boys' Secondary School in Hagan Street Banjul was officially opened. As far back as 1918, the Superior, Fr John Meehan, had spoken of the need for a secondary school, and with the arrival of an English priest, Fr Harold Whiteside, in November 1926, planning began. In 1928 work was started to add a second storey to the boys' elementary school, enabling the secondary school to be established. Oral tradition has it that Fr Meehan kept the building of the school a secret from the Vicar-General of Senegambia, Mgr Augustus Grimault, fearing that permission would not be granted, and that the money he had saved for the building would be taken from him. But in October 1931 the Banjul Mission was to become *sui juris* - self-governing - and free of supervision from Dakar.



Fr John Meehan in later years

10th February 1876: Departure for Senegal of Fr Lacombe, who had spent 12 years in The Gambia, ten of them as Superior.

19th March 1886: Death aged 47 of Brother Florentine Matthews, who had taught at the boys' school in Banjul for 23 years.

24th March 1911: Death in Dakar from yellow fever of Brother André, who worked in the boys' school in Banjul with the Superior, Fr John Meehan.



15th March 1914: Consecration of the rebuilt church in Hagan Street Banjul by Bishop Hyacinth Jalabert.

11th March 1934: Fr Harold Whiteside celebrated the first Mass in Old Jeshwang in a hut used for catechism classes.

2nd February 1947: Ordination as Anglican deacon of the Revd John Colley Faye, who served on the Legislative Council and the Executive Council from 1947 to 1957.

18th February 1947: Opening of the Convent at Basse with Sr Lawrence and Sr Brigid in charge of the school.

6th February 1949: Fr Matthew Farelly, Superior, celebrated the first Mass in Lamin, outdoors.

20th February 1955 (60 years ago): Marriage at St Cuthbert's Anglican Church Basse of David Jawara (later, President of The Gambia) and Augusta Hannah Mahoney.

8th March 1955 (60 years ago): Opening of the primary school in Sambang, Upper River Region.

26th February 1959: Arrival of Fr Geoghegan and Fr Thomas Tarmey.

10th February 1960: Arrival of Fr Sean Little.

End of February 1962: Completion of the Cathedral tower.

16th March 1966: In response to liturgical reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council, the high altar in the Cathedral was moved forward so that Mass could be celebrated facing the people.

During February 1975 (40 years ago): Fr Michael Flynn became Parish Priest at Star of the Sea Bakau. He was the first District Superior of the Spiritans to live in the priests' house at Bakau.

5th February 1976: The House of Representatives registered the constitution of the St Anthony of Padua Society. Its predecessor, the St Anthony of Padua Friendly Society, had been founded in 1907.

24th-27th February 1979: Bishop Moloney hosted the Bishops' Conference of The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

27th March 1979: Alhaji Ousman Semega-Janneh presented his credentials to Pope St John Paul II as The Gambia's first Ambassador to the Holy See.

29th February 1980 (35 years ago): Archbishop Johannes Dyba presented his credentials to President Jawara as first Papal Nuncio to The Gambia.

4th February 1981: Funeral at Wesley Church Banjul of Augusta Mahoney, former wife of President Jawara.

15th February 1981: It was announced that Fr Michael Cleary was to become Second Bishop of Banjul in succession to Bishop Michael Moloney, who had resigned owing to ill-health the previous year.

25th March 1981, Feast of the Annunciation: Episcopal Ordination at St Augustine's High School of Bishop Michael Cleary.

23rd February 1992: Visit of Pope St John Paul II to The Gambia

28th February 1996: Death of Fr James White.

27th March 1997: Opening of St Joseph's Church Jarjil.

31st March 2001: Death in Britain of Sir John Paul, last Governor and first Governor-General of The Gambia.

2nd February 2008: Death of Fr Myles Fay CSSp at Kimmage, Dublin.

2nd March 2009: A group of young Piarist priests from Senegal met at GPI as part of their *formation permanente*. The Piarists work in Dakar, Oussouye and Sokone.

17th January 2010 (five years ago): Blessed Sacrament Kanifing became an independent parish, with Fr Peter S. Lopez as first Parish Priest.

Early February 2010: Fr Sean Devereux was released from Beaumont Hospital Dublin, having been invalided to Ireland suffering from schistosomiasis (bilharzia).

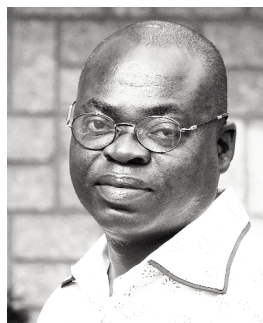
8th March 2010: Death of Dr Samuel Palmer, retired physician, founder with Dr Lenrie Peters of Westfield Clinic. His funeral at the Anglican Cathedral on 12th March was attended by his close friend, Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary, and by Bishop Robert Ellison and other Catholic clergy.



During February 2012: Fr Tommy Conray, Chaplain of Gorey Community School, Ireland, paid his tenth annual fortnight's visit to The Gambia, accompanied by a group of pupils.

3rd February 2013: Fr Pius Gidi (*right*) and his parishioners celebrated the 8th anniversary of Holy Cross Church Brusibi.

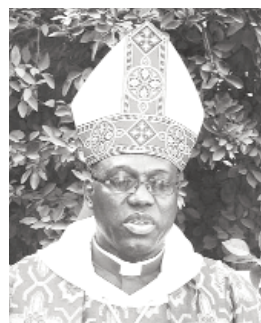
1st March 2013: Fr Joseph Gough, Principal of St Augustine's High School Banjul in the late 70s and early 80s, finally left after a series of long annual visits, during which he had given substantial aid to sports endeavours in this country.



21st February 2014: Funeral at the Independence Stadium Bakau of the Most Revd Tilewa Johnson, Bishop of Gambia and Archbishop of the Anglican Province of West Africa (*right*) who had died suddenly on 22nd January.

2nd March 2014: Celebration at Kunkujang Mariama of the golden jubilee as priest of Fr John Sharpe CSSp.

24th February - 2nd March 2014: Fr Peter S. Lopez, Director of GPI, attended a meeting in Rome of *Signis*, the Catholic lay organisation for professionals working in radio, television and other media.



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Question Box

I have a friend, brought up in a Catholic family, who no longer attends Mass because she says she's not sure what she believes, and would feel a hypocrite joining in the Creed and saying amen to various prayers.

What advice or help I can give her?

You should most certainly pray for her. But unless she asks for help or advice it may not be easy to give it. Here, though, are some considerations that you and she may find helpful.

