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FIRST ISSUE

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Mission in a
Changing Media
World

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*[God's] delights are to
be with you; let yours be
to be with him.*

Saint Alphonsus Liguori, CSsR

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Letter from the Publisher

From Print to Presence: Rediscovering Our Mission in a Changing Media World

Fr. Charles Vijay Kumar, CSsR

There was a time, not too long ago, when content had a physical home. Music lived in CDs. Films were stored on DVDs. Books rested on shelves. Knowledge had weight, texture, and form. To access content meant to possess it. To share it meant to pass it on physically.

Then came the great shift. With the rise of the internet in the late 20th century, the very structure of distribution was transformed. Content was no longer bound to material form. Music moved to digital platforms like iTunes. Films found new life through streaming services. Books became e-books, read on devices rather than printed pages. The world entered a new phase where access replaced ownership, and speed replaced distance.

That was the disruption of distribution.

But today, we stand at the threshold of something even more profound. With the emergence of artificial intelligence, it is no longer only the distribution of content that has changed, but the very creation of content itself. Machines can now generate text, compose music, produce videos, and simulate human creativity. What once required time, skill, and experience can now be produced in seconds.

This is not merely a technological shift. It is a human question.

In a world where content is abundant, instantly available, and increasingly automated, we are compelled to ask: what does it mean to communicate truth? What does it mean to be human in a space where even creativity can be replicated?

And more importantly for us: what does this mean for our mission?

A Mission Reframed, Not Replaced

As Redemptorists, our mission has never been tied to a medium. It has always

been tied to a message. We are called to proclaim the Good News “to the whole creation.” That call remains unchanged. But the ways in which we live that call must continually be rediscovered.

For generations, print media has been one of our most powerful tools. Books, magazines, pamphlets, and pastoral writings have shaped consciences, formed families, and accompanied believers in their journey of faith. So the question arises: in a digital and AI-driven world, why return to print?

The answer is simple, but not easy. Because the challenge today is not the absence of information, but the overwhelming excess of it. We are no longer searching for knowledge. We are searching for clarity. We are no longer struggling to access content. We are struggling to discern what is true. We live in a time where truth competes with half-truths, where authenticity is often masked, and where voices are many, but wisdom is scarce. The real crisis is not information, but formation. Not access, but discernment.

And this is precisely where our mission finds renewed urgency.

Print as Pastoral Presence

In this context, print is not outdated. It is intentional. A well-curated magazine is not just content. It is discerned content. It is prayerfully chosen, pastorally guided, and spiritually grounded. It invites not just reading, but reflection. It slows the reader down. It creates space for encounter. It becomes, in a real sense, a companion. It is in this spirit that we have taken a bold and hopeful step: the revival of our publication ministry through the launch of Liguorian

Magazine, now renewed as Liguorian International.

Liguorian International: One Faith, Many Voices



Fr. Charles Vijay Kumar, CSsR

The story of Liguorian is not new. It is deeply rooted in mission. What began in 1913 as a simple pastoral initiative by Redemptorist priests to accompany the faithful has grown into a trusted voice of Catholic teaching and reflection. It

was never merely a publication. It was, and remains, a pastoral instrument, a printed pulpit through which the Gospel is shared with clarity and compassion. Today, that same spirit takes on a new form.

Liguorian International is not an export of one culture to another. It is an exchange. It is a global collaboration where the richness of the universal Church finds expression in local contexts.

Drawing from a strong theological and pastoral foundation, each region adapts and contextualizes the content to speak directly to its people. It becomes, as we might say, both universal and local at once, a truly “global” mission that carries one faith through many voices.

This initiative responds directly to the reality of our time. People today are not just looking for information. They are searching for meaning. They are navigating confusion, fragmentation, and often spiritual loneliness. In such a landscape, a trusted Catholic voice becomes not just helpful, but necessary.

A Ministry for Families, A Voice for Formation

We firmly believe that there remains a deep and urgent need for a family-centered Catholic publication. Even in a world saturated with digital media, families continue to seek guidance. Parents look for ways to form their children. Individuals seek clarity on moral and pastoral questions. Communities desire resources that speak to real life with faith and wisdom.

A magazine, both in print and digital form, can still serve this need in a unique way. It can enter homes regularly. It can become part of family life. It can shape conversations. It can gently but powerfully form conscience. Liguorian International is envisioned precisely as such a companion, one that supports families, strengthens faith, and offers pastoral clarity in a complex world.

From Local Initiative to Global Mission

What is especially significant about this moment is that this is not merely a revival. It is a reimagining. In a time when many publishing houses across the world are closing due to lack of resources and personnel, we are choosing a different path. We are choosing collaboration over isolation, co-creation over competition, and mission over maintenance.

We are bringing together strengths across regions, sharing resources, and building a model that is sustainable, scalable, and deeply missionary. What has begun in one context is not meant to remain there. The vision is global. Liguorian International is already reaching beyond borders, and we believe it will continue to grow as a shared platform for Redemptorist media ministry across continents.

Toward a New Era of Evangelization

We do not see print and digital as opposing forces. We see them as complementary. Print offers depth. Digital offers reach. Creative media offers engagement. Together, they form a powerful ecosystem of evangelization.

As Redemptorists, we are called not to retreat from the changing media landscape, but to enter it with discern-

ment, creativity, and courage. Just as St. Alphonsus used every available means of his time to preach the Gospel, we too must use every available means today. This is not about preserving the past. It is about proclaiming the Gospel ever anew.

A Word of Gratitude and Hope

This new chapter would not be possible without the dedication and vision of our publishing team, our collaborators, and all those who believe in this mission. With gratitude, we present to you this renewed ministry. With hope, we look toward the future. And with faith, we continue the work entrusted to us, to proclaim the Good News in every possible way, to every possible person.

As we journey through this new chap-

ter of our media mission, we do so in the light of Easter, the great proclamation of newness. The Resurrection of Christ is not merely an event of the past, but a living reality that continues to renew, restore, and reorient our world. In a time marked by noise, confusion, and overwhelming information, the risen Lord offers clarity, truth, and life in abundance. It is this new life that we seek to share through Liguorian International, a life that reaches into homes, strengthens families, and forms hearts in faith. Just as the empty tomb became the beginning of a new mission for the Church, so too we believe that this renewed ministry, in print, digital, and beyond, is our humble participation in that same mission of bringing hope, renewal, and the Good News to all.



Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Magnifica Humanitas

Pope Leo XIV's First Encyclical on Artificial Intelligence

Fr Sandeep Menezes, CSSR

Introduction

On 25th May 2026, the Vatican released Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical letter on Safeguarding the Human Person in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. Signed on May 15th, 2026, *Magnifica Humanitas* (MH) invites human beings to reflect on what kind of future we choose to build. Quoting Pope Francis, the document notes that emerging technologies have interwoven with everyday human life to such an extent that, "Never has humanity had such power over itself." The Pope calls us neither to unfounded fears nor to naïve enthusiasm about AI, but to sober reflection about its purposes, its beneficiaries, and its consequences.

MH is a must-read for every Catholic who wishes to play an active role in the future of the world and the Church. The Holy Father situates MH within the stream of Catholic social doctrine that began 135 years ago with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*. In the age of AI, humanity faces a choice: to develop AI as a top-down, profit-driven project that alienates us from God just like the tower of Babel (cf. Gen 11:1-9); or as a God-guided project for the common good, like Nehemiah's rebuilding of Jerusalem (cf. Neh 2-6). The Gospel is critical in this process, establishing criteria for what humanizes or dehumanizes, what liberates and what oppresses.

Chapter One

Chapter One traces the development of Catholic social doctrine, emphasising a dynamic engagement with the Gospel. The Church journeys with the world, bringing the wisdom of God's Word into dialogue with the human sciences. Truth is a gift to be shared, not a possession to be monopolised. Recalling John Paul II's regret over "intolerance

and the use of violence in the service of truth," the Pope embraces Francis' principle that "time is greater than space". This means the truth of the Gospel is not imposed from above but grows within the concrete interweaving of lives, communities, and cultures. The mission of the Church is not to defend cultural strongholds, but to initiate good processes and allow them to mature.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two applies the five principles of Catholic social doctrine — common good, universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity, and social justice — to the digital age. The Pope grounds everything in human dignity: "Human dignity does not depend on a person's abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love" (MH 50). AI must serve the common good through dialogue across ideological divides, just governance, and an international order that respects every people's right to exist and contribute to the human family (MH 62-64). Its benefits must reach all — patents, algorithms, platforms, and data must never exclude or create new forms of poverty (MH 67). By subsidiarity, AI governance must grow from dialogue at every level, not be imposed from above (MH 68-72); by solidarity, knowledge must be shared by all, since the future of each is bound to the future of all (MH 73-76). Social justice means taking on the perspective of the weakest while preserving the goods of nature and technology for future generations (MH 77-85). The

Pope also calls the Church herself to account — for synodal participation, transparency, the purification of abusive power, listening to victims, and sharing ecclesial resources so that no one may be in need (cf. Acts 4:34).



Fr Sandeep Menezes, CSSR

Chapter Three

Chapter Three critiques the technocratic paradigm that prioritises efficiency, control, and profit over the human person. The Pope names the asym-

metry of power in the hands of the few who develop AI, highlights the exploited workers who sustain algorithmic systems, and calls for universal access to both the technologies and the education needed to use them. Developers of AI bear a particular ethical and spiritual responsibility to build for humanity's good, not its enslavement.

The Pope critiques post-humanism and transhumanism for selling an earthly evolution that transcends human limitations. Instead, he invites us to see those limitations not as defects to be corrected but as a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship (MH 118). For Christians, becoming "more than human" is not a technological achievement but a divinization wrought by the Holy Spirit in Christ. As Leo XIV quotes Francis: "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being." True freedom grows not through self-sufficiency but through "a relation-

ship that liberates and a communion that transforms” (MH 128).

Chapter Four

Chapter Four addresses the concrete dangers to truth, work, and freedom. Pope Leo warns that AI risks triggering a crisis of truth — amplifying disinformation, manipulating public opinion, concentrating power, eroding conscience, weakening democracy, homogenising culture, and weakening critical thought. He raises urgent concerns for the young: AI can extinguish the desire to ask questions, harm sleep, shorten attention spans, and weaken emotional regulation. Most gravely, AI tools are

being used to produce pornography and enable grooming, blackmail, and sexual exploitation.

On work, the Pope warns against automated surveillance, the risk of mass unemployment, inequality in innovation, and the decline of wages. On freedom, he warns of digital addictions driven by an “attention economy,” digital slavery in data-labelling and traumatic content moderation, and digital colonialism in which health and demographic data of fragile regions is appropriated by the powerful to secure leverage over vulnerable populations.

Chapter Five

Returning to the contrasting visions of Babel and Jerusalem, Chapter Five sets the culture of power against the civilisation of love. The culture of power serves strategic interests at all costs, normalises war, and relies on autonomous weapons that can take a human life without human judgment. The Pope calls instead for building a civilisation of love: disarming words, pursuing peace through justice, adopting the perspective of victims, and cultivating a healthy realism that seeks viable paths for patient negotiation rather than treating war as inevitable.

Conclusion

The Pope invites us to a demanding vision of Christian life in the digital age. The future of humanity is rooted not in the transhumanist ideal of self-enhancement but in the mystery of the Incarnation. God enters human weakness and transforms it from within! The human face remains the centre of history; no machine can replace its dignity and grandeur. A Eucharistic spirituality counters isolation and exclusion, opening us to justice, sharing, and care for those marginalised by new technological and economic systems. The faithful are called to cultivate hearts that love truth and seek wisdom over seductive, immediate results; to evangelise the digital world while preserving physical presence and genuine closeness in service of the poor. Ultimately, the Christian spirituality called for today is grounded in Mary’s Magnificat. It is a song of the lowly, a song of hope that even in the age of AI, the Holy Spirit will bring about a civilisation of love.



Catholics IN India

Part 1 - South India

Unity in Diversity

*Discover the Stunning Diversity of the Indian
Catholic Church*

When I say the word, “Catholic,” what comes to mind? We often think of a Westernized image of priests, nuns, churches, shrines and Eucharistic liturgies. However, within the global Church, and most vibrantly in India, these expressions of Catholic faith are displayed in an incredible diversity of cultural packages, featuring varied vestments, liturgical practices, church architecture, customs and ways of life.

Entering the seminary 20 years ago as an urban, middle-class, English-speaking, Goan-migrant from Bangalore, I was entirely unprepared for this diversity. I expected every seminarian to express their faith just like me. Instead, I discovered companions from across the country who were perfectly

Catholic, yet spoke no English, never sang Western hymns, and celebrated Mass in entirely different rites. They were rural, semi-urban, and urban Christians, from north, south, east and west, and completely united in the Lord.

In this, and similar articles in the coming three issues of Liguorian International, we shall scan the rich tapestry of the Catholic faith across the Indian subcontinent. This will be a respectful, non-controversial, historically aware, and culturally nuanced presentation without any pretense to scholarly authority. Instead, it will be a basic pastoral introduction to the rich variety of cultural forms of the one Catholic faith to the general population of the lay faithful of India and the world. Hopefully, this will help

us who are stuck in our own echo-chambers to realize, as I did while growing through seminary formation, that Catholicism in India, and indeed the global Church, is far greater than my idea and experience of it.

We shall examine how diverse histories and customs have allowed the faith to take root in various cultures and geographies while maintaining the essence of Christianity and full communion with the universal Church. Remarkably, during my theology studies, I discovered that parts of India embraced the Gospel nearly 2,000 years ago even before many in the Western world ever did! There isn’t a single story of Catholicism in India. There are multiple stories, starting with the most ancient one in the South.

1. South India: The Oldest Bastion of Indian Catholicism

In this first part of the series, we shall focus on the South of India where Catholic Christianity has its deepest and oldest roots. And here we have one of the most extraordinary claims in all of Indian Church history...

Kerala: Where an Apostle Sanctified the Soil

The state of Kerala, recently renamed as Keralam, is famously called “God’s own country,” a term popularized by the State’s tourism industry, and enriched by a powerful historical tradition. In AD 52, less than 20 years after the Resurrection, St. Thomas the Apostle is said to have sailed to the Malabar Coast, landing at Kodungallur. He traveled through Kerala, preaching, baptizing, and founding seven-and-a-half

churches- Kodungallur, Palayoor, Kottakkavu, Korkkanganalam, Niranam, Chayal, Kollam and the so-called half-church at Thiruvithamcode Arappally.

