

# ***The Missionary Oblate***

**A Journal of Mission Animation**



**Pope appoints Sr. Simona Brambilla  
as Vatican's first female prefect**

**(see p 62)**

**No 67**

**Jan., – June, 2025**

# ***The Missionary Oblate***

**A Journal of Mission Animation**

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**Editor: Fr. Emmanuel Fernando OMI**

Address: Rajabima Oblate Centre, 519 / 16, Jayanthi Mawatha,  
Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka

Tel (0094) 025-2222462; 077 235 9203

email: [emma1938omi@gmail.com](mailto:emma1938omi@gmail.com)

Associate Editors: Fr. Anton Shivantha Waas, OMI  
and Fr. Surain Danushka Fernando OMI

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## **THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE ROMAN SYNOD IN 2024 APPROVED BY POPE**

The Final Document of the Roman Synod, held in Rome in October, 2024, which was approved by the Synod assembly, was also approved and signed by Pope Francis and it belongs to ordinary Magisterium of the Pope.

## **Editorial**

### **SYNODAL WAY FOR MEANINGFUL PASTORAL CARE**

The Synodal approach revived in the Catholic Church by Pope Francis is calling for servant-leadership embodying innovative pastoral approaches in the dioceses and in the parishes.

Jesus sets an example of servant-leadership. Jesus said: “I have come not to be served but to serve (Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28). “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:27). Vivid example of this leadership took place on the night before Jesus’ death by washing the feet of his disciples. After Jesus had washed their feet, he asked the apostles, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am.....I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you” (Jn13:12-17).

St. Paul, writing to the Christians at Philippi said, “Jesus who is divine had assumed the condition of a slave” (Phil 2:6-7) and to help the Corinthians he said, “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Most effective way to teach a good behaviour pattern is to teach it by example.

The ordained ministers need to know also the difference between the concepts, ‘power and authority’. Authority is rooted in leader’s ability to promote the well-being of the people, causing much joy while the use of power by the

ordained ministers hurts and causes wounds and pains in the baptized. Pope Francis laments, saying use of power by the ordained ministers has destroyed the image of the Church. Use of power manifested in different ways makes the people become slaves.

Jesus, our Lord and Master combined his authority with servanthood thereby creating also a spirit of commitment and involvement. The Synodal way adopted in the Catholic Church embodies servanthood, namely the spirit of listening prayerfully to the Holy Spirit who is present and active also in the baptized persons.

Authoritarian-leader imposes his / her desired behaviour pattern (power) in an organization whereas a servant-leader models his / her desired behaviour. In an authoritarian leadership, accompanied by an attitude of resentment, there can be temporary compliance by trying to circumvent the order imposed.

Servant-leadership produces lasting beneficial results. Servant-leaders empower people through their example, guidance, caring, understanding, trust, appreciation, encouragement and shared vision. People under servant-leaders become enthusiastic, committed and perform beyond expectation while people living under authoritarian leaders become lethargic and sad.

The Layfaithful and the Religious can expect servant-leadership from the ordained ministers (bishops and priests) in the dioceses if and when they (the ordained) have already acquired the habit of servant-leadership

before their ordination. There is a saying in Latin: “Nemo dat quod non habet” (Nobody can give what s/he does not have). Servant leadership is also an art. It is a style of leadership which needs to be acquired. Hence the formators (accompaniers) in the Major Seminaries and in the Houses of formation need to pay attention to this requirement in the candidates for presbyterate / priesthood before their ordinations. There is great need to learn from the world of sports and athletics where much emphasis is laid on skills-training.[]

Fr. Emmanuel Fernando, OMI

### **Pope Francis, [in his New Year's address](#)**

“Francis, [in his New Year's address](#), made debt forgiveness a central theme of this year's Jubilee as well.”The first to forgive debts is God, as we always ask him when we pray the Lord's Prayer, referring to our sins and committing ourselves to forgive in turn those who have offended us," [the pope said](#). "And the [Jubilee](#) asks us to translate this forgiveness on a social level, so that no person, no family, no population is crushed by debts. I therefore encourage the rulers of countries with a Christian tradition to set a good example by canceling or reducing as much as possible the debts of the poorest countries."

Michael Sean Winters  
NCR, Jan., 3, 2025

# Priesthood of the Laity and the Servanthood of the Priestly Clergy

## NOT THE OTHERWAY ABOUT

Courtesy: ***Aloysius Pieris, s.j.***, Editorial, Vagdevi  
36, New Series, Vol.18, no 2, July 2024

After three and a half decades of reversing the Conciliar renewal (as documented on pp.19 ff) we have experienced in many countries a reappearance of the pre-conciliar *heresy of exclusive Priesthood of the Clergy and the mere Servanthood of the Laity*. In countries such as ours, bureaucrats lord it over the masses while calling themselves “Government servants”. That should never be a mark of the Church. The role of shepherding the flock, according to the sacred tradition of the Church, was always associated with servanthood: *diakonia* (in Greek) and *ministerium* (in Latin). But the temptation to ‘wield power’ rather than ‘render service’ on the part of presbyters and bishops was warned against already in the nascent Church (1 Peter 1-3). It is a recurrent temptation that must be resisted incessantly if we want to see the church as the bride of “Jesus the servant” (Phil 2:7).