Our age is increasingly secular. We need to deepen our own faith, support each other in the faith, and reach out in due humility to those who lack or have lost faith.

Why has your particular friend drifted away from the Church? How much - truly - would she like to come back?

Every Sunday Mass is attended by people of varying temperaments - a 'mixed bag'. Some of those present are truly close to Our Lord - some may be saints, because Christ is the very centre of their existence. Others are decent Christians whose faith is at least a major factor in their lives. Yet others are not always conscious of God, and don't always say daily prayers, but think they ought, at least, to come to Mass.

For others, the Mass may be a 'cultural thing' - a badge of their particular place in society.

Others come to Mass when they're in the mood, and don't worry if they have other things to do on a Sunday. Yet others only come when it's a 'high-day' in the Church such as Christmas, Easter or Sang Marie.

But the Church welcomes everyone, and your friend will be by no means alone if she has doubts or reservations about the faith.

She should obviously not receive Holy Communion, but if at heart she would like to return fully to Christ and his Church, she can at least say the prayer, 'I believe; help my unbelief.' (Mark 9: 24). 'Even others, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has power to graft them in again.' (Romans 11: 23)

In his ministry, Christ was open to people of all temperaments and degrees of faith. He transformed many lives. That transformation can be ours today, if we want it and ask for it.

Our Lord knows each of us intimately - our own failings, our own needs and particular circumstances; and he will bring us back in his own way, if only we seek him and invite his friendship.

Reminder

MANY Catholics who have been careless about regular attendance at Sunday Mass may wish to make a fresh start this Lent. For them, and for others, here's a reminder.

To remain in good standing in the Church, all Catholics should take part in the Mass every Sunday and all Holydays of Obligation.

Everyone - Catholic or otherwise - is welcome to attend Mass.

But Holy Communion may be received only by Catholics, and they must be in a state of grace.

If you are aware of any grave sin you must make confession before a priest and receive absolution. Then you may receive Holy Communion in good faith and with joy.



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CHILDREN'S PAGE

Jesus in the desert

HERE IS A PICTURE
FOR YOU TO COLOUR



After his baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert. There he fasted for forty nights and forty days and was tempted by the devil.

He was strong. He did not give in to any temptations of the devil.

Forty-one years of women's endeavour

ST MARTHA'S Society was founded in 1973 by Adele Faye-Njie with the aim of bringing together Catholic women regardless of race or tribe, and to empower them.

From the first, the society encouraged members to develop their creative abilities and to appreciate women's pivotal role in the development of this country.

St Martha's supports the Catholic Church in all its undertakings and seeks to arouse interest in the development of the Catholic community by promoting understanding, friendliness, initiative and co-operation.

In addition, the society encourages the full and proper use of local crops and materials, and helps women use their limited leisure-time productively.

Beginning in Banjul...

St Martha's Society started with a few women in the Cathedral Parish, Banjul. Later, as the exodus into the Kombos gathered momentum, members opened other branches. Today there are branches in the parishes of St Therese Kanifing, St Charles Lwanga Fajikunda; Good Shepherd Farato, and in Yuna.

St Martha's began by identifying needs at the Cathedral. There were many. The society selected a few of them. A fund-raising dinner and dance enabled the society to buy a stand-fan for the sanctuary and another for the office of the Administrator.

When thieves broke into the Cathedral and stole the clock, and later emptied the poor-box, St Martha's engaged the first watchman, and paid his wages for over ten years.

For many years the society organised catering for big events such as ordinations.

Members were encouraged to take up the reading and study of Scripture, and some became competent as lecturers at Mass.

St Martha's has always helped young men and women heading for the priesthood or the religious life. Members serve in the Vocations Committee, and others visit the seminary and religious houses to offer encouragement.

In the Holy Year 1975, St Martha's sponsored a member, Maria Carvalho (now Mrs Benka-Davies) to take part in a Catholic pilgrimage to Rome.

From small beginnings, St Martha's has forged ahead with projects to benefit all women.

In 1992 at Lamin, with the help of Mrs Faye-Njie, the society introduced an animal husbandry project for market-women. Farming, food processing and preservation were to have played a major part. But unfortunately, due to interference by a local politician, the project was brought to a halt.

St Martha's Skill Centre

In 1974-75 the society opened a branch in Fajikunda. After identifying local needs, the society selected leaders from among Church women, notably Madeline Boisse-Goddard, Marian Gomez and Agnes Kenny. The church had not then been built, and Masses were celebrated in a classroom.

Mrs Boisse-Goddard gave selfless service by visiting young women and girls at home to tell them about St Martha's. Starting in a small way, the society taught simple skills with the aim of helping those who were semi-literate to become more literate, and the illiterate to acquire literacy.



St Martha's Skills Centre began under mango trees. The primary school and Mrs Boisse-Goddard's compound were used to show women how to prepare weaning food and how to wean gradually. Those taking part learnt how to make doughnuts, preserve fruit and vegetables, and prepare simple meals. Jeanette Mbinky gave a group free tuition in needlework.

After the church was built, around 1985, Sr Marcelline of the Marist Congregation offered help. She taught women how to adapt used clothing into clothes suitable for young girls. She also taught embroidery, which attracted young women who were not members of St Martha's.

Fr Francis Tandoh was impressed with the society's work in the parish and offered the use of the sacristy as a classroom. In 1989 the centre moved to new classrooms built with funds provided by Canadians, facilitated by Sr Elizabeth, another Marist Sister.

Recognising the society's need of better accommodation, the Catholic Mission agreed that we should move to St Charles Lwanga Lower Basic School. Funding to build the new centre there was provided by Catholic Relief Services.

The centre is now one of the best-known in the country, having trained countless girls and young women. Some are gainfully employed - for instance, in hotels and catering - while others have set up their own small enterprises.

The Skills Centre needed to expand, and a couple of years ago, with the help of the Marist Sisters, the society was fortunate to receive overseas funding. The new big hall is known as 'Bantaba'.

Contacts abroad

In 1975 the Gambia Women's Federation, then headed by the late Cecilia Cole, sponsored four members to represent The Gambia at the first meeting of the International Women's Year in Denmark. Among the four were two members of St Martha's - Adele Faye-Njie and Judith Sarr (née Fye). The other two were Mary Langley and Elizabeth Abie Forde.

In 1989 Mrs Sarr represented St Martha's at a conference of Catholic women in Onitsha, South-Eastern Nigeria. The trip was part-funded by the Diocesan Secretariat, thanks to Bishop Michael Cleary.