• **The Syrian Connection**

The descendants of these early believers are known as Saint Thomas Christians or Nasranis. In the 4th century, their community was strengthened by the arrival of Syrian Christians led by a Persian merchant, Thomas of Cana. Adopting the East Syriac liturgy, they looked to the Church of the East for spiritual leadership.

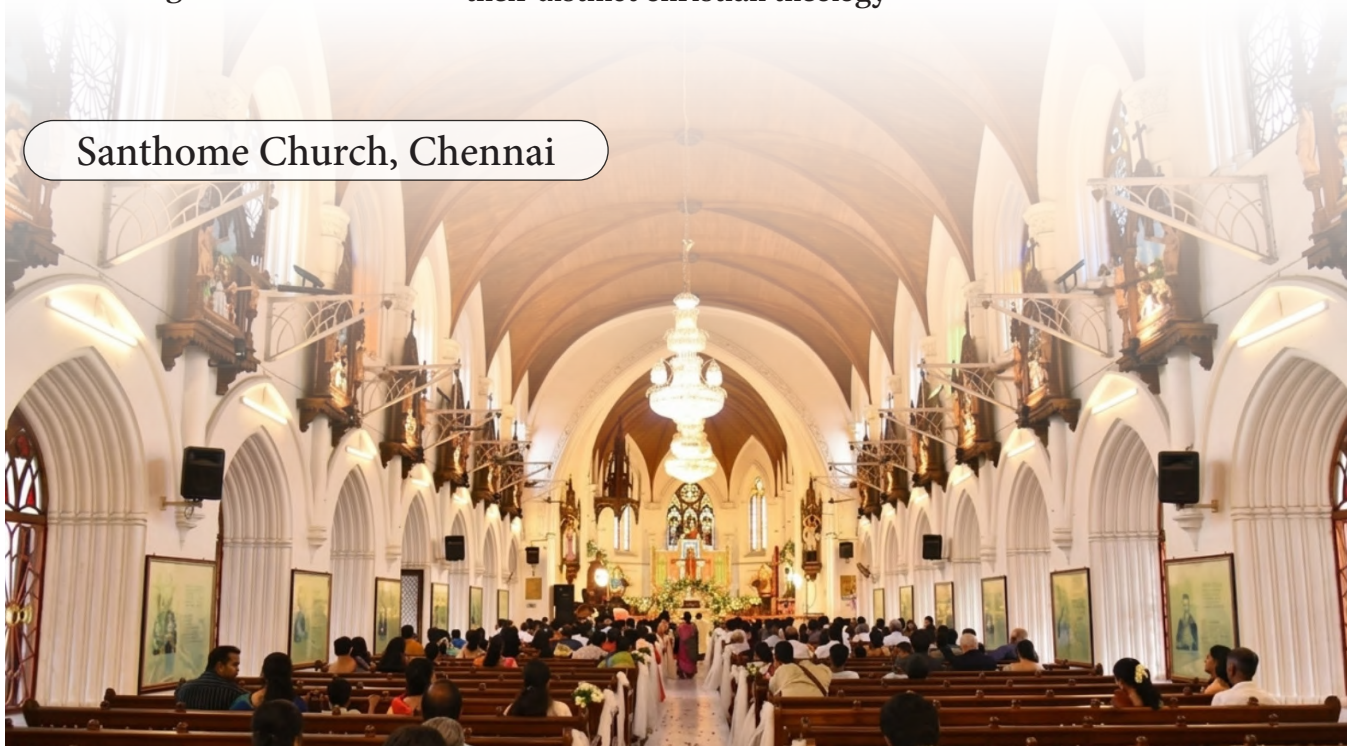
These Christians held a high social status, lived harmoniously alongside their Hindu neighbours, and integrated local culture into their faith. They spoke Malayalam and Syriac, wore traditional Indian clothing, and celebrated local festivals like Onam, while keeping their distinct Christian theology

and worship intact.

• **The Portuguese Arrive: A Complicated Chapter**

In 1498, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut. The Portuguese were astonished to find a thriving, 1,500-year-old Christian community completely independent of Rome. Tensions mounted as the Europeans attempted to impose conformity to the Latin Church, culminating in a major 17th-century split. Those who accepted communion with Rome formed the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, while others took different paths. Under the leadership of orthodox archbishop Mar Ivanios some of the orthodox Christians came into communion with Rome in 1930, thus forming the Syro-Malankara Church.

Santhome Church, Chennai





Our Lady of Ransom - Vallarpadam

• The Current Kerala Catholic Church Scenario

Today, Kerala boasts three distinct Catholic rites co-existing in peace:

1. The Syro-Malabar Church
2. The Syro-Malankara Church
3. The Latin Church

Together, Christians make up about 18% of Kerala's population. For those outside Kerala who have been raised strictly in the Latin rite, these autonomous, rite-based sui iuris churches might seem unusual. However, they maintain full doctrinal communion with the Pope while governing themselves through their own hierarchies, traditions, and disciplines. Today, Kerala Catholicism stands as a global powerhouse for missionaries and exerts a profound social influence through business, healthcare and education.

Tamil Nadu: The Land of the Fishermen and the Missionaries

• St. Thomas in Tamil Nadu

St. Thomas eventually crossed to the eastern Coromandel Coast, reaching Mylapore (modern Chennai), where he was martyred by a spear around AD 72. The grand San Thome Cathedral Basilica stands over his burial site today.

The Portuguese rediscovered his tomb and built a church there in 1523. In 1606, the Madurai Mission began under Jesuit leaders like Roberto de Nobili and later Costanzo Giuseppe Beschi. These European missionaries pioneered a genuine inculturation of the faith centuries before Vatican II by adopting local dress, customs, and idioms to preach the Gospel.

• St. Francis Xavier and the Paravas

In 1532, a community of around

10,000 pearl fishermen known as the Paravas, living along the southern coast of Tamil Nadu, converted to Catholicism — partially seeking Portuguese protection from Arab traders.

When St. Francis Xavier arrived in India in 1542, he was sent to catechize the Paravas, who had been baptized without formal instruction. Xavier travelled tirelessly from village to village, learning Tamil phrases, ringing a bell to gather children, and establishing local churches. His labours laid an unshakeable foundation for Tamil Catholicism, making coastal cities like Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari enduring centres of faith.

• Velankanni: Our Lady of Good Health

Tamil Catholics hold an extraordinary devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, centered at the shrine of Velankanni, the “Our Lady of Good Health.” Tradition states Mary appeared here to a



St. Thomas Church, Trivandrum

young buttermilk vendor and a lame boy. A church arose in the 16th century, and today it draws millions of pilgrims annually for its 11-day feast ending on September 8. Amazingly, a great percentage of these pilgrims are from other faith traditions.

Tamil Catholicism is one of the most culturally rooted forms of the faith in the world. What makes it unique is not just its age, but its depth. The faith has intertwined with the Tamil language, aesthetics, social structure, and religious sensibility to such an extent that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the faith is experienced as Tamil faith. God is addressed in classical Tamil idiom, and this matters much to people whose language is among the oldest living tongues on the earth. Tamil Catholics carry a strong consciousness that their faith predates Portuguese Christian-

ity in India and that gives their Catholicism an unshakeable quality even in the midst of life's great upheavals and sufferings.

Karnataka: From the Royal Courts to the Carnatic Mission

- Parallel Stream of Catholic History in Karnataka

The history of Catholicism in Karnataka features two parallel streams: the Konkani-speaking Mangalorean migrants from Goa, and the interior Kannada-speaking Catholics. We shall deal with the Mangalorean form of Catholicism in our treatment of Western India in a later edition. For now, we focus on the Kannada Catholic identity that blossomed in the plains and historic capitals like Srirangapatna, Mysore, Hassan, and Bengaluru.

- The Permanent Foundation

of Kannada Catholicism

The permanent foundation of this mission began in 1649 when an Italian Jesuit, Fr. Leonardo Cinnami, entered the Kingdom of Mysore. Welcomed by Maharaja Kanthirava Narasara Wodeyar I, who admired the priest's holiness and intellect, the Christians were granted land, protection, and complete religious freedom. This birthed the "Canarese Mission" (the old British term for Kannada) By respecting the local language and customs, the missionaries gathered nearly 30,000 Kannada-speaking Catholics by the end of the 17th century.

Wars under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan later devastated these communities and destroyed their churches. Following Tipu Sultan's fall in 1799, the surviving faithful invited a legendary French missionary, Fr.

Jean-Antoine Dubois — affectionately called Abbe Dubois or Dodda Swami (the Great Priest) to lead the community.

- **Abbe Dubois's Contribution**

Dubois spent 22 years living as an ascetic, traveling on foot, rebuilding agricultural communities like Settihalli, and laying the foundations for St. Mary's Basilica in Bengaluru. He was also a medical pioneer, saving countless lives by vaccinating 25,000 people against smallpox, including members of the royal family.

The legacy of Kannada Catholicism is defined by resilience, royal patronage, and a poetic devotion to the language. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, successive Wodeyar Maharajas maintained a beautiful relationship with the Church, gifting lands and funding schools and hospitals.

- **Kannada Cultural Elements**

A defining cultural hallmark of this region is the Radhotsava or Jatre—a grand festival where a massive, decorated wooden chariot bearing a statue of Jesus or Mary is pulled through the streets. Accompanied by brass bands, fireworks, and jasmine garlands, this electric devotion is famously witnessed at the Basilica of Our Lady of Health in Harihara. Kannada Catholics, because of their deep historical roots and centuries of peaceful co-existence under Mysore Kings, are known for

their gentle, highly integrated social presence. They live in seamless harmony with people of other faiths, quietly running small businesses and charitable institutions to serve the wider society without discrimination.

Andhra Pradesh and

Telangana: The Mission Grows Inland

The Catholic faith entered the Telugu-speaking regions not via naval landings, but through arduous, inland journeys undertaken by resilient missionaries who learned to dress, speak, and think like the local people.

The earliest phase began in 1598 with Portuguese Jesuits led by Fr. Simon de Sa. They reached the declining Vijayanagara Empire's court at Chandragiri, where Emperor Venkatapati Raya II permitted them to open a school for royal nobles. While a diplomatic success, this era did not establish a permanent local community.

- **Beginnings of Telugu Mission**

The true, lasting foundations of Telugu Catholicism arrived with the Carnatic Mission, established by French Jesuits in 1701. Rather than targeting palaces, missionaries like Fr. Jean-Venance Bouchet went straight to the rural heartlands. Inspired by De Nobili, Bouchet adopted the attire of local holy men, mastered the Telugu language, and explained Christian theology using agrarian

metaphors. Consequently, the faith flourished among farming communities, and Telugu Catholic identity blossomed through original Kirthanas (devotional songs).

- **The Telugu Catechists' Resilience**

When the Jesuit order was temporarily suppressed and the community faced persecutions under Tipu Sultan, the faithful did something extraordinary: in the total absence of priests, they kept the faith alive themselves. Village elders, known as upadesis (catechists), took charge—baptizing infants, conducting prayer services, and passing down memorized Telugu hymns across generations until French Foreign Mission (MEP) priests arrived in the 1800s.

- **Cultural Elements of Telugu Catholicism**

Telugu Catholics are deeply rooted in their own centuries-old cultural identity while simultaneously playing an important role as quiet catalysts for rural development and education. One of the most beautiful aspects of Telugu Catholicism is its integration with local art and classical music. Since the 1800s, the French missionaries realized that the people possessed a profound love for literature, music and poetry. So instead of imposing European styles, they encouraged local expressions. Telugu faith is sustained by popular devotions and shrines. Village feasts, pilgrimages and a legacy of rural empowerment

make Telugu Catholicism unique and attractive.

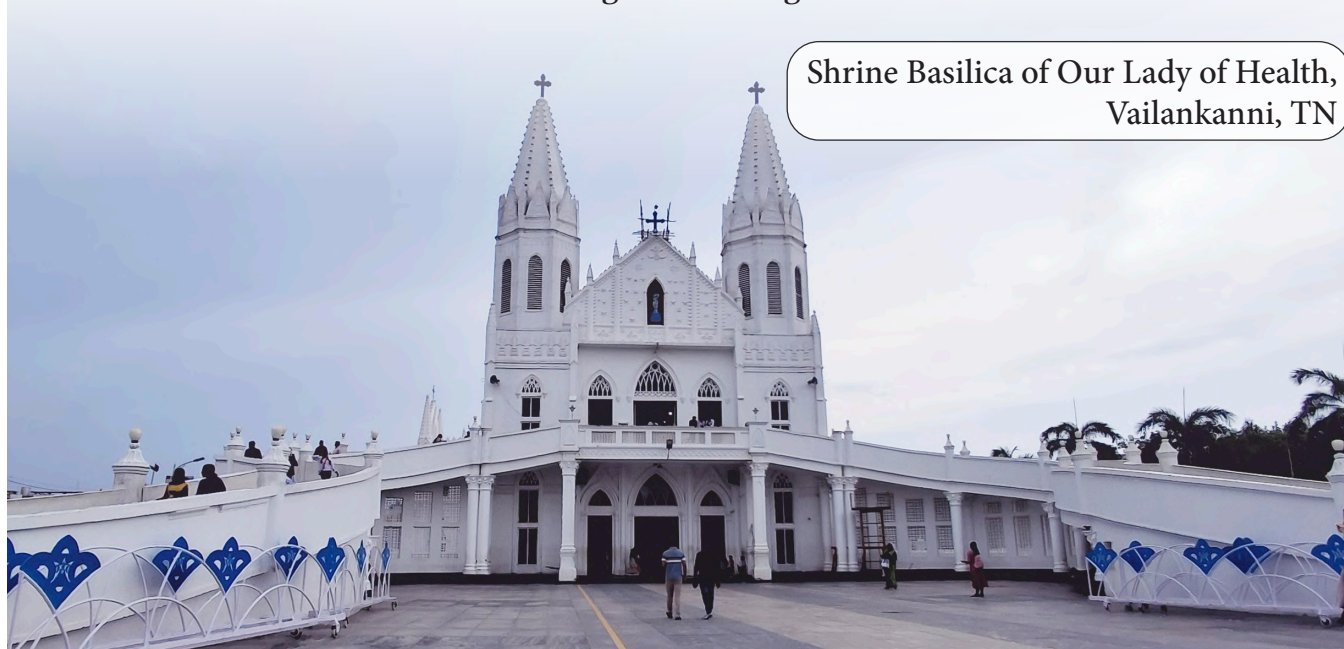
- For the Next Edition:
Catholicism in Western
India

In this article, we have only had a broad overview of the

Catholicism in South India with little room for detail or nuance. And still, we've been able to identify four different cultural forms, one of which is divided into three rites. Such marvelous diversity and such spiritual unity in the one Catholic faith! In the coming edition of Liguorian

International, we shall cover the Western Indian forms of the Catholic Faith including the Mangaloreans, the Goans, and the "East Indians" of Maharashtra. Don't miss this introduction to a new segment of the Catholic family in this beloved land of India.

Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Health,
Vailankanni, TN



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Be a part of the Redemptorist charism to bring the Word of God to those thirsty for truth, beauty and goodness.

Help us – the Holy Redeemer Foundation – spread the Gospel message far and wide. Your donations are vital for our mission.

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Redemptorist Charism

IN THE FOOTSTEPS
OF SAINT ALPHONSUS



THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS REDEMPTORISTS TO PLACES THE CHURCH OFTEN STRUGGLES TO REACH



A Gift to Serve the Poor and Abandoned

CARDINAL JOSEPH W. TOBIN, CSSR

In every generation, the universal Church receives gifts from the Holy Spirit. We call these “charisms,” from a Greek word meaning “favor” or “freely given gift.” Charisms reflect the richness and diversity of the Christian life. They help us experience life in Christ in a variety of ways and in distinct circumstances.

I am blessed to be a member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists). Founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori in Scala, Italy, in 1732, we are a community of missionaries dedicated to caring for poor and vulnerable people around the world. Our charism can be discerned in the life and teaching of our founder and in the ways Redemptorist priests and brothers have responded to the changing needs and circumstances of those we have served over the past nearly 300 years. When Redemptorists are at our best, that gift of the Holy Spirit leads us to witness to Jesus in places the Church often struggles to reach.

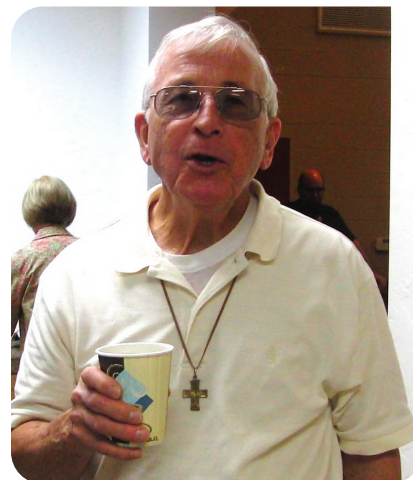
In a formula spoken on the day of his profession, every Redemptorist “... binds [himself] to live faithfully a life of brotherly love, imbued with apostolic charity in the same Congregation, founded by St. Alphonsus especially for preaching the gospel to the poor.” The Redemptorists you will meet in this article pronounced those words and found that they led them to address situations of human misery and enormous suffering with unmistakable courage, creativity, and

compassion. Such commitment demonstrates the special attention that the Redemptorists continue to show for the poor, the deprived, and the oppressed and reminds their brothers that it is more important to be where there is pastoral neglect than to remain in well-established churches with an impressive number of participants.

In my fifty-plus years as a Redemptorist, I was taught by several of the personalities profiled in these pages: compassionate missionaries in migrant camps, advocates for people with AIDS and children in slums, an urban apostle in enclaves of refugees, and tireless organizers of an association that brought stability to a threatened neighborhood. None of them worked from prepackaged solutions. Their closeness to the poor taught them what they should do.

Alphonsus wanted his companions always to be close to the type of people for whom Jesus himself showed a clear preference. For eighteen years, I traveled the Redemptorist world, visiting my brothers in seventy-one of the eighty-two countries in which we

“follow in the footsteps of Christ the Redeemer.” The vast steppes of Siberia, teeming slums in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and war-torn regions of Angola and Cameroon featured a mélange of Redemptorists who felt compelled to



Redemptorist Br. Bill Cloughley

remain with the poor, simply because they knew that decision somehow was also the choice of their Master.

In our heart of hearts, Redemptorists realize that the poor do not need us. If we choose not to go to them, God will find someone else, because God hears the cry of the poor. The point is that Redemptorists need the poor if we are to be true to the mission that has been given to us. Obedience to their voice is not simply “doing things” for them; rather, it’s entering a process of conversion that leads us to empty ourselves and offer our lives as a gift. To do this, we must recognize that abandoned poor really exist—they are not simply theories or statistics; they have names and faces. We must be able to look them in the eyes, recognizing a sister or brother loved unconditionally by God. The Redemptorists highlighted in this account decided to go where the Church could not or would not go and listen to the people they found there. They listened to the voices of the poor in the light of the Word of God and the tradition of our Congregation, and they learned what they should do.



Redemptorist Fr. Mike Shea at his 86th birthday celebration

Left: Students from one of the twenty-two Mercy kindergartens



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSSR, DD, has been the Archbishop of Newark since 2017. He also served as Archbishop of Indianapolis from 2012–2016 and as secretary of the Congregation (now Dicastery) for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life from 2010–2012. He was superior general of the Redemptorist Congregation for two terms, from 1997–2009. He professed his temporary vows as a Redemptorist in 1973.



Redemptorist Charism in Action

PETER TRAN

Many Redemptorists have reached out to disadvantaged and vulnerable peoples in mission territories, while others have ventured into ministerial projects that serve the economically poor in the United States. Here are some of their stories.

Sarnelli House, Thailand

In the 1990s, when Redemptorist Fr. Michael Shea began his work with HIV/AIDS patients in Nong Khai, Thailand's northeastern province that borders Laos, he took one boy and two girls into his care. The missionary priest from Wisconsin recalled that the boy's mother had committed suicide. The mother of one of the girls had died of AIDS. The other girl's mother had abandoned her daughter because her husband had AIDS. That was how Sarnelli House Foundation came into existence. At the time, the younger girl was three. Now, she has finished college as a physical education teacher.

Sarnelli House, officially opened in 1999, is "home" for children with HIV/AIDS who have been abandoned or subjected to sexual abuse. Today, Sarnelli House is used as both the umbrella

name for Fr. Shea's projects and the name of one of the seven houses under his care.

In the early days of his ministry, Fr. Shea said people with AIDS were often banished from their villages and ostracized by their families and neighbors because of fear of and ignorance about the disease. He recounted that they were forced to leave their homes to live in hovels in the jungle where the Redemptorists brought them food, medicine, and pastoral care. Likewise, many children had been cast out by their relatives because their parents had contracted AIDS. "We are a place of safe refuge that is filled with love and understanding for every child who lives there," said Fr. Shea.

Mercy Centre, Bangkok

About 380 miles south of Nong Khai, a six-year-old took part in the third-year kindergarten graduation at a school run by the Human Development Foundation Mercy Centre in Bangkok's Klong Toey slum. She grew up sleeping at night on the pavement of a gas station with her parents, who pumped gas. Now, she lives in one of the Mercy homes for children.

Parents with no legal documents left their sick child in the hospital. A nurse who lived near Mercy Centre contacted a staff member to let her know of the abandoned girl. Today, she not only has a home, but new friends and a new life.

The Mercy Centre began in 1972 with Redemptorist Fr. Joe Maier and Sr. Maria Chantavarodom. At that time, the slum included an enclave of poor Catholics who earned a living butchering pigs for the market. Today, the area is home to more than 100,000 residents living in tight quarters in dilapidated tin-roofed houses. In the beginning, Sr. Chantava-

rodom taught catechism to the Catholic children who didn't go to school; the few who did go to school either failed their classes or dropped out. So, Fr. Maier and Sr. Chantavarodom turned a shack in the slaughterhouse into a preschool.

The foundation today has twenty-two Mercy kindergartens with more than 2,000 students. The alumni of that first slaughterhouse kindergarten are now teachers, business owners, secretaries, street vendors, and taxi drivers.

Under Fr. Maier's leadership, the foundation now operates five Mercy homes for children, providing a refuge for 150 abandoned, orphaned, and trafficked children. They also established a school for street and special-needs children as well as a drop-in community center for the elderly, the disabled, adults living with HIV, troubled children, or anyone else in need.

People's Place, Kingston, New York

Amy was a late-20s single mom in 1977 who came regularly to People's Place in Kingston, seeking assistance. Founded by Redemptorist Fr. Patrick McGarrity (1936–2022), People's Place provided



Above: Redemptorist Fr. Joe Maier with Mercy kindergarten graduates

Right: Redemptorist seminarians, left to right: Juan Rosario, Pete Sousa, Joe Prucha, Joe Tobin, and Bernie Carlin

Page 27, top: Holy Name Housing breaks ground.

Page 27, middle: Food donations and volunteers help People's Place feed the hungry.



Redemptorist seminarians who were studying at Mount Saint Alphonsus Seminary with the opportunity to do some social-pastoral work. For almost two decades, the seminarians took turns running the storefront, offering food, clothing, transportation, education, and guidance to the poor in the area. Amy helped the Redemptorists run the store in gratitude for the support she received. She obtained her GED through an education program sponsored by People's Place and eventually earned a nursing degree to work at Kingston Hospital.

The mission of People's Place today is the same as what the Redemptorists envisioned more than fifty years ago. Christine Hein, executive director of People's Place, said, "Our purpose is to operate solely to fulfill our charitable mission of feeding and clothing individuals while providing hope, support, and assistance with life events. We respond to the essential needs of the people in Ulster County with kindness, compassion, and the preservation of human dignity." In 2024, People's Place served more than 1.6 million meals.

She also said that in 1985, when the Redemptorists moved to Washington, DC, the management of People's Place was transferred to twenty-five volunteers. This nonprofit organization now has more than 185 volunteers, a small staff, and a board of directors that

help continue the original Redemptorist mission of assisting people in Ulster County.

Holy Name Housing Corporation, Omaha, Nebraska

In the early 1980s, former Redemptorist Frs. Jerry Mullin and Don Neureuther were assigned to Holy Name Parish in north central Omaha. The two young priests began a housing ministry by asking residents who lived near the church to express their concerns. One



issue was the deterioration of homes, which decreased property value and threatened their neighborhood. When a donated run-down house was sold — after employing resi-

dents in need of work to rehab it using repurposed materials — Holy Name Housing Corporation was born. Since 1983, the organization has renovated and sold more than 200 homes. With a background in plant maintenance, Br. Bill Cloughley joined his two Redemptorist confreres in this housing endeavor. He said that the program appealed to many interests in the community: city officials wanted to turn a deteriorated area back into taxable property; residents were happy to get rid of eyesores in their neighborhood; and impoverished people saw the possibility of home ownership.

According to Matthew Cavanaugh, executive director of Holy Name Hous-

ing Corporation, "We currently have nearly 400 units of affordable housing under management. This allows us to reach out to our low-income residents and support them with resources such as home-ownership training and budgeting classes. Many of the affordable units we build are single-family homes, and it is often our goal to transition our renters into owners by helping them purchase the home they are currently renting." He noted that his team is now engaged in every aspect of providing affordable housing: "We act as project developers and general contractors, and we own and manage our units."

Reflecting a relationship with the Redemptorists, Cavanaugh stated, "Our history with the Redemptorist Order and the tenets of Catholicism are foundational to our mission and our work today. Though we provide our services without favor to faith, creed, or religion, the Redemptorist charism of 'working with the poor and the most abandoned' aligns directly with our belief that we need to be a part of the community to be of value to the community. We support the communities in which we work by helping people remain in or return to the place they can call home."

Migrant Ministry, USA

Redemptorists are well known for their outreach to the poor and most abandoned in the migrant and refugee community. A pioneer in this work was Fr. Jimmy O'Connell (1914–1986), who began following the stream of migrant workers in the Midwest and Southwest more than eighty years ago. Fr. O'Connell gave Redemptorist seminarians an opportunity to participate in this ministry through a summer program in which they helped with the liturgy, visited families, and taught catechism to migrant children. One of the seminarians who participated was Fr. Hugh "Ricardo" Elford (1938–2023), who spent his life working with Hispanics in the barrio of Tucson and along the

US–Mexico border. He became a pillar of the Hispanic community, advocating for refugees fleeing from persecution in Central America in the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s, providing the poor with food, clothing, and shelter. In 2003, he and Dr. Evan Kligman founded Clinica Amistad to offer free healthcare to the unemployed and uninsured, those with undiagnosed chronic medical conditions, and low-income families who could not afford medications.

Redemptorists continue the legacy of Frs. O’Connell and Elford today.

Among them are Fr. Mike McAndrew, who published his experiences in *Walk With My People: A Life in Migration Ministry* (Liguori Publications, 2024), and Fr. Patrick Keyes, who works with his Redemptorist confreres in Mexico City. He said he spends most days at La Santisima Trinidad, “an iconic church in the middle of one of the oldest, noisiest, and poorest areas in the city.”

Lao Refugee Mission Team, USA

Redemptorists got involved in ministry for Southeast Asians in Chicago and around the country when millions of refugees were resettled in the United States after the fall of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in 1975. The Lao Refugee Mission Team was formed in the mid-1980s with former Redemptorist Fr. Peter Tran, Paris Foreign Mission Fr. Luis Leduc, and Sr. Alice Thepouthay, a Lao Charity Sister of St. Joan Antida. As the only Lao-speaking priests and sister at the time, their missions across the US and Canada included prayer services, confessions, and Mass. They also visited families in the Lao, Hmong, and Khmu communities to discuss their adjustment to life in the US. Bishop Pierre Bach, MEP (1932–2020), appointed by Pope St. John Paul II to serve Laotians scattered around the world, traveled

with the Lao Mission Team, as did former Redemptorist missionary in Thailand, Fr. Wil Lowery (1923–2021), until his retirement in 2009.

Fr. Tran also helped set up the Indo-Chinese Catholic Center to serve Vietnamese and Lao communities in uptown Chicago. The Center assisted refugees in finding jobs and housing

and provided pastoral care. In the mid-1980s, the Redemptorist Denver Province offered an interest-free loan to a nonprofit uptown recycling center that Fr. Tran helped establish.

Former refugees were hired to work at the recycling center, and it supported elderly refugees who collected recyclables in neighborhood alleys.

Redemptorist ministry to the refugee community continues to this day. Since 2018, Redemptorist Fr. Chakrit Micaphitak from Thailand serves hill tribe refugees—Karen, Karenni, Hmong, and Lao—from Myanmar and Laos in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Father Micaphitak is one of two Hmong priests in the United States. After his ordination in 2006, he spent his ministry with other Redemptorists in Thailand’s mountainous provinces, serving some 2,000 Catholics in seventeen rural villages. He said that these refugees remind him of “sheep without a shepherd,” adding that, as a Redemptorist, he is called to serve the “most abandoned.”