In 1991 a St Martha's member, Marian V. Gomez, was nominated to take part in a training course for entrepreneurs.

The following year, Adele Faye-Njie and Madeline Jallow were invited by the International Labour Organisation to participate a local women teachers' workshop on food preservation.

Via Crucis – the Way of the Cross

DURING Lent, most parishes arrange for the devotion known as Stations of the Cross to be performed every Friday. This is well-attended on the first Friday, but numbers tend to fall off as Lent progresses. This is surprising, because one might suppose that as Good Friday approaches, devotion to our suffering Lord would intensify.

To encourage participation in the Stations, here is information about the origin of the devotion and how it is carried out.

THE STATIONS of the Cross are pictures, carvings or statues depicting Christ carrying his cross to his crucifixion. They are placed round the inside walls of a church or along a road leading to a church or shrine. At each station it is customary to meditate on the event represented.

The stations may be followed by individuals or groups at any time, but especially on Fridays and during Lent.

The Via Crucis (the Way of the Cross) or Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrows) was fostered by the Franciscans, guardians of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, as a simulation of the Via Dolorosa, the route followed by Jesus on his way to his crucifixion.

In the 15th century the Franciscans began to build outdoor stations in Europe to resemble those in the Holy Land. In 1686 Pope Innocent XI granted the Franciscans the right to erect stations inside their churches. In 1731 Pope Clement XII extended to all churches the right to have the stations, provided that a Franciscan father erected them with the consent of the local bishop. At the same time, the number of stations was fixed at fourteen. In 1857 the bishops of England were allowed to erect the stations without the intervention of a Franciscan priest, and in 1862 this right was extended to bishops throughout the Church.

The stations must consist of at least fourteen wooden crosses (pictures alone do not suffice), blessed by someone with the authority to erect stations.

The Stations as traditionally performed



1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. Jesus carries his cross
3. Jesus falls the first time
4. Jesus meets his mother
5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls the second time
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls the third time
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross
12. Jesus dies on the cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

Customary prayers

The devotion begins with an Act of Contrition:

O MY God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace I will not sin again.

Before each station:

V We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you
Adoremus te, Christe. Et benedicimus tibi

R Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world
Quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum

After meditation at each station:

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

V Have mercy on us, O Lord
Miserere nostri, Domine

R Have mercy
Miserere nostri

May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Fidelium animae, per misericordiam Dei, requiescant in pace. Amen.

On the way to the next station, a verse of a hymn, eg, the Stabat Mater, is customarily sung.

The Scriptural Way of the Cross

Of the fourteen traditional stations, only eight have clear scriptural foundation. Stations 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 are not specifically attested to in the Gospels. In particular, no evidence exists of Station 6 (Veronica) being known before mediæval times. Station 13 (Jesus' body being taken from down from the cross and laid in his mother's arms) seems to embellish the Gospel record, which simply says that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus down from the cross and buried him.

On Good Friday 1991 Pope St John Paul II introduced a form of the Stations called the Scriptural Way of the Cross, a version more closely aligned with Biblical accounts. He celebrated this form many times. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI approved St John Paul's alternative set of stations for meditation and public celebration.

1. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested
3. Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin
4. Jesus is denied by Peter
5. Jesus is judged by Pilate
6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns
7. Jesus takes up his cross
8. Jesus is helped by Simon to carry his cross
9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
10. Jesus is crucified
11. Jesus promises his kingdom to the repentant thief
12. Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other
13. Jesus dies on the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb

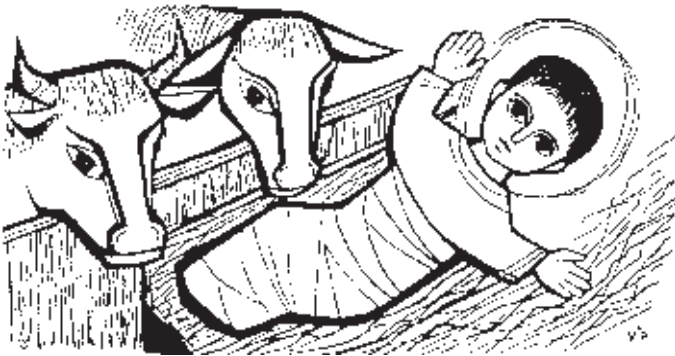




THE BISHOP OF BANJUL'S MESSAGES FOR CHRISTMAS 2014 AND NEW YEAR 2015

Bow in silent adoration

The message of Bishop ROBERT ELLISON for Christmas 2014



THE CHRISTMAS story has been told in various ways. The story as given to us by St Luke is probably the most familiar. Jesus was born when the Roman Emperor, Cæsar Augustus, ruled the world.

Jesus was born in a stable on a hillside outside the town of Bethlehem because there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn.

Rooted in history

Luke tells us when and where Jesus was born. In other words, the coming of God on earth as man was firmly rooted by Luke in world history. It happened in the silence of a cold night. An angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds and told them: 'I bring you news of great joy; today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Then they heard a choir of angels praising God and singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among men of goodwill." With that, the shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. It was exactly as they had been told by the angel.'

St John and the Word made flesh

St John gives us a very different account about the Jesus of Nazareth whom he had first met on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. He doesn't give us any details about when or where Jesus was born. Instead, he wants to tell us 'something' very special about this child who was born in Bethlehem. We believe in it as the 'mystery' of the Incarnation.

John opens the message of his First Letter in this way: 'Something...we have heard and seen with our eyes, which we have watched and touched with our hands, the Word of life. That life was made visible; we saw it and are giving our testimony... so that you too may be in union with us, as we

are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1: 1-3). It is very similar to the opening of his Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh'.

In the Bible, the word 'flesh' refers to the weaknesses of our human nature. But we also have a soul or a 'spirit' in that we are created in the image and likeness of God our Creator. Remember the words Jesus spoke to his disciples at the Agony in the Garden: 'The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.' When God became man, he took on our human nature (flesh) while still remaining a divine Person.

'The Word of life'

John spent the latter years of his life as an exile on a Greek island called Patmos. I try to picture John as he wrote those words: 'something' we have heard, seen, watched and touched with our hands – the Word of life. That life was made visible. John was not only one of the twelve apostles. He was also one of the special three often chosen by Jesus (Peter, James and John). Then he was also known as the 'beloved disciple'. As such, it seems he had a special closeness or relation with Jesus among the twelve. In the solitude of his surroundings on the island where he lived, he must have pondered over and over again his experiences as a first-hand witness to the life of the Master: his words and his example. There, he fully became convinced that this man Jesus of Nazareth was more than just a man. In other words, the Child born in Bethlehem on that first Christmas night was both the Son of God and the son of Mary.