Prayer, Reflection, Charism

Asked to reflect on the Redemptorists’ work with the poor, Br. Cloughley said Redemptorists discern among themselves, pray together, and then share how they can respond to the poor. “Our vocation is to be with the poor.

The question is, how can we creatively respond to the poor around us?”

Asked to define what a “good priest” should be, Fr. Shea said, “Like the Lord Jesus, a good priest should lose himself in service and lead a simple life of faith. He should eagerly serve the poor, the sick, and the elderly, especially those who are considered outcasts by society. Redemptorist priests generally work among the poor, love the poor like one would love Jesus, and treat the poor as one would treat Jesus.”

Father Keyes said, “As Redemptorists, we are called not simply to evangelize the poor, but also to be evangelized by them.”

Father Maier said he was grateful that the Redemptorists had been generous and supportive of his presence in the slaughterhouse after all these years. The slum is a “salvage place drenched in mercy, and the poor have taken good care of me, looked after me. We stand together with the poor. It’s basically this—my door is always open to whoever we meet on life’s path. We don’t abandon anyone.”

In my association with Fr. Elford, I know he always lived by this passage from Proverbs 31:8–9: “Open your mouth in behalf of the mute, and for the rights of the destitute; Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!”

Through the charisms given by the Holy Spirit, may the Church continue to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and uphold the dignity of the poor and needy by defending their rights. #



Peter Tran, MRE, MDiv, was the assistant director of the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, Arizona. He is a former editor of the

Union of Catholic Asian News at the main editorial office in Bangkok. During his years as a Redemptorist, his ministry was extensively in the field of pastoral care for refugees and migrants in the United States and at the Vatican. He professed his temporary vows as a Redemptorist in 1973.

Besides Frs. Maier and Shea, other American Redemptorists who made an impact in Thailand were Fr. Ray Brennan (1933–2003) and Fr. Harry Thiel (1930–2006). Father Brennan began an orphanage in Pattaya—Thailand’s southeastern seaside tourist city—that served abandoned and disabled children, while Fr. Thiel served Hmong hill tribe people in Thailand’s northern provinces.

Our Lady Who Opens Doors

Plain Talk

FR. PETER D. HILL,
CSsR

As a Redemptorist, I have learned that some of the most powerful moments of ministry happen quietly. One of those moments unfolds every week in most Redemptorist parishes around the world in the presence of an icon. The church may be full or half empty; the candles many or just a few. Yet, the people who are present come with deep faith, bringing their joys and struggles to Our Lady. For Redemptorists, devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help is not just a tradition; it is part of who we are.

When Pope Pius IX entrusted the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to the Redemptorists in 1865, he asked us to “make her known.” We have been trying to do that ever since—not by turning Mary into the center, but by allowing her to lead people to Christ. For us, this devotion has always been missionary, as it goes out to meet the people.

Week after week, I watch people approach this devotion with genuine faith. Some are regular churchgoers, while others come only for the novena. Some sit quietly in the back, while others mouth every word by heart. Many carry needs and concerns in their hearts: a sick loved one, a failing relationship, immigration issues, loneliness, financial stress, fear. The icon gives them permission to bring all of that into the church.

There is something deeply human about the image itself. The Child Jesus clings to Mary; one sandal hangs loose; and the angels hold the instruments of the passion. Mary looks outward, calm and steady, her eyes drawing everyone into deep contemplation. People see themselves there, in the tender arms of a loving mother. She is not a distant or decorative Mary, but a Mother who is ever ready to help us.

This devotion opens doors. People who might never come to Sunday or weekday Mass will come to the novena. They listen and pray, and many take advantage of the sacrament of reconciliation.

I have celebrated novenas to Our Mother of Perpetual Help in large city churches and in small rural chapels. The prayers and music may differ slightly, but the heart of the devotion stays the same. People keep coming because they know that Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, is their mother, and she always helps her children.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is more than an icon on a wall. She is a companion in the mission. Through her, people encounter a Church that listens, a God who understands, and a Redeemer who loves them unconditionally and will never give up on them. For Redemptorists, that is not an extra part of the mission; it is the mission itself. Our Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us. #

Devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help is part of who the Redemptorists are.



OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP, COURTESY
OF THE REDEMPTORIST

Memories Old and New

Musings

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA,
CSsR

In this issue of *Liguorian*, we celebrate and highlight some of the forms of ministry that the Redemptorist community has engaged in over the last few years. This is, at best, only a “slice of the pie.” In fact, every time I read the article (“Redemptorist Charism: In the Footsteps of Saint Alphonsus”) that speaks about these ministries, I think of some Redemptorist or some ministry that has not been mentioned. I guess it is not unlike the “In Memoriam” segment at the Oscars each year. As meaningful and as beautiful as it is, people usually can recall a few actors who passed in the previous year yet were not included in the tribute. All sorts of conspiracy theories blossom as a result, when no conspiracy was intended. So it is with this attempt to highlight all the Redemptorist ministries—it is admittedly incomplete. Although we may have unintentionally excluded someone who should be remembered, in no way does that diminish the pride we feel for that person’s dedication and service.

What prompted this effort is the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Province of Denver—the Redemptorist province that animates Liguori Publications, our partners in mission, and the many men and women who contribute to our ministries. Thirty years is not that long; it is just a step along the way, and it is a small step. It is, however, significant. There will never be a 31st anniversary of the Denver Province. As of January 1, 2027, we will become the Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos Province of the Redemptorists, and a new history will begin.

This new province will incorporate three distinct Redemptorist provinces, each with its own unique story. We are bringing together not only the Denver Province but also the Baltimore Province and the Province of Mexico. We are also incorporating a Vietnamese vice-province into the collaborative mix. The result will be much better use of our resources, our personnel, and our ministerial efforts. It will provide an opportunity to strengthen what we already do while providing us with opportunities to accept new ministries and new challenges moving forward.

This issue of *Liguorian* celebrates both the old and the new, and its main theme is devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart has a long history within the devotional practice and life of our Church family, but it has also received renewed emphasis from both Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV. This is our contribution to the renewal of this wonderful devotion.

We continue and expand our look at the historical roots of the Catholic Church during this year of celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American union. We also look at other forms of Catholic spiritual practice with a wonderful meditation on the rosary and the third eucharistic poem in our continuing series. Our columnists bring much-needed



San Miguel Mission, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, established in 1610, is the oldest church in the United States.

WIKIPEDIA

perspective and commentary and, as usual, provide us with wonderful reflections that help us on our spiritual journey. It is really a team effort, each and every issue.

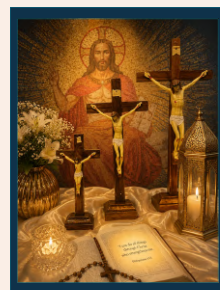
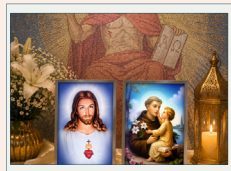
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We continue and expand our look at the historical roots of the Catholic Church during this year of celebration of the 250th annuversary of the American union.



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The Heart of the Good News

Redemptive Living

VINITA HAMPTON
WRIGHT

The Church has a fine missionary history—not perfect, by any means, but impressive in that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been shared with people all over the world. Not only that, but mission work has often included works of mercy, such as feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and so forth. In the United States alone, healthcare dates back to the Catholic religious’ establishment of hospitals where none had existed. And, still, organizations associated with Christian discipleship — Catholic and Protestant — continue to minister during disasters, provide help for people on the margins, and join in massive efforts to improve life for everyone, not just the folks who attend our churches.

In fact, it’s safe to say that the influence of Christ’s followers through the generations has shaped societal ideas about what is good and healthy, such as compassion, equality, justice, and a culture in which people are assigned dignity and worth. We’ve become so accustomed to those values that we might assume they just developed on their own; we might forget that Christ’s way of seeing people and treating them caused ripples throughout history.

But what is the “good news” in today’s world, where God’s kingdom has been present and growing for millennia? And, in an age of overflowing information, what might a person need to know that he or she hasn’t already heard? When I’m interacting with a person, what’s the number-one thing Christ would have me share?

As much as I love the Church, I’m not sure that explaining church life and inviting another person to join is the first thing Christ would have me do. The American landscape is dotted with thousands of churches, and many non-Christians are familiar with church culture and yet have chosen not to partake. Does it make sense to press the issue?

When he walked this earth, Jesus looked at people’s wounds, losses, and needs. I think that’s still the first thing a true missionary should do. And one of the most crucial human needs is for a person to know that he or she is *already loved*. Already valuable. Already seen by God and desired by God. Before they go to church or change their ways or believe this or that theology — before people do *anything* — God loves them. And everything I do and say should communicate this truth to every person.

It’s not my job to point out another’s sins or what I perceive to be their mistaken ideas or beliefs. People already know they need healing and wholeness, and many live with a quiet burden of guilt over their shortcomings and sins. What they need is the truly Good News that God waits to embrace them, nourish them, and enjoy them forever. Divine love will do the rest of the work. So, in what ways can I tell others, “God loves you”? #



**In what ways can I tell others,
“God loves you”?**

PAVEL L PHOTO AND VIDEO / SHUTTERSTOCK

Rosary

A TOUCHING GIFT

BRING A WANDERING MIND TO PRAYERFUL FOCUS THROUGH BEADS

CAROLYN ANCELL

I was recently gifted a beautiful old rosary that belonged to my spiritual director of more than twenty years, a contemplative Redemptorist priest in the desert Southwest. It is a precious gift. I confess that although I haven't been a faithful pray-er of the rosary in recent years, now holding Fr. John's beads in my hands, feeling their weight, and caressing their well-worn surfaces, I am drawn again to this ancient prayer.

Thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian, philosopher, and bishop St. Bonaventure, in his writing *The Mind's Road to God*, defined prayer as the journey of the soul into God, along with the things that support and express the journey. Our sense of touch (as well as our senses of taste, sight, hearing, and smell) can be one such support. Numerous spiritual traditions employ a tactile support in beads that help quiet the wandering mind and focus on a heart-full recital of the Holy Name, a sacred word, a phrase from Scripture, the names of those we are praying for, or traditional prayers.

Prayer beads used by the world's religious faiths range from the 59 beads of the Catholic rosary (the mysteries of Jesus' and Mary's life and the birth of the Church) and the 33 beads of the Protestant or Anglican rosary (for the 33 years of Jesus' life) to the 108 beads of the Hindu *mala* (the number 108 chosen for a variety of spiritual, mathematical, and cosmological reasons), the 99 beads of the Muslim *Misbaha* or *Tasbeih* (for the attributes or names of God), and, introduced in 1995, the 18-bead Lutheran Pearls of Life, a set of beads of various sizes and colors, each with a designated focus, such as God, silence, baptism, desert, serenity, love, mystery, night, and resurrection. Prayer beads can be of any material, or they can simply be knots on a cord.

The major religion for which I did not at first see the presence of a tactile support for prayer was Judaism. Looking more closely, however, I found that many Jews, following the LORD's command in Numbers 15:37-40, finger the *tzitzits*, the knotted corners of their *tallits*, or prayer shawls, as they pray. Then, I met The Velveteen Rabbi. Not kidding. Rabbi Rachel Barenblat is an ordained rabbi and *mashpi'ah ruchanit* (spiritual director), prolific writer, lecturer, and teacher on the East Coast. A Buddhist friend

gave her a set of *mala* beads, which she holds and clicks through as she chants in her mind the Jewish declaration of faith: *Sh'ma Israel, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad*. She writes in her blog (VelveteenRabbi.com), "Moving the beads between thumb and forefinger is a little bit like winding the fringes of my *tallit* around and between my fingers while praying."

Beads of Courage is a wonderful healthcare application of beads for spiritual support. According to a February 2023 edition of the *Arizona Daily Star*, quoted on BeadsOfCourage.org, the nonprofit organization offers beading for children coping

with serious illnesses, their parents, and their clinicians. "Black beads represent blood draws, IVs, or needle pokes; yellow represents an overnight stay in the hospital; and so on." A mother who now volunteers with the program said, "When you count out the beads, you are mindful of all the obstacles," referring to all the steps along the way to the child's healing. "It really keeps you grounded."

Finally, the Greeks give us *komboloi*, or "worry beads." Although not necessarily considered a tool for spiritual activity, using them can nonetheless calm a troubled spirit. Recently, I sat at my computer, fascinated, as I watched a tutorial on how to use worry beads on GreekReporter.com. As the senses become occupied in the whirling and clicking of the beads, there's simply no room left for worry—and letting go of our worries is a pretty good start to prayer!

Multiple websites and YouTube videos provide guidance on praying the Catholic rosary. As you explore your own rosary practice and its benefits, you may find yourself following the traditional format of prayers, or you may decide to create a pattern of prayer using fragments from the Book of Psalms or other Scripture, words that rise out of the intentions and meditations of your heart, or words and phrases that hold you in the Divine Presence while you are praying for your own needs, the concerns of family and friends, and those of the nation, world, and Church.

To bead, or not to bead? What matters is discovering ways to bring a wandering mind to prayerful focus. Let us not overlook God's gift of our sense of touch to serve that purpose well. #

Meditation



Carolyn Ancell is an author of books and articles on spirituality and the arts, a therapeutic harpist, and a member of Santa Catalina Catholic Church, a parish staffed by the Redemptorists in Oro Valley, Arizona.

How's Your Prayer Life?

Teach Us to Pray

FR. GARY LAUENSTEIN,
CSSR

Students in the classroom expect a test or quiz from time to time which tells the teacher how well they are absorbing what is being taught in the classroom. And people who are able to have an annual physical check-up. If a check-up shows the beginning of some malady, it can be addressed and remedied in a timely fashion. It does not have to grow until it becomes a major problem.

Similarly, it is good to have a check-up of our spiritual life, before a habit or lifestyle sets in which is detrimental. So here are a few questions for a "spiritual check-up":

"I have a set prayer time of several minutes every day and I offer little prayers throughout the day."

YES or NO

"I attend Mass every Sunday."

YES or NO

"When I am at Mass, I participate by answering the prayers and singing the hymns with the Congregation."

YES or NO

"I go to Confession or participate in a Penance Service every month or six weeks."

YES or NO

"I try to do some spiritual reading every day, either from the Bible or from some other source of spiritual writing."

YES or NO

How did you do? If you have answered "yes" to all those questions, you are doing very well. But if there is one or the other which has slipped in your practice of prayer, you might want to look at

your spiritual life and see where there is opportunity for some changes.