The Word that was with God since the beginning of time was also the Word made flesh. John wanted to clarify this teaching because some members of the young Christian churches he had founded were led astray by false teachers who denied the mystery of the Incarnation - that is, that Jesus had both a human as well as a divine nature.

The first crib

The Christmas story has also been told without the use of any words! I refer to the Christmas crib – the initiative of St Francis of Assisi. How appropriate; he also taught his companions: 'Preach the Good News at all time; if necessary, use words!' As the proverb says: 'example speaks louder than words'.

St Francis assembled the first crib in a cave on the side of a mountain in the year 1223. A large crowd of local people came

to take part in the ceremony of the first crib. An image of the Christ child lying in a manger of straw and two live animals - an ox and a donkey - were its only occupants.

The idea of the crib was to help Christians to imagine the scene of Jesus' birth on that first Christmas. In this way, the story of his birth would become more vivid or alive to the minds and the hearts of the farmers and the shepherds who lived in the nearby village of Greccio. One of St Francis' companions wrote an account of his experiences that night: 'Simplicity was honoured; poverty was exalted; humility was praised.'



Christ child, we gaze in wonder at the mystery that confronts us: heaven is joined to earth and earth to heaven. The son of

Heaven joined to earth, and earth to heaven

Today, Christians all over the world have followed the example of St Francis. Cribs have been assembled both in churches and homes. We might call him the 'genius of simplicity'. Looking at the tiny figure of the

Mary, a helpless child, is also the Son of God. Emmanuel - God is with us.

We can also go back to the message of St John: 'something' we have heard and seen with our eyes; which we watched and touched with our hands - the Word of Life. And that Word was made visible; and we are telling you so that you can be in union with us as we are with God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son.

What can we do? There is just one thing: take time to visit a crib (at home or in Church) during the twelve days of Christmas. Other than that, just bow down in adoration and marvel at the mystery of God becoming man. Yes, just bow down in silence - no need to say anything or do anything.

Listen in your heart to the angels singing: 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace among men of goodwill.' And remember those words: 'Simplicity was honoured; poverty was exalted; and humility was praised.'

*Yalla, sunyu Borom, nyungi la gerem ngir sa dom Yesu
Krista, ki di fengyal sa har kanam chi nyun.*

*You, Yalla Borom yermade, mi nyu wotu sasu nyu sone te
new dole. Sunyu reyrey, nga ut nyu be gis nyu,
te fehal sunyu hol.*

*Nanyu Yesu Bur I jama ji dimali, ndah nyu sahal jama chi
sunnyu bir hol, chi bir sunyu njobot,
chi sunyu reu ak chi bir aduna si sepa. Amin*

Caring for our God-given world and for each other

The message of Bishop ROBERT ELLISON for New Year 2015

THE FIRST day of the New Year has been set aside as World Day of Peace. Looking back at the year 2014, we could ask ourselves if we have sincerely prayed for peace. We have witnessed some horrible atrocities and violence across our world over the past twelve months.

'Blessed are the peace-makers: they shall be called the children of God'. Note that Jesus uses the word 'peace-maker' when speaking to his disciples and not 'peace-keeper'. Yes, let us pray constantly for peace. But praying for peace without some action is not enough. We are called to be peace-makers as well.

Contradiction?

Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper: 'Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give..' But he also told his disciples: 'Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on, a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; father against son, son against father...'

How are we to understand these two opposing statements about peace?

When Jesus was presented in the Temple as a child, Simeon said to Mary: 'This child is destined to be a sign of contradiction.' And so it was.

Peace without justice will fail; justice without truth will also

fail. And truth is something we treasure so much, yet find it so difficult to accept.

'What is truth?'

Jesus told Pilate that he had come simply to bear witness to the truth. This left Pilate speechless. He could say no more, except to ask: 'What is truth?' Then he turned away and said to the Jews: 'I find no case against him.'

In his heart, Pilate knew the truth. In fact, he was afraid to follow his conscience. At that moment, the prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled, and an innocent man was denied justice.

God wants us to enjoy that gift of peace which the world cannot give. But it is costly, and can cause division among communities, families and nations.

A short time ago two members of our Catholic community, both women, stood up to give witness to the truth of their faith in Jesus the Lord and did so in very difficult circumstances. They spoke the truth as a matter of justice. Only then could there be peace. We are proud of them. May God bless and protect them always.

Climate and the environment

Climate change often means less rainfall. Less rainfall often means crop failure. And that is when people begin to starve. This was a warning given by the Kenyan bishops' Justice & Peace commission as world leaders gathered (yet again!) last

September to discuss the need to protect our environment from further disaster.

Uncertainty

In The Gambia we are only too aware of the uncertainty of our annual rainfall. The year 2014 has been a very poor year in most parts of the country. I had first-hand experience in November, when I saw crops like millet and couscous completely parched and destroyed due to the drought. These crops belonged to the people of a village



called Jalokoto, about 15 kilometres from Bansang on the north bank of the river.

An elder from the small Christian community begged me for some help for his people. He knew that they would have nothing to eat until the next rains – if they come in plenty.

This is only one village among so many in the same situation. Nevertheless, I believe that we should try to give some small help even to one village instead of doing nothing at all.

Jesus worked that miracle of the loaves when a boy gave up his five loaves and two fish to feed a crowd of three thousand people. There is little we can do to reverse climate change; but we can help to offset its effects by helping those who are most vulnerable.

Two scientists have been working hard to find some way to speed up the urgent need to turn deserts into green pastures. This is their conclusion: the most promising way to achieve this would be by the example and pressure from leading religious institutions.

How true? This is a serious religious issue, a matter of faith. For the destruction of our environment is a form of sacrilege, especially when the damage done to God's bountiful creation is wilful.

God made man in his image and likeness and made him responsible for the gifts of the earth which he entrusted to us as faithful stewards.

Creator God, teach us to conserve, to preserve and to use wisely the manifold treasures of our wealth-stored earth.

Teach us, Lord, to respect the work of your creation. Help us to share your bounty, not to waste it or pervert it; and then we can live in peace with each other.

A life worth remembering

I was fortunate to be invited to the launching of a book entitled, 'The Very Reverend J.C. Faye: His Life and Times'.

The book was written for two reasons.

Firstly, as a record of the numerous ways in which J.C. Faye contributed to his country,



especially as his life spanned the transition of The Gambia

from colony to independence.

In this respect he managed to integrate three distinct roles: in education, in politics and as a pastor of the Anglican Communion in The Gambia.

Secondly, the book was written so that posterity could learn from J.C. Faye's experiences, benefit from the virtues and values he cherished, and learn from his guidance to shape our own lives for the common good of our nation.

Vision

I have bought this book and begun reading it. Even though I knew J.C. Faye to some extent in his later years as an Anglican priest, I had no idea of his earlier life - its successes and its disappointments. He was gifted with a vision of a way forward for his country as it moved towards independence.

Education was for him a key factor in implementing this vision. And he gave many years of his life contributing to education in a rural part of the URR near Fatoto. Human and financial resources were so sparse that he willingly contributed from his own personal needs.

Prophets and charismatics are rarely appreciated among the leaders of any institution, civil or religious. The fruits of their work often take time to mature. It is said we should never judge ourselves by the successes we have made, but rather by the seeds that we have sown for the future.

Compare the extent of education as we know it in our country today as it was at the time of Fr J.C. Faye. 'Remember your leaders' (Hebrews: 13:7).

Challenges for 2015

We move into a New Year 2015 aware of some serious handicaps: hunger due to poor rainfall in 2014, especially in the rural areas; and a shortage of tourists due to fear of the ebola virus in countries around us.

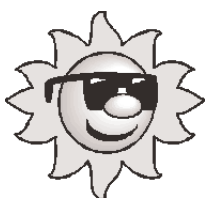
If we could turn our eyes and hearts to our National Anthem, I believe it could be a good 'prescription' to motivate our nation, irrespective of religious, tribal, political or social status, to work together as one human family, with food for all.



For The Gambia, our homeland,
We strive and work and pray,
That all may live in unity,
Freedom and peace each day.
Let justice guide our actions
Towards the common good,
And join our diverse peoples
To prove man's brotherhood.
We pledge our firm allegiance,
Our promise we renew;
Keep us, great God of nations,
To The Gambia ever true.

Keep up-to-date with your Diocese!

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Fee moi Gambia

Not critical enough

IN the December/January Newsletter I pointed out how foolish and dangerous some cyclists are – riding without hands on the handlebars and on the wrong side of the road, riding bikes that are too big or too small for them, using earphones while riding, and making no hand signals.

A reader says I should have also castigated cyclists who carry a passenger - even a child - on their crossbar: something certainly dangerous.

And he says I should have mentioned cyclists who don't use lights after dark, don't even wear reflective clothing.

As our roads become ever-more crowded, everyone - drivers, cyclists and pedestrians - should use them more carefully, with regard to everyone's safety.

I should add how gratifying it is to see that the authorities are working harder than ever not only to make new roads but to upgrade and maintain existing ones.

Stalwarts

THESE are difficult times: poor harvests, and many people dependent on the tourist-trade have been laid-off. Yet financial demands on the family are as critical as ever.

My heart warms to petty traders who probably make little money but are doing their best to procure a little something for their families. Most street-side traders are women who, after sitting long hours hoping for customers, make their way home to yet more work in the house.

Such people are in some sense the backbone of our society, asking for and expecting little, but doing their best for others. They are stalwart, patient and persevering.

Let's never think of them, or treat them, as 'little' people.

Coincidence

THIS YEAR'S Ash Wednesday, I see, falls on the same day as Gambian Independence Day – so that Catholics and other Christians, while rejoicing with all our citizens in this country's annual celebration of statehood, will also have to observe the fast.

Ash Wednesday will next coincide with Independence Day in 2026, and again in 2037 - by which time most of this Newsletter's readers will no doubt have gone to meet their Maker!

Keeping quiet

PUBLICITY for concerts at popular venues features glamorous photographs of the singers. They're exotically dressed and coiffured; but it appears that most – if not all – of them are male.

Have we so few popular women singers?

We're outnumbered!

I'VE been looking at a DVD of television programmes about insects and other small creatures presented by that veteran of natural history on TV, David Attenborough. (Some years ago his team came to The Gambia to gather material for documentaries on birds.)

The human population of The Gambia – and the world – is utterly insignificant in numbers compared with the zillions of insects all around us and beneath our feet. I wonder how many ants there are in my garden, and how many termites are nibbling away at my walls. Unless such tiny creatures annoy us, we take no account of them: yet were there no insects, plant-life and the life of all other creatures could not be sustained.

I have no idea how insects fit into Christian theology. If I asked a priest or some other well-schooled Christian, I wouldn't be surprised to be told, 'Does it matter?'

Yet the Psalmist often sings of God as wondrous Creator of the Earth and everything in it:

O Lord, how manifold are all your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. (Psalm 104:24)

And you probably remember Proverbs 6:6.

Go to the ant, you lazybones, consider its ways, and be wise. Without having any chief officer or ruler, the ant prepares its food in summer and gathers its sustenance in harvest...

And what about Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)?

The bee is small among flying creatures, but what it produces is the best of sweet things (Sirach 11:3)

Indeed! Where would we be without the bee...?

First and last

'I saw Stephen the other day.'

'Did you? Where was he?'

'In a bus.'

'I really can't believe that. Stephen is the last person to travel by bus. He's often said so.'

'Well, I didn't actually see Stephen. I saw his coffin. The poor man died last week, and he was being taken to the cemetery.'

'Ah, I see: Stephen's first journey by bus was also his last.'



Congratulations

to the Right Reverend Bishop Emeritus of Banjul
MICHAEL J. CLEARY CSSp
on the Thirty-Fourth Anniversary
of his Episcopal Ordination
Feast of the Annunciation, 25th March 1981

Daily Mass Readings

Sunday readings Year B Weekday readings Year 1



February & March 2015

Memorials in brackets are optional

The celebration of saints' days in brackets is optional, and limited in Lent to the use of the Collect.