And you may have some questions of your own: What do you do about distraction in prayer? What happens when God does not seem to answer your prayers or you are going through a dry spell in your spiritual life? How do you know what to talk to God about? And what do you do when you keep falling asleep when you are trying to pray?! You may have many other questions. The experience of some difficulties in prayer is common to all of us human beings. You should not feel discouraged.

Perhaps we can help. The founder of the Redemptorists, St Alphonsus Liguori, wrote quite a bit on prayer from his own experience and from the experience of many others who had preceded him in the history of the Church. We Redemptorists have tried to heed his teaching and we have tried to incorporate it into our life.

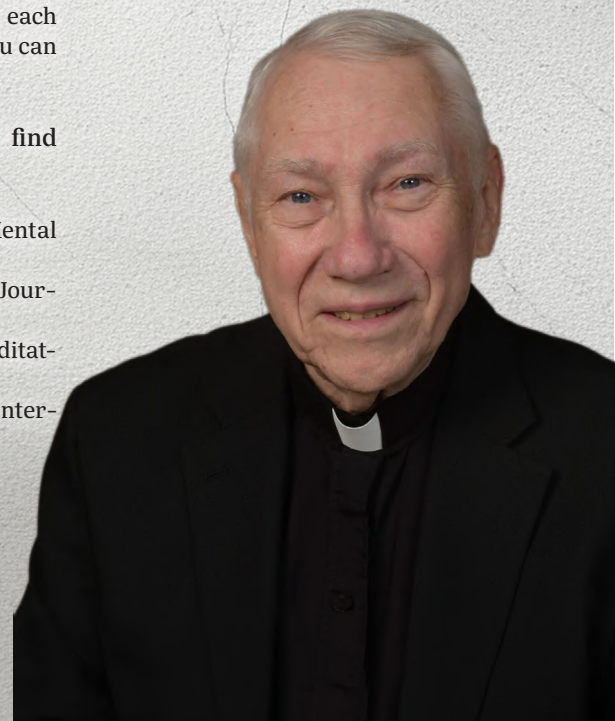
Each month over the next several months we will be offering in these pages a sort of "instruction manual" on various forms of prayer. Also, in each article, we will point out where you can find some information on-line.

The sorts of things you will find here are:

- Four kinds of meditation: Mental Prayer
- Four kinds of meditation: Journaling
- Four kinds of meditation: Meditating with a text
- Four kinds of meditation: Centering Prayer
- Liturgical Prayer
- Devotions
- How to Make a Retreat
- Prayers after Communion
- Sing once, Pray twice

Those are the topics of the articles you will find here. They are also the names of the videos you will be directed to on-line, should you decide to use them. And the articles and videos will not be identical. There may be some things that the articles contain, which the videos do not. And vice-versa.

We like to call this our "School of Prayer." Some education in life is for learning practical skills or adds to our enjoyment of the arts or helps us understand the world we live in. This School of Prayer will help you in the one area that is the most important: your relationship with God. May you find the School of Prayer a blessing and may it contribute to your healthy relationship with Your Lord. We look forward to meeting you in "The School of Prayer."



Healing Digital Exhaustion

**Social Media
Perspectives**

ADAM TRAN-CHUNG

Have you ever scrolled through social media for long periods of time and then felt a deep sense of fatigue? Digital exhaustion is the tiredness that comes from endless scrolling, constant notifications, and the pressure to remain perpetually plugged in. Social media promises to keep us connected and stimulated, but over time, it leaves us numb, overwhelmed, and undernourished.

Signs of digital exhaustion include shorter attention spans, difficulty praying, and discomfort with silence. Moments meant for rest are soaked up by passive consumption. This dulls our spirits and preoccupies our minds which, in turn, blocks us from properly encountering God. Just as the Church has always recognized a special concern for the materially poor and abandoned, today we must also recognize those who are spiritually drained by constant connectivity. For people in this predicament, their souls cry out for rest, listening, and renewal.

Rather than looking for the next thing that demands our eyes and energy, we should ask ourselves: *How can we heal our attention spans? Instead of competing in the social marketplace, how can we create an environment in which we are not required to perform, react, or consume? How can we create a place where we can simply be?*

Social media has become necessary in business and education, and it connects us with remote family and friends and with other people all over the world. Yet, we must understand both the positive and negative effects. Platforms are designed to keep users engaged; algorithms curate our experience, demanding our attention for as long as possible. Over time, this can become an addiction. We need to acknowledge this reality in our lives and handle it with great care.

We have to admit that sometimes we reach for our phones to fill the stillness. Silence may feel threatening, yet it is in silence that God often speaks to us. If we seek balance, we can choose practices that reorient our hearts: eucharistic adoration, prayer groups, daily Mass, or retreats.

If the first thing you reach for every morning is your phone, try interrupting that habit by getting out of bed first. Make social media the last thing on your morning to-do list. In doing so, you will reclaim control over your focus, one moment of stillness at a time. These moments will remind you that we are not meant to live at the pace of our notifications. The goal is to create more pockets of stillness that ground us and help us remember that we are more than online presences or comments on the posts of influencers we will probably never meet. We are beloved children of God who long to hear his voice. #



Digital exhaustion comes from the pressure to remain perpetually plugged in.

Sinitta Leunen / Unsplash



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The Perfect Guy

PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION REVEALS DISCOVERIES ABOUT FAMILY AND SELF

CHARLENE HOYT

Glenny O'Hara jogged down the path near her home until she reached the old bench along the way and sat down. She had gotten up early because she hadn't slept well, and she thought the air might clear her head.

She watched as the sun rose, blending such glorious colors that changed minute by minute. Her dad often said, "Morning is the blessing of God's day." Lately, though, Glenny thought that sleeping in was a blessing. So many times, she'd turn the alarm off, hoping for at least five more minutes, but, faithfully, her dad would knock and cheerfully announce, "Don't miss out on the best time of the day."

She took some deep breaths and a few swallows from her water bottle, thinking about him. He rarely talked about his younger years, only that Glenny's mom had died shortly after she was born, and they had come to America a few years later. She never really asked her dad much about his childhood, and, as years went on, she simply became more interested in doing her own thing. She did have twinges of guilt from time to time, like when he had suggested they walk down the path and wait for sunset, but she had refused, saying she was going to meet friends at the mall. He didn't complain, but she knew she had disappointed him.

Glenny's dad was her only family, and he'd been very good to her. But as she grew into her teens, she started

thinking he was a little old-fashioned and began wanting more independence. She sighed as she thought about how lately it seemed as if nothing quite satisfied her. Even when she and her friends were together, somehow it seemed...shallow. And now, her dad was very excited because she'd be confirmed in just a few days. She was looking forward to it, too, but lately she'd been feeling regretful about doing some things that she knew would hurt her dad if he found out—her dad, who had probably never done anything wrong. She knew that, somehow, she needed to get to confession before confirmation on Sunday.

She stood up, stretched, and felt a bit surprised at how beautiful it was outside. She laughed slightly and said aloud, "Maybe dad knows something after all."

"I'll bet he does," came a voice from behind her. As she whirled around, she saw it was Chad Carter, and he smiled. "Isn't this a little early for you?"

"Actually, yes," she admitted. "What about you? Couldn't you sleep either?"

"Nah," he said as they started walking alongside each other. "I do this every day. I really like the morning."

"You too?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, my dad always says I'm missing the best part of the day."

"Sounds like a smart guy," he replied. "Well, I'm going



to pick up the pace. After all, graduation is in a month, and I don't want to wreck my perfect attendance now. If we want to make it in time for our first class, we'd better get moving."

"Oh, wow!" she replied. "You're right."

"Want me to pick you up?"

"That'd be great!" she replied. "Thanks."

The kitchen light was on and, through the window, she could see her dad moving about. As she opened the door, he turned and smiled. "Did you enjoy the sunrise?"

She nodded. "I did."

"Better hurry and eat. It's getting late."

She did as instructed and, after finishing her first bite, looked over at him. "These are really good, Dad. I didn't know you could make crepes."

"I thought since you went out to experience the goodness of the early morning, I'd make something special."

After a quick shower and change of clothes, she saw Chad's car out front.

"I'll see you later, Dad," she called, heading out the door.

It was during confirmation preparation class that Glenny started getting sleepy. Suddenly, she heard her name being called, and she had no idea why.

"Glenny," the teacher was saying, "what saint's name have you chosen?"

Glenny felt her face flush, but she managed to answer, "I'm not sure yet."

"Well, confirmation is Sunday, so be sure to know by then."

"I will," she replied, feigning confidence.

That afternoon, walking home, Glenny kept hoping for some great inspiration. She loved St. Thérèse, but Thérèse was already her middle name. Saint Thérèse was special because she did things in her "little way." So many other saints had founded schools, started religious orders, and done other notable things that Glenny was sure she herself could never do. *In fact*, she thought, *if I'm truly honest, I feel barely fit to be confirmed*. Her dad would be so hurt if he ever knew she'd gone to a party where beer and marijuana were free for the taking. And she felt shame remembering how Kyle Braden, the heartthrob of the senior class, had flattered her by asking her to go to the mall, only to coax her into stealing a sweatshirt. *Why*, she mentally berated herself, *hadn't I had the courage to stand up to him?* As soon as she'd gotten home from the mall that day, she'd taken the money she'd been saving, along with the price tag from the sweatshirt, and quickly went back and left them at the store.

The next day after school, it took all her gumption to ask Fr. Stevens to hear her confession. It was hard, but she felt new inside afterward and now could look forward to her confirmation. If only she could decide on a name...

Later, when Glenny got home, she was surprised to see a strange car in the driveway. As she got closer, she saw her dad was showing someone around the flower garden that was starting to bloom. He spotted her, and she waved.

“Glenny,” he called, and she could almost feel the pride in his voice. “Come here and meet my best friend from Ireland. This is Charlie Murphy. Rather, Father Charlie Murphy,” he corrected himself.

“I’m so glad to meet you, Glenny” he said, taking her hand. “Ah, you have a definite resemblance to Kathleen.”

“You knew my mom?” Glenny perked up.

“Yes,” he replied, then added with a chuckle, “for some reason, she fell for your dad, even though he was moody and standoffish.”

“Are you sure you’re thinking of the right man?” Glenny said, taken aback by Charlie’s words. “I’ve never seen Dad anything but upbeat.”

Charlie laughed. “Oh, Sean,” he said, but stopped himself from saying more.

Her dad shook his head and changed the subject. “Come along! I have a nice corned beef and cabbage simmering on the stove.”

“Dad, did you know Fr. Charlie was coming?”

Her dad nodded. “Charlie said he’d try to stop over but didn’t know for sure if he could make it.”

That night, as she loaded the dishwasher, Glenny could hear her dad and Fr. Charlie telling old stories from Ireland. Glenny couldn’t help wondering why her dad had never mentioned Charlie before and had rarely mentioned anything about Ireland at all.

The next morning, Glenny decided to go for another morning run. When she reached the old bench, Fr. Charlie was sitting there. He looked up and smiled.

“I didn’t expect to see you this early,” he said.

“It is kinda weird,” she admitted. “I

came out yesterday and surprised myself by liking it. So, I decided I’d come again today.”

“Well, I’m glad you did, and this is a good place to take a break.”

Glenny sat down. “It’s nice meeting dad’s best friend. Fact is, he hardly ever talks about Ireland.”

“The pain was so great. I believe he just wanted to forget.”

“I guess Mom dying must have been really hard on him,” she said thoughtfully.

He stood, with a faraway look. “It wasn’t just that,” he said reflectively, then began...

“One evening, when Sean was seventeen, your grandpa told him to hitch the buggy and go into the village and

pick up his sister Molly, who worked part-time at a dressmaker’s shop. It was raining, and your grandpa didn’t want her walking home in it. Sean loved his sister, but he was annoyed nevertheless. Besides a full day at school, he had already done several hours of farm chores and just wanted to go sit by the fire for a while. He left the house in a bad frame of mind.”

Charlie sat back down. “Well, he did pick up Molly, but the rain had gotten worse. Even though he knew he should slow down, he kept urging the horse on faster. They were almost home when they hit a rut in the road, and Molly was thrown from the buggy, hit her head on a rock, and died instantly. His lovely sister Molly, with the face of an angel, was dead.”

He sighed. “Before the accident, Sean and I were rather a mischievous pair, but afterward he became so riddled with guilt and withdrawn, and we drifted apart. I guess it affected both of us to the core. I became focused on a different way of life and ended up where no one would have expected—I decided to become a priest. When I was in the seminary, I’d occasionally make it back and visit your dad. Though he didn’t show any interest, I still came as often as I could.”

“God has forgiven you. Now, you must forgive yourself.”



FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ARAB CHRISTIAN ICON OF SAINT DISMAS FROM THE BERLIN STATE MUSEUM / WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

Fr. Charlie smiled and shook his head. "One day," he continued, "he surprised me and asked how I decided to change from being the wild guy I was to wanting to be a priest. I told him the seeds had been planted one Good Friday, when the passion was being read. Somehow, I was so struck that a criminal who was dying next to Jesus would ask him to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom. And that Jesus would tell the criminal he'd be with him in paradise that very day! I couldn't get it out of my head.

"Suddenly, I knew there was hope for me...for all of us. For the first time in a couple years, I made myself go to confession, and I tried to clean out all the garbage I'd been carrying around. At the end, the priest surprised me by saying, 'God has forgiven you. Now, you must forgive yourself.' As I was telling all this to your dad, I remember seeing him force back tears. I told him he needed to forgive himself too. Molly's death had been an accident.

"I began reading what I could find about the good thief, and he became one of my favorite saints." He let out a deep sigh. "I figured a guy who hadn't been perfect would be the perfect guy to intercede for me. And every day, I asked him to pray for your dad."

Fr. Charlie continued. "After that, by the grace of God, Sean began to blossom again. He met your mom, fell deeply in love, and soon they married. When she died after your birth, I was afraid he'd fall back into

depression, but he didn't. He gave you loving care and surprised everyone when he told us that the two of you were moving to America. Yesterday was the first time in sixteen years I've seen Sean. I thank God for taking such good care of him," he smiled, "and you."

Glenny stood up. "Wow!" she said. "I had no idea." And then, thoughtfully, she asked, "Do you know what the good thief's name was?"

"It was Dismas."

Dismas. The name rolled around in her head. *Dismas...*

They had almost reached the house when Glenny turned and impulsively gave Fr. Charlie a hug. "Thank you so much for caring about my dad," she whispered.

As they went into the house, Glenny felt warm inside. She now knew that a guy who hadn't been perfect would be the perfect saint for her, too. And on Sunday, when the Holy Spirit would come down upon her, she would gratefully take the name Dismas in honor of a humble intercessor to help in times of weakness. #



Charlene Hoyt is a freelance writer from southeastern Wisconsin. She enjoys walks with her border collie, Bo, and visiting with her wonderful neighbors. She loves horses and football, but her greatest blessings are her faith and family.

Bible Quiz answers (puzzle is on page 43)

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1-O (Ex 24:13) | 13-G (Gn 35:8) |
| 2-H (1 Mc 6:16-47) | 14-E (2 Tm 4:14) |
| 3-M (Gn 25:26) | 15-X (Acts 17:33-18:3) |
| 4-W (Gn 34:25) | 16-R (Acts 12:1-12) |
| 5-V (Gn 30:14) | 17-L (1 Kgs 5:6-8) |
| 6-I (Lk 24:13-18) | 18-N (Jn 2:1) |
| 7-J (Dn 8:15-16) | 19-P (1 Sm 17:12) |
| 8-U (Tb 3:17) | 20-Q (Lk 15:11-32) |
| 9-S (Mt 9:9) | 21-T (Rv 12:7) |
| 10-K (Gn 45:9-10) | 22-B (Gn 6:15) |
| 11-D (Jgs 7:12) | 23-A (1 Kgs 6:2) |
| 12-F (Neh 1:11) | 24-Y (Ex 2:21) |

Catholic Crossword answers (puzzle is on page 42)

B	E	A	R		D	A	L	E	S		T	E	E	M	
E	N	C	E		E	V	A	D	E		A	C	R	E	
D	O	H	S		V	E	N	U	E		H	U	L	A	
E	C	O		F	I	R	E			T	I	M	E	D	
	H	O	M	I	L	Y		T	N	O	T	E			
			A	S	S			E	A	S	I	N	G		
E	N	O	S	H		J	E	E	P	S		I	A	D	
B	I	B	S		H	O	S	T	S		E	S	T	H	
B	C	E		L	U	R	C	H		C	A	M	E	L	
	E	D	G	I	N	G				H	O	C			
		I	R	A	T	E				H	A	W	H	A	W
A	N	E	A	R			V	E	I	L		M	R	E	
B	E	N	D		A	T	E	A	R		A	B	E	D	
L	A	C	E		T	H	I	R	D		C	R	A	G	
E	T	E	S		L	E	N	T	O		T	Y	K	E	

Family Time Is Holy Time

Face to Face

SCOTT CZARNOPYS

As we move into the warmth of summer, it's a season of "lasts." My daughter, Haven, will graduate from St. Patrick's Parish School as she completes eighth grade. She has been part of St. Pat's since she was three years old. Time can be abstract, but when you watch your child prepare to leave the only hallways she's ever known, time suddenly becomes the most real and precious commodity we have.

Recently, I was given a rare gift. I was able to go on a weekend "mission" to Indianapolis. Usually, my wife handles Haven's gymnastics trips, but this time, I was able to drive her to the competition, which was four and a half hours from our home in Grand Rapids.

The drive was a lesson in pure fatherhood. At first, Haven claimed the back seat and popped in her earbuds. In the Redemptorist tradition, we are called to meet people exactly where they are. In that car, "where she was" was in the space right between childhood and high school.

She couldn't keep her earbuds in the whole time and eventually began to talk. We discussed high school plans, the sports she wants to play, and what's happening in her social circle. Even the long stretches of quiet didn't feel empty; we were together. In the hotel that night, she didn't want to go out or do anything, even though I kept offering. We just hung out. I realized that the shared space is what mattered.

The next morning, I sat in the stands for two hours, watching her compete. Moments like these help me hear again the wisdom of St. Alphonsus Liguori, the founder of the Redemptorists, who once wrote, "The time which is given us is the price with which we may purchase eternal life."

Time is our most precious commodity, and how we spend it on those we love becomes a form of prayer. We often think of missionary work as serving the broken, but spending unhurried, intentional time with our families is also a kind of mission.

By the time you read this, the school bells will be silent, the hallways empty, and the days longer. Summer is the season of opportunity, when our children are home, and the commodity of time feels more palpable. I challenge you (and myself) to cherish the mundane. Whether it's a quiet car ride, a shared meal, or just sitting on the deck together, be aware that time is fleeting.

Time is our most precious commodity. How will you use yours this summer? #



Cherish the mundane...be aware that time is fleeting.

LUKMANNIL HAKIM / UNSPLASH

Eucharistic Poetry

JEANETTE MARTINO LAND

Your Word

Seed your Word into my heart, Lord.
Let it germinate, while I contemplate
Your life in me,
My life in you.

Ripen me to
a loving relationship, a living faith in you.
Feed and nourish me with yourself:
Your precious Body, Blood, soul, and divinity.

Inscribe your Word in my heart—
to be treasured and shared.
Scatter me so
I can be Eucharist to others.

Mature me in your ways;
teach me to be living gospel!
Through my witness,
may others come to experience the fullness
of your love!

Your Word, Lord...
Seeded,
Germinated,
Contemplated,
Ripened,
Scattered,
Treasured,
Shared,
Matured,
Lived,
Experienced!

A Living Word of Love!



Jeanette Martino Land is a freelance writer and a member of St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church in Singer Island, Florida. As a Passionist Associate, she presents Days of Prayer, and she and her husband, Jack, have made two missionary trips to Haiti. Jeanette has two sons and one granddaughter.

The Saints We Can Trust

One of our favorite comedian's quips is a claim that some spiritual things, like relics and exorcisms, should be entrusted only to the Catholic Church. When there is a demonic possession, nobody runs into the street and yells, "My child is possessed by a demon! Quick! Call the non-denominational worship pastor!"

Or, imagine walking into the lobby of the Living Springs Congregational Church and seeing a human head in a glass case labeled, "Kevin, our former youth pastor." (If you have been to Siena and seen St. Catherine's head, this story is even more relevant!)

The Catholic Church has many unique traditions and, from its beginnings, has recognized the potential and power in canonizing saints. The church has a lengthy and rigorous process of declaring a human being a Saint (with a capital "S").

All communities need heroes. We are inspired and comforted by the memory of those who have walked this journey of life, struggled, and made it to heaven, where they can intercede for us. Our experiences with several Redemptorist communities in Minnesota and Arizona have shown us both the great missionary zeal and the healing power of Redemptorists like St. Gerard Majella and Blessed Francis Seelos.

The canonization process takes many years, often decades. Every aspect of the candidate's life and writings is scrutinized and evaluated. The criteria of "heroic holiness" is the lens held up throughout the process from "Servant of God" to "Venerable" to "Blessed" and, finally, to "Saint." We recognize the spiritual power of these saints and dedicate feasts, prayers, rituals, and liturgies in their honor because we believe in the communion of the saints and in the efficacy of their intercession.

When the secular world declares someone a "saint" or a "martyr," there is a difference. When someone dies today—whether it's a victim of police brutality, a political figure, or a media star—people sometimes declare their "sainthood" almost immediately. Within hours, shrines are erected, poems are penned, and songs are composed in their honor. The need to memorialize and give proper expression to our painful grief is rooted deep in us, and there is nothing wrong with that. But, without wise due process, people who did not live up to the criteria of heroic holiness, are declared secular saints or martyrs. And, often, chaos ensues. Division and vitriolic discourse follow. Families, parishes, and even the wider Church can fracture as we rush to "canonize" or "demonize" certain individuals in the public arena.

We would be wise to move slowly in declaring anyone a saint and instead lean on those who have been duly scrutinized and canonized. As we pray for peace amid our country's divisions, may all the Redemptorist saints and martyrs pray for us! #



People who did not reach "heroic holiness" are declared secular "saints" or "martyrs."

JULIE RICARD / UNSPLASH

The Social Gospel in the Forests and Frontiers

Social Gospel

**FR. RAJA VIJAYANAND,
CSsR**

In the living history of the Redemptorist Congregation in India, Fr. James Chakalakkal, C.Ss.R., stands as a prophetic witness to the Gospel not merely preached from pulpits, but embodied in forests, refugee camps, tribal villages, and forgotten margins. His life is a compelling testament to the words of Christ: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18).

From the early years of his Redemptorist missionary life, Fr. James embraced immersion as the heart of evangeliza-

tatives, and even the establishment of a post office, the parish became a living model of the Social Gospel. This mission proved that evangelization must include social awakening, education, and empowerment.

After this pioneering coastal mission, Fr. James chose not institutional comfort but the deeper uncertainty of tribal mission among the marginalized communities of Muthanga in Wayanad, Kerala. At a time when many would have sought structured ministry, he entered the dense forests, difficult terrains, and

ernment welfare schemes, educational opportunities, and social resources long denied to them.

At the heart of his spirituality is a simple yet profound confession centred on Jesus of Nazareth. His testimony reads: “Jesus of Nazareth is always with us—He is our way, our truth, and our life. My life and mission are nothing but a humble and fully committed effort to follow the footsteps of my Master. The presence of the Master with us is not merely a matter of faith, but a living reality.” For him, the presence of Jesus



tion. In 1972, alongside fellow Redemptorist confreres Fr. Thomas Kocherry and Fr. Mathew Oottukulam, he ventured into the coastal fishing parish of Poothura near Trivandrum. There, these missionaries did not remain distant administrators; they lived among the fisherfolk, worked alongside them, and shared their daily struggles. This pastoral insertion became a remarkable chapter of social transformation. The people of Poothura would later remember this period as the ‘golden years’ of renewal. Through lay participation in liturgy, adult literacy programs, tuition centres, a public library, healthcare ini-

neglected settlements where indigenous communities struggled for dignity, land, and survival. His mission was not one of occasional charity, but of incarnational solidarity.

Known affectionately as the “Kaadu Priest” (Forest Priest), Fr. James mirrored the Redemptorist charism of following Christ the Redeemer among the most abandoned. For over five decades, more than 51 years, he has remained with nearly 1,000 tribal families in Muthanga. His mission was not paternalistic charity, but empowerment rooted in justice. He worked to ensure tribal communities could access gov-

is not an abstract belief but an experienced reality that shapes every step of mission, every act of solidarity, and every moment of life among the poor. His entire missionary identity flows from this conviction that to live with the poor is to live in the living presence of Jesus of Nazareth.

He encouraged contextual theology, helping communities interpret faith through their lived realities of oppression, poverty, and dignity. His practical creativity extended even to livelihood initiatives, such as promoting bamboo craftsmanship and furniture-making as sustainable means of income.

Fr. James himself summarizes his mission profoundly: “My faith tells me that the poor are special to God, that He is with them in a unique way, and that I experience Him through my life with the poor.” He lived with the tribal people, walked their paths, shared their poverty, and became one among them. Like the Good Shepherd who “lives among his sheep” (John 10:14), he understood that authentic evangelization required presence before preaching.

His simple attire often devoid of conventional priestly garb was not a rejection of priesthood but a radical expression of missionary adaptation. He stripped away external distinctions to become accessible to the people he served. In this, he followed the pattern of Christ Himself, who “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:7).

Fr. James did not merely minister to tribals but lived with them. In the forests of Wayanad, where tribal communities often faced displacement, illiteracy, exploitation, and social exclusion, he became an advocate for justice and human dignity. His life reflected the biblical mandate: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute” (Proverbs 31:8). This is Gospel-rooted liberation. Like St. Alphonsus Liguori, who founded the congregation to serve the spiritually and materially abandoned, Fr. James recognized that redemption must touch both soul and society.

During the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, Fr. James served courageously in refugee camps sheltering displaced persons fleeing violence, persecution, and devastation. In those camps, amidst disease, hunger, and trauma, his priesthood became compassionate presence. He embodied Matthew 25:35: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” He also served as Novice Master, forming future Redemptorists not for comfort but for mission among the abandoned. In a Church often tempted by institutional security, his life remains a sharp pro-

phetic voice. He reminds us that faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

In tribal villages, refugee camps, formation houses, and forgotten corners, Fr. James followed the Master who touched lepers and proclaimed freedom to captives. Today, in a world wounded by inequality and displacement, his life cries out as a challenge: Are we willing to leave comfort and become Gospel presence? His legacy is not merely Redemptorist but it is ecclesial, prophetic, and deeply human. Fr. James Chakalakkal did not seek prominence. Like John the Baptist, his life pointed to Another. Yet in that hiddenness, his witness shines brighter.

For in the end, his life is the continuation of Christ’s own mission: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). In the forests of Wayanad, in refugee camps of war, and in the lives of the marginalized, Fr. James lived this Gospel as reality.



“Well done, good and faithful servant!” is a popular quote from the parable of the ten talents found in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 25:14-30) as well as Luke (Lk 19:11-27). As we all know, this parable is about a master who entrusts some talents to his servants, expecting them to invest it, trade with it and in return, earn some income on it like any good steward would do with their master’s money. The master in this parable expects that his stewards should make his money grow, he wants his stewards to multiply his money and he later also holds them accountable for it.

Have you ever wondered how this parable applies to our lives? Let me explain. God has given each one of us certain talents, according to our abilities which we must use responsibly since on the last day we too will be held accountable for how we have used our God gifted talents. This parable teaches us that everything we own – be it our wealth, talents, time and all our other resources are all entrusted to us by God. All we possess in our life is a blessing from God and we have been given the responsibility of safeguarding his possessions which he has entrusted to us like the good steward in the parable of the ten talents.

Each one of us are called to use the resources in our possession not only for our personal needs but also for His greater glory and for the interest of others. It is important to remember that all the resources that we have, is not just ours, it is simply a gift from God and how we use it is our gift to God. We have to strive to be good stewards

by managing all the resources that God has blessed us with prudently and by also utilizing it for the growth of the kingdom of God.

The dictionary meaning of the word steward is a person supervising or taking care of something entrusted to him by the owner. Thus, the steward’s

job is to faithfully manage the resources under his care as if it were his own. The Catechism of Catholic Church (CCC 2404) states that the ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefit to

others. Theologically speaking, stewardship means that all the resources we possess are a gift from God, entrusted to us, to be managed responsibly, shared generously and used for common good rather than being treated as personal property. It involves offering one’s skills, talents, wealth and resources for God and the church.