On Sundays 8th, 15th & 22nd March the readings and prefaces for Year A may be used instead of those given here. See page 20

Sun 1st Feb	Deuteronomy 18: 15-20. Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9. 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35. Mark 1: 21-28	4th SUNDAY of YEAR
Mon 2nd	Malachi 3: 1-4. Psalm 24: 7-10. Hebrews 2: 14-18. Luke 2: 22-40	The PRESENTATION
Tue 3rd	Hebrews 12: 1-4. Psalm 22: 26-28, 30-32. Mark 5: 21-43	(St Blaise or St Angtar)
Wed 4th	Hebrews 12: 4-7, 11-15. Psalm 103: 1-2, 13-14, 17-18. Mark 6: 1-6	St Agatha
Thu 5th	Hebrews 12: 18-19, 21-24. Psalm 48: 2-4, 9-11. Mark 6: 7-13	St Paul Miki <i>abstinence</i>
Fri 6th	Hebrews 13: 1-8. Psalm 27: 1,3,5. 8-9. Mark 6: 14-29	(of the BVM)
Sat 7th	Hebrews 13: 15-17, 20-21. Psalm 23: 1-6. Mark 6: 30-34	
Sun 8th	Job 7: 1-4, 6-7. Psalm 147: 1-6. 1 Corinthians 9: 16-19, 22-23. Mark 1: 29-39	5th SUNDAY of YEAR
Mon 9th	Genesis 1: 1-19. Psalm 104: 1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 24, 35. Mark 6: 53-56	St Scholastica
Tue 10th	Genesis 1: 20-2: 4. Psalm 8: 4-9. Mark 7: 1-13	(Our Lady of Lourdes)
Wed 11th	Genesis 2: 4-9, 15-17. Psalm 104: 1-2, 27-30. Mark 7: 14-23	<i>abstinence</i>
Thu 12th	Genesis 2: 18-25. Psalm 128: 1-5. Mark 7: 24-30	St Cyril & St Methodius
Fri 13th	Genesis 3: 1-8. Psalm 32: 1-2, 5-7. Mark 7: 31-37	
Sat 14th	Genesis 3: 9-24. Psalm 90: 2-6, 12-13. Mark 8: 1-10	
Sun 15th	Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46. Psalm 32: 1-2, 5, 11. 1 Corinthians 10: 31 – 11: 1. Mark 1: 40-45	6th SUNDAY of YEAR
Mon 16th	Genesis 4: 1-15, 25. Psalm 50: 1, 8, 16-17, 20-1. Mark 8: 11-13	
Tue 17th	Genesis 6: 5-8; 7: 1-5, 10. Psalm 29: 1-4, 9-10. Mark 8: 14-21	(Founders of the
Servite Order)		

Lent begins

During Lent, the observance of optional saints' days [in brackets] is limited to the use of the collect

Wed 18th	Joel 2: 12-18. Psalm 51: 3-6, 12-14, 17. 2 Corinthians 5: 20 – 6: 2. Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18	ASH WEDNESDAY
Thu 19th	Deuteronomy 30: 15-20. Psalm 1: 1-4, 6. Luke 9: 22-25	
Fri 20th	Isaiah 58: 1-9. Psalm 51: 3-6, 18-19. Matthew 9: 14-15	
Sat 21st	Isaiah 58: 9-14. Psalm 86: 1-6. Luke 5: 27-32	[St Peter Damien]
Sun 22nd	Genesis 9: 8-15. Psalm 25: 4-9. 1 Peter 3: 18-22. Mark 1: 12-15	1st SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 23rd	Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18. Psalm 19: 8-10, 15. Matthew 25: 31-46	[St Polycarp]
Tue 24th	Isaiah 55: 10-11. Psalm 34: 4-7, 16-19. Matthew 6: 7-15	
Wed 26th	Jonah 3: 1-10. Psalm 51: 3-4, 12-13, 18-19. Luke 11: 29-32	
Thu 26th	Esther C: 12, 14-16, 23-25. Psalm 138: 1-3, 7-8. Matthew 7: 7-12	
Fri 27th	Exodus 18: 21-28. Psalm 130: 1-8. Matthew 5: 20-26	
Sat 28th	Deuteronomy 26: 16-19. Psalm 119: 1-2, 4-5, 7-8. Matthew 5: 43-48	
Sun 1st Mar	Genesis 22: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18. Psalm 116: 10, 15-19. Romans 8: 31-34. Mark 9: 2-10	2nd SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 2nd	Daniel 9: 4-10. Psalm 79: 8-9, 11, 13. Luke 6: 36-38	
Tue 3rd	Isaiah 1: 10, 16-10. Psalm 50: 8-9, 16-17, 21, 23. Matthew 23: 1-12	
Wed 4th	Jeremiah 18: 18-20. Psalm 31: 5-6, 13-16. Matthew 20: 17-28	[St Casimir]
Thu 5th	Jeremiah 17: 5-10. Psalm 1: 1-4, 6. Luke 16: 19-31	
Fri 6th	Genesis 37: 3-4, 12-13, 17-28. Psalm 105: 16-21. Matthew 21: 33-43, 45-46	
Sat 7th	Micah 7: 13-15, 18-20. Psalm 103: 1-4, 9-12. Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32	[St Perpetua & St Felicity]
Sun 8th	Exodus 20: 1-17. Psalm 19: 8-11 or Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9. 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25. John 2: 13-25	3rd SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 9th	2 Kings 5: 1-15. Psalm 42: 2-3; 43: 3,4. Luke 4: 23-40.	[St Frances of Rome]
Tue 10th	Daniel 3: 25, 34-43. Psalm 25: 4-9. Matthew 18: 21-35	
Wed 11th	Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9. Psalm 147: 12-13, 15-16, 19-20. Matthew 5: 17-19	
Thu 12th	Jeremiah 7: 23-28. Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9. Luke 11: 13-23	
Fri 13th	Hosea 14: 2-10. Psalm 81: 6-11, 14, 17. Mark 12: 28-34	
Sat 14th	Hosea 6: 1-6. Psalm 51: 3-4, 18-21. Luke 18: 9-14	
Sun 15th	2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23. Psalm 137: 1-6 or Psalm 23: 1-6. Ephesians 2: 4-10. John 3: 14-21; 9: 13.	4th SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 16th	Isaiah 65: 17-21. Psalm 30: 2, 4-6, 11-13. John 4: 43-54	
Tue 17th	Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12. Psalm 46: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9. John 5: 1-16	[St Patrick]
Wed 18th	Isaiah 49: 8-15. Psalm 145: 8-9, 13-14, 17-18. John 5: 17-30	[St Cyril of Jerusalem]
Thu 19th	2 Samuel 7: 4-5, 12-14, 16. Psalm 89: 2-5, 27, 29. Romans 4: 13, 16-18, 22	St JOSEPH
	Matthew 1: 16, 18-21 or Luke 2: 31-51	
Fri 20th	Wisdom 2: 1, 12-22. Psalm 34: 17-21, 23. John 7: 1-2, 10, 25-30	
Sat 21st	Jeremiah 11: 18-20. Psalm 7: 2-3, 9-12. John 7: 40-53	
Sun 22nd	Jeremiah 31: 31-34. Psalm 51: 3-4, 12-15. Hebrews 5: 7-9. John 12: 20-33	5th SUNDAY of LENT
Mon 23rd	Daniel 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62. Psalm 23: 1-6. John 8: 1-11	
Tue 24th	Numbers 21: 4-9. Psalm 102: 2-3, 16-21. John 8: 21-30	
Wed 25th	Isaiah 7: 10-14; 8: 10. Psalm 40: 7-11. Hebrews 10: 4-10. Luke 1: 26-38	The ANNUNCIATION
Thu 26th	Genesis 17: 3-9. Psalm 105: 4-9. John 8: 51-59	
Fri 27th	Jeremiah 20: 10-13. Psalm 18: 2-7. John 10: 31-42	
Sat 28th	Ezekiel 37: 21-28. Psalm Jeremiah 31: 10-13. John 11: 45-56	

29th-31st March (Palm Sunday onwards): see the Newsletter for April-May 2015

Some weekday celebrations in February & March



Monday 2nd February: The Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas)

WHEN the Feast of the Presentation falls on a weekday, it is easy to overlook it. But it is one of the Church's oldest feasts. It has several names: the Presentation of Christ in the Temple; the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Candlemas; and the Meeting. All these show how much this day has to teach us.

The Presentation has a 'bitter-sweet' nature. It marks a turning-point in the Christian calendar: a looking-back to Christmas, and a looking-forward towards Lent and the Cross.

The revelation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, greeted by Simeon and Anna, calls for rejoicing. But Simeon also speaks of the fall and rising of many, and the sword that will pierce Mary's heart: so our thoughts turn to the suffering, years ahead, awaiting Jesus and his Mother.

Today also celebrates Mary's acceptance of the Jewish law requiring mothers to come to the Temple 40 days after the birth of a child for ritual purification and the presentation of their infant (Exodus 13:12, Numbers 8: 15-17, Leviticus 12: 1-6).

Because of her Immaculate Conception, Mary had no need of purification, but her submission to the law teaches us humility and respect for tradition.

The Presentation is one of the Twelve Great Feasts in the calendar of Eastern Orthodox Christians. They call it *Hypapante tou kyriou*, 'the Meeting of the Lord'.

Today's Mass is preceded by the procession of candles, celebrating the entry into the Temple of the Child Jesus, Light of the World. We carry candles as pilgrims walking in the light of Christ, eager to associate ourselves with his life among us, and his death and resurrection.

Friday 6th February: St Paul Miki & his companions *martyrs*

PAUL Miki was born into a wealthy Japanese family and educated by Jesuits. He became a Jesuit himself and a well-known preacher, gaining numerous converts. The Japanese *daimyo*, or territorial lord, became fearful of the Jesuits' influence, and began persecuting Catholics. Miki and others were jailed, then forced to march 966 kilometres from Kyoto to Nagasaki. All the while, on their way, they sang the *Te Deum*. At Nagasaki, the city with the largest Catholic population in Japan, Miki was crucified on 5th February 1597. He preached his last sermon from the cross, forgiving his executioners. Crucified with him were Joan Soan (de Gotó) and Santiago Kisai, also of the Society of Jesus; along with 23 other clergy and laity, all of whom were canonised by Pope Pius IX in 1862.

Some three and a half centuries after the martyrdom of Paul Miki and his companions, the destruction of Nagasaki by a nuclear bomb brought about innumerable deaths and forced the end of the Second World War.



Wednesday 11th February: Our Lady of Lourdes

African pilgrims at Lourdes



UNTIL 1858, Lourdes, in south-west France, was a quiet town with a population of only 4,000. On 11th February 1858 a 14-year-old local girl, Bernadette Soubirous, claimed that 'a lady' had appeared to her in a grotto on common land used for pasturing animals, collecting firewood and dumping rubbish. It had a reputation as an unpleasant place. The vision later identified herself as 'the Immaculate Conception'. She appeared 18 times, and by 1859 thousands of pilgrims were visiting Lourdes. A statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was erected at the site in 1864.

Lourdes has become one of the world's leading Marian shrines. From March to October it receives five million pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. More than 200 million people have visited the shrine since 1860, and the Church has recognised 68 miraculous healings. Spring water from the grotto is believed to possess healing properties. Cures are examined using strict criteria for authentic healing with no physical or psychological basis other than the miraculous healing power of the water.

St John Paul II visited the shrine in August 1983 and August 2004.

Monday 23rd February: St Polycarp *martyr*

POLYCARP, Bishop of Smyrna (Izmir, present-day Turkey), was burnt alive about the year 155 because he refused to publicly curse Christ and acknowledge the Roman emperor as divine. 'I have served [Christ] for 86 years,' he declared. 'How can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?'

Tuesday 17th March: St Patrick bishop

PATRICK was born in Wales in the 390s. He was captured and taken as a slave to Ireland, but after six years escaped to Gaul (present-day France). Having been ordained, he returned to Ireland. There he founded the Diocese of Armagh and spent the rest of his life preaching the Christian faith. He is the principal patron saint of Ireland. We give thanks today for the work of Irish missionaries in this country.



Thursday 19th March: St Joseph spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

JOSEPH was the divinely-chosen husband of the Virgin Mary, with whom he lived in chastity (one of his emblems is a lily). He was a descendant of the house of David. In the Greek New Testament he is described as a *teckton* (craftsman), usually translated as 'carpenter'. Because Joseph was so close to his foster-child Jesus, practising the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience, he is an example to all, and especially to members of religious orders.

On this day we pray for the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy, who for many years have offered devoted prayer and service to the Diocese of Banjul.

Wednesday 25th March: The Annunciation of the Lord

THE SOLEMNITY of the Annunciation commemorates the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary, to seek her acceptance of God's will, that she should bear his incarnate Son, the Saviour of all mankind (Luke 1: 26-38). Of all Gospel stories, none has been more often depicted by artists throughout the centuries. It may seem odd that this lovely feast should often fall in Lent, the Church's foremost season of penance. Yet it is highly appropriate. The Annunciation reminds us that the man whose suffering and death we recall especially in Lent is not merely man, but God-with-us, who bore and conquered death and sin on behalf of the whole human race. Mary's 'yes' to God made this possible.

The Annunciation reminds us, too, of Mary's submission to the will of God. 'Be it unto me according to your will.' Her words prefigure Luke's account of Christ's prayer before his passion: 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.' And there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him.' (Luke 22: 42-43).

During Lent especially, as individuals and as a community, we seek to discern God's will and to obey it, after the pattern of Jesus and Mary.

To encourage us we have the example, too, of the saints who through the ages have sought God's will and practised it in lives of service, sacrifice and love.