In the bible, stewardship can be traced right from the book of Genesis to Revelation. It’s calling is rooted in the creation story and highlighted throughout the bible. From the very beginning, God called Adam to work in the garden of Eden. Basically, God commanded Adam to take care of things on his behalf. Then we have Joseph the son of Jacob who was sold as a slave to Egypt and goes on to become the manager of Potiphar’s house, he is an exemplary example of what it means to be a good steward. Thus, the concept of stewardship is ancient but the principle is applicable even

today. True stewardship is exhibited in behaviour, reflecting our understanding that everything belongs to God and is entrusted to our care.

So, then what is Financial Stewardship? financial stewardship refers to faithful management of the financial resources God has entrusted to us. We have to use our financial resources wisely such that it satisfies not only our needs but also the needs of others. It is interesting to note that the main theme of the parable of the ten talents is financial stewardship. The good steward who was praised by the master used the resources which was entrusted to him to improve his master’s wealth.

As Christians, we are called to manage our financial resources not with self-centeredness but with the intention of advancing God’s kingdom. Hence, it doesn’t matter what you do for a living, how much money you earn, everything that you have belongs to God. Whatever he has entrusted to you, you need to care for it and use it for your own needs as well as to serve others. To manage our finances responsibly, we have to keep track of the various aspects of finance which includes generation of income, budgeting, our spending habit, saving and investing methods.

In short, we have to be efficient in making money, managing money and multiplying money to increase our wealth. And as good financial stewards our mindset should shift from ownership to accountability in how we allocate and invest our money since stewardship requires prioritizing God even in our finances. It challenges us to look deeply at how we steward the money we possess so that it aligns with God’s purposes.

Developing a healthy relationship with money is of utmost importance since our entire life revolves around money.



Novia Almeida, CA

Hence, financial literacy is an essential life skill which needs to be instilled in a person at a very young age. However, the lack of financial education offered in schools, colleges or even at homes is the root cause of why so many people get trapped in debts and face huge financial losses. Hence, here we are presenting to you a column on finance to help you become good financial stewards so that you can achieve your financial goals as well as allocate money wisely to spread God's kingdom. Because what better words would we like to hear from Jesus on the last day than "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Novia Almeida is a Chartered Accountant who in her free time, gives investment advice that uses faith to inform professional strategies.



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Can War Still Be Just in an Age of AI and Weapons of Mass Destruction?

Social Justice

**FR. JERRY FERNANDES,
CSsR**

On the 28th of February 2026, the world was left in shock as news channels flashed the heart wrenching tragedy of 165 innocent schoolgirls losing their lives in Iran. Yes, war is painful. Thousands have lost their lives, millions are displaced from their homelands and the world has witnessed horrific scenes in the mass migration and starvation of the people in Gaza. That same evening of the bombing in Iran, a young boy asked me, “Father, what does the Church say about war? Does the Church support war?” His question made me pause and reflect deeply on the tragic reality of war. So further questions surfaced, What have the Popes taught us about war? Can a war truly be called a “just war”? How do we Catholics understand Just War Theory? And as Catholics, what do we need to know and understand about war in our present world?

Understanding the Just War Theory

In simple words Just War Theory holds that war is always a tragic last resort and may be considered morally permissible only when every reasonable effort toward peace has failed. Even then, it can be justified only under strict moral conditions, particularly for the defence of innocent life and the protection of a nation against unjust aggression.¹ The Catholic Church has long upheld the doctrine of Just War since it is not a license for militarism, but rather a safeguard for peace and justice. Rooted in Sacred Scripture, developed by St. Augustine, further clarified by St. Thomas Aquinas, and later codified in theological teachings and catechisms, the theory seeks to establish moral limits in war even in times of conflict.

Traditionally, Just War Theory is divided into three principles:

1. Jus ad bellum — justice before war. (when war may be initiated)
2. Jus in bello — justice during war. (how war must be conducted)
3. Jus post bellum — justice after war. (how peace and reconstruction should take place)

Jus ad bellum deals with the conditions under which entering a war may be morally justified. A war may be considered just only for serious reasons such as self-defense, protecting innocent life, defending a nation from aggression, or preventing genocide and mass atrocities. War can never be justified for revenge, conquest, economic gain, or religious domination. Moreover, only a legitimate public authority, such as a sovereign state or recognized government, may declare war. The Church also teaches that war should be undertaken only when there is a reasonable chance of success and when all peaceful means such as diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, sanctions, and international pressure have been exhausted. Even then, the expected good must outweigh the harm caused by war.

Jus in bello concerns moral conduct during war. Even when a nation enters a war for a justified reason, its actions during the conflict must remain moral. The Church strictly prohibits direct attacks on civilians and insists that non-combatants must be protected. Weapons of mass destruction and prohibited weapons must never be used, and military force should always remain proportionate. For example, destroying an entire neighbourhood to eliminate a minor target would be morally unacceptable. Jus post bellum refers to the moral responsibilities that continue after a war has ended. Victors

must not seek revenge or act unjustly, but instead work toward a just and lasting peace. This includes protecting human rights, restoring lawful authority, rebuilding society fairly, and conducting proper international trials for war crimes. Post-war settlements should encourage reconciliation and

IS THE GOOD PROPORTIONAL?

The use of arms **must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated.** The anticipated benefits must outweigh the anticipated harms.



prevent future cycles of violence.

Even with these principles and conditions, the Church continues to see war as a tragic reality rather than a virtue. The ultimate goal of every Christian must always be peace, not violence. While Just War Theory was developed to protect civilians and uphold justice during conflicts, its relevance in the modern world is increasingly debated. In an age of advanced weaponry, mass civilian casualties, technological warfare, and AI powered weapons, it has become far more difficult to maintain clear moral limits in war.

What Have the Popes Said ?

From the nuclear anxieties of the Cold War to today's fears of AI warfare and mass civilian destruction, Popes over the decades have repeatedly raised their voices against violence, militarism, and perils of war. The recent attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran have once again rekindled discussion on the Church's "Just War" doctrine. In an age of nuclear, biological, chemical, robotic, and AI-controlled weapons, many are asking whether war can ever truly be justified.

During the tense years of the Cold War, shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis,

aware of the horrors of the Second World War and the growing threat of nuclear annihilation, Paul VI warned that modern war could destroy humanity itself. He insisted that war does not solve human problems, but instead creates new cycles of hatred, revenge, and suffering.

Pope John Paul II echoed the same appeal of Pope Paul VI in his messages on the conflicts in the Balkans, Iraq, and other global crises. During the proposed invasion of Iraq in 2003, he strongly opposed the war both publicly and diplomatically, declaring that **"War is always a defeat for humanity."**

Pope Francis spoke perhaps most radically and consistently against war. In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, he openly questioned the continuing relevance of the traditional "Just War" theory in the modern age. "We can no longer think of war as a solution," Francis wrote, adding that *"It is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a 'just war'."* For Francis, modern warfare

with its drones, nuclear weapons, and indiscriminate destruction has made the moral cost of war unbearably high.

During the Ukraine war, Pope Francis repeatedly condemned the invasion, civilian bombings, and nuclear threats. He appealed urgently to world leaders, warning that **"Every war leaves the world worse than before"** and that **"War is madness."** Deeply moved by the suffering of ordinary people, he publicly prayed for refugees, migrants, children, the wounded, and grieving families, crying out to the world: **"Stop the massacre."**

Pope Leo XIV – "Just War Theory is Now Outdated"

From the very beginning, Pope Leo XIV has placed peace at the centre of his pontificate. His first words from the Loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, "Pace sia con tutti voi" ("Peace be with all of you"), set the tone for his papacy. If Pope Francis was often associated with "mercy," Pope Leo XIV may well be remembered for "peace." More recently, in his Palm Sunday homily in March 2026, Leo XIV declared, **"This is our God: Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war."** During the Prayer Vigil for Peace, he emphasized that every person has a role in building the mosaic of peace in the world. "Peace begins not in conference rooms but in daily life, in our homes, relationships, and communities," he said. When asked by a journalist about his mission, he responded simply and boldly that the Church "is not about political strategy but about witnessing to Christ's message: **'Blessed are the peacemakers.'**" True to this vision, he continues to preach and witness courageously to the Gospel of peace.

In his very first and historic encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, issued on 25 May 2026, Pope Leo XIV among the many valuable teachings he sharply warns us that humanity is entering a dangerous era in which war is becoming culturally normalized. He also reminds the world that many are losing historical memory of the horrors of the two World Wars and the Holocaust.

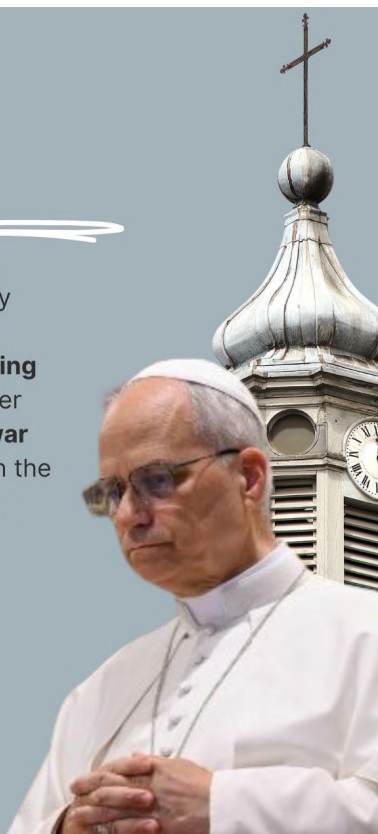
In paragraph 192 of the encyclical, he makes the bold statement that **"today more than ever, without prejudice to the right to self-defence in the strictest sense, it is important to reaffirm that the 'just war' theory, which has all too often been used to justify any kind of war, is now outdated."** Pope Leo XIV holds this view because the growing use of artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons raises serious moral concerns, since machines cannot exercise conscience, compassion, or moral judgment. For him, technology may assist human decision-making, but it cannot make moral decisions about life and death. This is why he insists that "moral judgment cannot be reduced to calculation." A soldier on the battlefield sees human faces, whereas AI systems see data points,

PAPAL TEACHINGS

Modern popes, especially from John XXIII onward, have **expressed increasing skepticism** about whether the **conditions for just war** can realistically be met in the modern age of total war, leading to a **stronger emphasis on peace-building and conflict prevention.**

Pope John XXIII issued his landmark 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. In this historic document, he strongly condemned nuclear war and rejected the idea that violence could bring lasting justice. He wrote, *"It is irrational to think that war is the proper way to obtain justice."*

In 1965, speaking before world leaders at the United Nations Headquarters, **Pope Paul VI** delivered one of the most memorable papal appeals for peace in modern history. Crying out to the nations of the world, he declared, **"No more war, war never again!"** Deeply



heat signatures, and coordinates, reducing human beings to targets rather than recognizing their inherent dignity. Modern weapons can cause widespread and disproportionate destruction, with long-lasting consequences for entire populations and essential civilian infrastructure. A cyberattack, for example, could disable hospitals, water systems, or power grids, affecting millions of civilians.” Traditional Just War reasoning assumes human responsibility, that means, if a commander orders an unjust attack, that commander can be held accountable. But with AI-powered war systems, however, responsibility becomes blurred. Who is responsible/accountable? Is it the programmer, the state, the commander, or the algorithm? Such technology can create a moral vacuum in which no one fully accepts responsibility. This is why the Pope writes: “No algorithm can make war morally acceptable.

In the same encyclical, the pontiff also condemns those who misuse religion to justify violence and conflict. He warns that invoking God in support of terrorism or war is a betrayal of true faith

itself, writing: “*Whereas those who use the name of God to legitimize terrorism, violence or war betray his true nature, for to fight in the name of religion means attacking religion itself.*”

Conclusion

For us Catholics today I think we need to understand that the Just War theory, shaped largely through the teachings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, has long guided Catholic teaching on warfare by insisting that war can be justified only under strict moral conditions, including just cause, proportionality, protection of civilians, and sincere efforts toward peace and diplomacy. Yet, in an age marked by nuclear weapons, artificial intelligence, and large scale civilian destruction, Pope Leo XIV has categorically expressed that the ‘Just War Theory’ has become increasingly inadequate and “is now outdated.” Echoing the consistent teaching of the modern Church, he reminds the world that humanity possesses far better means of resolving conflicts through **dialogue, diplomacy and forgiveness and international cooperation** than on ever

more sophisticated means of warfare.

From Pope John XXIII to Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV, the Church has increasingly recognized that modern warfare destroys not only soldiers, but entire populations, cultures, futures, and the environment. Civilians suffer disproportionately, while war leaves behind refugees, trauma, hatred, and deep human scars. He urges the world not to remain trapped in theoretical discussions, but to “touch the wounded flesh of the victims” and listen to the suffering of those affected by war in places such as Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, Africa and other conflict zones in the world.

In the light of this continuous teaching, I believe Christians today are called to distance themselves from hatred and violence. We are challenged not to normalize war or even the mentality that justifies it, for every war is a defeat for humanity and leaves the world worse than before. As followers of Jesus the Redeemer, we are called to be builders of peace, catalyst of reconciliation, and defenders of human dignity. As Pope Leo XIV reminds us, “The future belongs to men and women of peace.”

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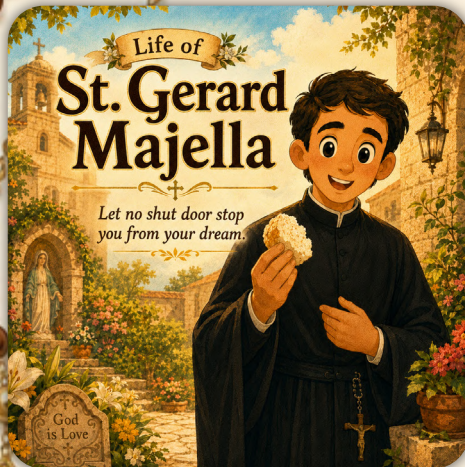
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Heroes of Faith

Children's Storytime with the Saints



Heroes of Faith

Children's Storytime with the Saints



Before I left, I had to leave a message for my mother so she wouldn't worry. I wrote the truest words I could find.



Out the window I went, swinging into the chilly night air!



Morning light filled the bedroom. Mother looked out in shock. In her trembling hand, she held the note I had left behind.

Mother, I am going to become a saint. Do not think of me.



I ran for miles down the dusty roads, chasing the horizon until my feet bled and my chest heaved.



Please, Fathers! Take me with you! Just try me out!

Young man, you look far too sickly for our hard lifestyle.



They finally agreed just to quiet me down. I proved them wrong by working harder than anyone. I found my true joy in serving others.



God used my weak body to perform great wonders. Once, I dropped a handkerchief, and a family saved it. Years later, it miraculously saved a mother and her child. Because of this, God made me the patron saint of mothers and babies.