** Today is the 34th anniversary of the episcopal ordination in Banjul in 1981 of Bishop Emeritus Michael Cleary CSSp*



Pious practices

Flowers in Church

IN almost every church you'll see flowers. They play no direct part in the liturgy, but they epitomise the beauty of God's creation and contribute to the dignity of worship.

Some people present plastic flowers to their local church. Such artificial flowers last indefinitely; but they cannot in the least compare with freshly-cut flowers arranged week by week for the Sunday Mass.

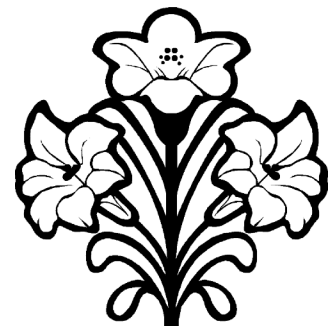
Fresh-cut flowers don't last for more than a few days, but their needing to be replaced reflects the movement of the Church's calendar - always going forward, always being renewed, always 'fresh'.

Flowers at or near the altar, the lectern and at shrines should not obscure or detract from devotions.

* Tradition decrees that flowers are not used to decorate altars and shrines during Advent and Lent. Then, when Christmas and Easter arrive, the re-appearance of flowers reflects the joy of the festival.

* Wreaths and sprays are used as 'floral tributes' at funerals and on graves.

* There is a welcome and growing practice of creating gardens or at least putting in some plants around church premises.



The Pope's Prayer Intentions

February

- That prisoners, especially the young, may be able to rebuild lives of dignity.
- That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.

March

- That those involved in scientific research may serve the well-being of the whole human person.
- That the unique contribution of women to the life of the Church may be recognised always.



18th-century portrait of a Gambian in high society London

SINCE 2011, an 18th-century portrait of a Gambian has been on prominent display in the world-renowned National Portrait Gallery in London. It is the earliest-known British oil portrait of a freed slave, and the first portrait that honours a named African and Muslim as an individual and an equal.

Ayuba Suleiman Diallo was born in The Gambia in a prosperous family of Muslim religious clerics. At the age of 29 he was captured as a slave and transported to work on a plantation in America. After being imprisoned for trying to escape, Diallo met a lawyer, Thomas Bluett, who became aware of his high birth, intellect and education and took an interest in him, arranging to take him to England in 1734.



Lasting impact

After his arrival, Diallo mixed with high society and had a lasting impact on British understanding of African culture, identity and religion. He was received with enthusiasm by aristocrats and scholars, including the Duke of Portland and Sir Hans Sloane, helping Sloane with Arabic translations and his interest in the Qur'an.

Sloane arranged for Diallo to be presented at the court of King George II, and later to be elected a member of the Gentleman's Society at Spalding.

Diallo's supporters arranged for him to sit for his portrait, which is the earliest known painting by the artist, William Hoare of Bath. Hoare responded sensitively to Diallo's personality by depicting him, at Diallo's own request, in his traditional dress and carrying his copy of the Qur'an around his neck.

The portrait is currently on long-term loan to the National Portrait Gallery by agreement with the Qatar Museums Authority.

The painter: William Hoare

William Hoare (c.1707-72) worked in the studio of the painter and sculptor Giuseppe Grisoni, with whom he travelled to Rome in 1728. Hoare was back in England by 1733, and after he returned from the continent, settled in Bath. He quickly established a reputation as an artist in oil and pastel, painting many members of high society. In 1769, at the King's request, Hoare became one of the founder members of the Royal Academy, and exhibited there until 1779. His finest work is characterised by its remarkable directness and empathy and ability to respond to the sitter's personality and interests.

The National Portrait Gallery was founded by Act of Parliament in 1856, and has been collecting portraits of 'persons contributing to British history and culture' ever since. It has some 10,000 portraits in its primary collection and more than 300,000 images in its reference collections. During the financial year 2009-10 nearly two million people visited the gallery, and more than five million visited its website: www.npg.org.uk.

Answers to 'Do you know?' (page 5)

- 1 'The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.' Genesis 3:8
- 2 Wesley Methodist Church. Dobson Street. The foundation stone was laid just over 180 years ago, in December 1834.
- 3 'Jesus wept' at the tomb of Lazarus of Bethany, whose sisters were Mary and Martha. In some translations this is given as, 'Jesus began to weep.' (John 11: 35) The other occasion when Jesus is said to have wept is when he approached Jerusalem (Luke 19:41)
- 4 The Orthodox Church, which numbers an estimated 225-300 million, mostly in Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East and the Balkans.
- 5 Member of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria.
- 6 A monstrance, in which the Host - the Bread of the Eucharist - is displayed for adoration. notably at the rite of Benediction.



ALL BRANCHES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC NOW

OPEN FROM MONDAYS TO SATURDAYS: 8:30am to 8:00pm

50 KAIRABA AVENUE - Telephone: 4399144, 4378489

LIST OF BRANCHES & IMPLANTS

1. Baka u New Town	6868820	20. Kairaba Avenue	6868801
2. Bakoteh	6868816	21. Kaw Junction L/ Kunda	6868861
3. Barra, North Bank Region	6868858	22. Kololi Highway	6868832
4. Banjul Leman Street	6868806	23. Lamin Village Opp Galp	6868815
5. Bansang	6969915	24. Latrikunda Sabiji	6868847
6. Basse Santa Su	6868839	25. London Corner	6868807
7. Basse Highway	6969865	26. Old Jeshwang	6868831
8. Brikama Nyambei	6968874	27. Old Yundum Market	6868843
9. Brikama Hawla Kunda	6868810	28. Sanyang	6868824
10. Brusubi Mini Market	6868819	29. Sayer Jobe Avenue	6868808
11. Brusubi Galp Station	6969873	30. Serrekunda Bartess	6868836
12. Bundung	6868821	31. Serrekunda Mosque Road	6868814
13. Busumballa	6868827	32. Soma	6868837
14. Churchill's Town	6868817	33. Sukuta	6868855
15. Cooperative	6868822	34. Tabokoto	6868813
16. Dippa kunda	6868812	35. Tallindling	6868809
17. Fajara	6868825	36. Westfield Opp. World Mobile	6868910
18. Farafenni	6868838	37. Westfield Next to Church	6868864
19. Kanifing Estate	6868842		





‘This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!’

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’

He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud came a voice: ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’

Suddenly, when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

Mark 9:2-10

The Gospel reading for the 2nd Sunday of Lent, 1st March

O, GOD, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word; so that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory; through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Collect for the 2nd Sunday of Lent