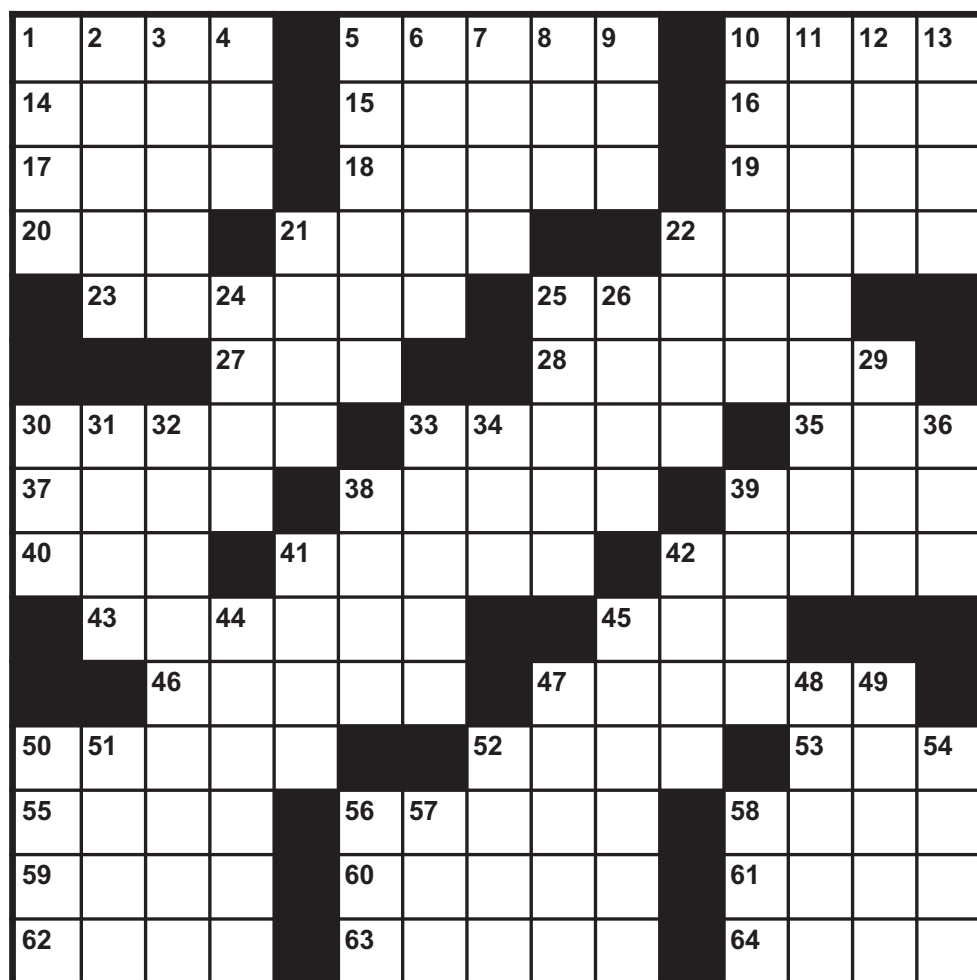
Now, my children, I ask you: Have you ever felt a small, quiet whisper in your heart telling you to help someone, or to do something brave for God?



Do not let fear, or the 'locked doors' of the world, stop you. When God calls your name, pack your courage, open the window of your heart, and run to Him!

ACROSS

- 1 "My punishment is too great to" (Gn 4:13)
- 5 Valleys
- 10 Abound
- 14 Differ ending
- 15 Elude
- 16 Land measure
- 17 Cries from Homer Simpson
- 18 Locale
- 19 Hawaiian dance
- 20 *The Name of the Rose* author
- 21 The Lord appeared to Moses in this (Ex 3:2)
- 22 Measured
- 23 Part of the Liturgy of the Word
- 25 US government obligation
- 27 Samson killed Philistines with the jawbone of this animal
- 28 Relaxing
- 30 Son of Seth
- 33 Utility vehicles
- 35 Start of the Christian era
- 37 Baby covers
- 38 "Heavenly sing alleluia..."
- 39 Only OT book that never mentions God
- 40 Alphabet string
- 41 Stagger
- 42 Biblical animal of transport
- 43 Border
- 45 Second of IHS
- 46 Angry
- 47 Guffaw
- 50 Lend
- 52 Veronica's covering
- 53 Theology degree (abbr.)
- 55 "...at the name of Jesus every knee should" (Phil 2:10)
- 56 Shed
- 58 Retired
- 59 Ornamental fabric
- 60 Commandment that directs us to keep holy the Lord's Day
- 61 Steep, rugged rock
- 62 Soissons seasons
- 63 Slow, musically
- 64 Small child



DOWN

- 1 Medieval English monk
- 2 Grandson of Adam
- 3 Cold comment?
- 4 Matter of law
- 5 Advocate
- 6 Cardinal Dulles
- 7 Alley
- 8 Univ. site
- 9 Jurisdiction of a bishop
- 10 Island from which the *Bounty* sailed
- 11 Promotion of the restoration of unity among Christians
- 12 Perry's creator
- 13 Alcoholic drink of fermented honey
- 21 This was offered to the risen Jesus (Lk 24:42)
- 22 Throw
- 24 Funeral
- 25 Molars
- 26 Sleeps briefly
- 29 We should enter by the narrow one
- 30 Flow back
- 31 Diocese on the French Riviera
- 32 A vow
- 33 First name of Pope Francis I
- 34 Key in a corner
- 36 Literary initials
- 38 Catholic actress Bonnie, of "Cheaper by the Dozen" fame
- 39 Apiece
- 41 ...a poor man is better than a (Prv 19:22)
- 42 Monk's hood
- 44 Corrects papers
- 45 Bob or weave?
- 47 "For where your treasure is, there also will your be." (Mt 6:21)
- 48 Place for sacred vessels
- 49 Inflict
- 50 Showing unusual talent
- 51 Trim
- 52 Blood vessel
- 54 Verge
- 56 An ocean (abbr.)
- 57 Definite article
- 58 of Faith

Answers are on page 29.

Catholic Word Games by Mary Bartlett is available from Liguori Publications (814303).

Bible Quiz

Rate yourself on your knowledge of Scripture.

Match the first column with the second. **Answers are on page 29.**

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Aide to Moses _____ | A. 20 cubits |
| 2. Antiochus Eupator used these in battle against Jews _____ | B. 50 cubits |
| 3. Born holding his brother's heel _____ | C. Bathsheba |
| 4. Brother of Dinah and Levi _____ | D. Camels |
| 5. Brought his mother the mandrakes Rachel wanted _____ | E. Coppersmith |
| 6. Destination of Cleopas _____ | F. Cupbearer |
| 7. First mentioned in the Book of Daniel _____ | G. Deborah |
| 8. Healed Tobit's eyes _____ | H. Elephants |
| 9. Jesus first saw him at the customs post _____ | I. Emmaus |
| 10. Joseph settled his family here _____ | J. Gabriel |
| 11. Midianites used these animals to attack the Israelites _____ | K. Goshen |
| 12. Nehemiah's occupation _____ | L. Horsemen |
| 13. Nurse of Rebekah _____ | M. Jacob |
| 14. Occupation of Alexander, who did harm to Paul _____ | N. Jonah |
| 15. Paul's occupation _____ | O. Joshua |
| 16. Peter went to this person's house after escaping prison _____ | P. Judah |
| 17. Solomon had 12,000 _____ | Q. Luke |
| 18. Swallowed by a big fish _____ | R. Mary |
| 19. The city of Bethlehem is here _____ | S. Matthew |
| 20. The Parable of the Lost Son is found here _____ | T. Michael |
| 21. Went to battle against the dragon _____ | U. Raphael |
| 22. Width of Noah's ark _____ | V. Reuben |
| 23. Width of the Temple _____ | W. Simeon |
| 24. Wife of Moses _____ | X. Tentmaker |
| 25. Wife of Uriah _____ | Y. Zipporah |

Quiz Ratings

11–15 Correct = Novice ★ 16–20 Correct = Good ★★★ 21–25 Correct = Outstanding ★★★★★

Spanish Gazpacho

Saint Isidore the Farmer

The Faithful Plowman

1070–1130 * Feast day: May 15

Patron of farmers and rural communities

Isidore grew up in a humble family and worked his entire life as a farmer for a wealthy Spanish landowner near Madrid. Even though he didn't have much, Isidore had a big heart and a deep faith in God. He was known for his kindness, generosity, and hard work.

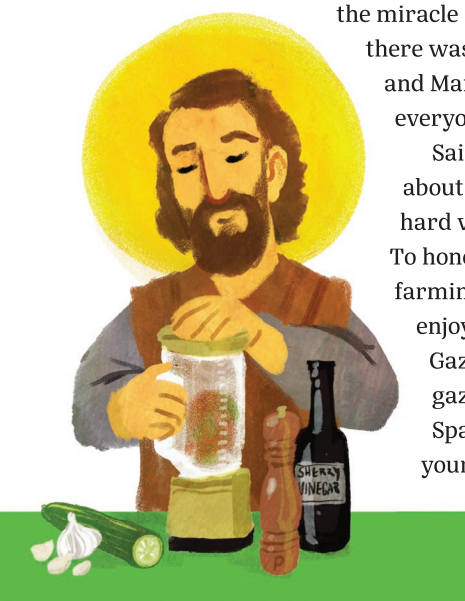
Isidore had three great loves: God, his family, and the soil. No matter how busy he was, he never missed a day of Mass. While working in the fields, he prayed constantly. One amazing story about Isidore is how angels would help him with his work. People said that while Isidore was praying, angels would take up the plow and finish his tasks for him. This miraculous help allowed Isidore to do the work of several men, and the fields he worked on always produced abundant crops.

Isidore and his wife, Maria, who is also a saint, showed their neighbors that poverty, hard work, and difficult times cannot destroy happiness if accepted with faith in Christ. Although they had little, Isidore shared what they had, especially his meals, even if it meant he would go without food. He often brought the hungry to his home, where Maria was always ready with a pot of stew.

One day, Isidore brought so many people home that they ran out of food. When Maria told Isidore the pot was empty, he insisted she look again. Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, there was more stew in the pot, and Maria was able to feed everyone!

Saint Isidore's life teaches us about the importance of faith, hard work, and kindness. To honor his dedication to farming and love of the land, enjoy this refreshing Spanish Gazpacho. This delicious gazpacho brings a taste of Spain's bountiful harvest to your table.

**Saint Isidore the Farmer,
pray for us!**



Ingredients (Serves 6)

- 2 pounds ripe Roma tomatoes, halved,
with core and seeds removed
- 1 small cucumber, peeled and with seeds removed
- 1 medium green bell pepper, cored
- ½ small red onion, peeled
- 2 small garlic cloves (or 1 large clove), peeled
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin

Tools Checklist

- Knives
- Vegetable peeler
- Measuring spoons
- Blender

Instructions

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Chill in the refrigerator for at least an hour before serving.
3. If desired, top individual servings with fresh chopped vegetables, croutons, or crusty bread.

Saintly Bites for Children: Mixing Faith, Fun & Family Time in the Kitchen
©2025, Shelby Siegfried; illustrated by Ted Schluenderfritz (828744,
Liguori Publications).

The Lighter Side



Pretty Good Excuse

A teacher said to one of her students, "It's clear you haven't studied your geography. What's your excuse?"

"Well," the student replied, "my dad says the world is changing every day. So, I decided to wait until it settles down."

Sitting Quietly

A mother with a fidgety seven-year-old boy told me how she gets her son to sit still and be quiet in church.

About halfway through the homily, she leans over and whispers, "If you don't be quiet, Father is going to lose his place, and he will have to start his homily all over again."



The Kg Unit

It was the end of the day when a policeman with the Kg unit was parking his van with Jake, his police dog, barking in the back of the van. He was gathering up his equipment when he noticed a young boy looking at him and then looking at the back of the van, where Jake was barking.

The little boy asked, "Is that a dog you have back there?"

"Sure is," the officer replied.

The boy thought for a moment and then asked, "What did he do?"



If you have jokes or amusing stories you'd like to share, please email them for consideration to Liguorianeditor@Liguori.org, or mail them to Liguorian Editor, 200 Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057.



Some "Wonders of the World" are made of stone...others wear sneakers and giggle.

More Child Wisdom

Well-known proverbs completed by third-graders:

- ☺ Don't bite the hand that... looks dirty.
- ☺ No news is...impossible.
- ☺ A miss is as good as a... mister.
- ☺ You can't teach an old dog new...math.
- ☺ If you lie down with dogs, you'll...stink in the morning.

Br. Raymond Pierce, CSSR, supplies the humor for "The Lighter Side."

To receive his complimentary weekly emails, "Morning Smiles," email him at raymondcssr@gmail.com.



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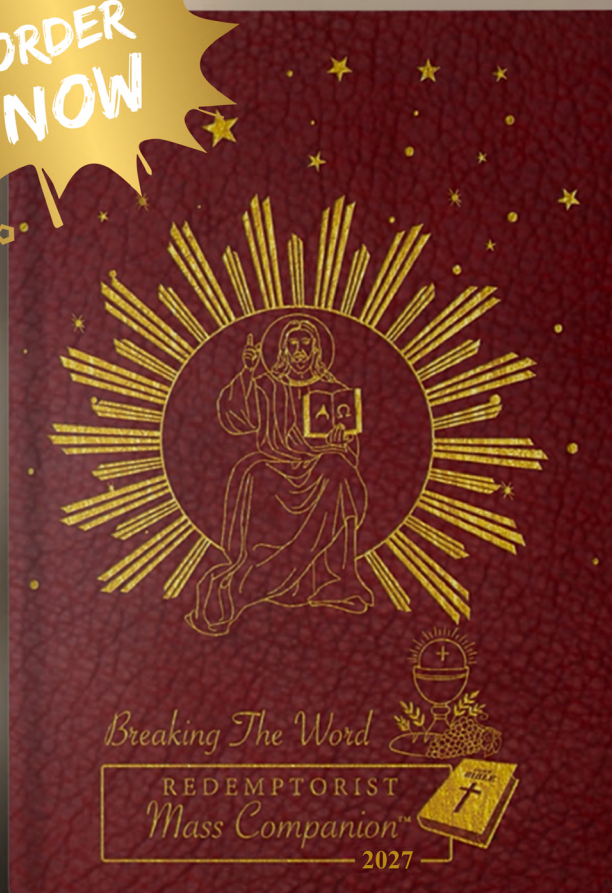
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