Hence the *formation of future presbyters and bishops as servants of the priestly laity* is a task that must be entrusted to those who have received both the charism and the training for it.

We regret, therefore, that the formation of Church-leaders in Sri Lanka has faced a serious setback with the



unfortunate decision to remove the Oblates from the Teaching Staff of the National Seminary and transferring their charism to the Bishops who have been anointed to exercise servant-leadership and not to organize the teaching of theology. In the early Church, the bishop (*episkopoi*, or “overseers”) and presbyters (*presbyteroi* or “elders”) were not all-powerful monarchs who controlled “charisms” that the Holy Spirit alone distributes among those whom She would choose.

There were three ministries that were dialectical counterparts of bishops and not in any way subordinate to them. One of them was the role of *didaskaloi* (teachers today known as the theologians; then there were the *prophetai* (who helped persons to discern the word / will of God and who are today known as counsellors or spiritual directors) and finally *apostoloi* (missionaries), like the celibates Paul and Barnabas) who opened new missions and handed them over to local leaders known as bishops and presbyters.

Faithful to this early tradition of the church founded by Christ, a distinction was maintained and continued even during the middle ages between two parallel “seats of authority”: *cathedra episcopalis* (Bishop’ seat of authority) and *cathedra universitatis* (theologians’ seat of authority.... Or in the language of St. Thomas, *pastoral magisterium and academic magisterium*. The latter was ‘chaired’ by Religious Congregations such as the Dominicans.

As Vatican 11 had asked us to go back to this original tradition of the Church, it was against the Spirit of the Council to remove from the National Seminary the OMI staff which enjoyed the charism of *didaskaloi*(teachers) and replace them with the bishops who are called to be administrators. Protesting against this decision, Bishop Leo of Badulla, a product and a promoter of Vatican 11, employed the services of the highly qualified theologian Michael Rodrigo OMI to train his seminarians...away from the national seminary.

The consequence of the aforementioned mixing up of charismata has already been revealed. Complaints of the laity (who are *priests* already by Baptism) need to be monitored about the quality of the contemporary pastorate. Blame must be placed also on the Major Superiors of Religious Congregations for not been faithful to their charism; for it is their God-given obligation to run an alternative institute of theological formation, at least for the members of *Vita Consecrata*! May the AIT (Asian Institute of Theology), an initiative of the Oblates, be patronized also by other religious Congregations.[]

# **Genesis 25,19-34**

## **The Introduction to the Jacob Cycle**

### **Part I**

**Prof. Dr. Shirley L. Wijesinghe**

The large sections such as primeval history, Abraham stories, Jacob stories and Joseph stories are clearly visible in the Book of Genesis.<sup>1</sup> There is very little material on Isaac. He is overshadowed by Abraham and Jacob. The Jacob cycle begins with “These are the descendants of Isaac” (Gen 25,19). Similar headings mark the divisions in the Book of Genesis (cf. 2,4; 5,1; 6,9; 10,1; 11,10.27 and 25,12.19; 36,1.9; 37,2).

Wenham observes a parallelism between the opening of Abraham stories and Jacob stories (Wenham, 1994:173).

These are the descendants of (25,19)	These are the descendants of (11,27)
Abraham was the father of Isaac (25,19)	Terah was the father of Abraham (11,27)
Isaac ... took to wife Rebekah (25,20)	Abraham took to wife Sarah (cf. 11,29)

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<sup>1</sup> \* Originally published in *Journal of Religious Reflection*, NS 8/2 (2014) 44-51.

(Rebekah) was barren (25,21)	Sarai was barren (11,30)
Journey (25,22)	Journey (11,31)
And the Lord said (25,23)	And the Lord said (12,1)
Predictions (25,23)	Predictions (12,1-3)
First fulfillment (25,24-26)	First fulfillment (12,4)
Age of patriarch then (25,26b)	Age of patriarch then (12,4b)
Second fulfillment of predictions (25,27-34)	Second fulfillment of predictions (12,5-9)
Wife/sister scene (26,1-11)	Wife/sister scene (12,10-20)

Gen 25,19-34 could be divided into two main sections. Gen 25,19-26 record the birth of the twins, Esau and Jacob, and Gen 25,27-34 narrates the story of the sale of the birthright (rights of the first born) by Esau to Jacob.

### **Genesis 25,19-26**

These verses narrate the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah, her situation of barrenness, the prayer of Isaac, the problematic conception, the consultation of Rebekah concerning the problematic conception, the oracle, the birth of the twins, and their naming with reference to their

characteristics. The age of Isaac frames the beginning and the end of the episode: “Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah” (v. 20); “Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them” (v. 26). In comparison to the Abraham cycle where the events such as the barrenness of Sarah, the conception and the birth of Isaac unfold slowly in the space of many chapters, these events are recorded fast in eight verses.

There are three formulae which mark the section, namely the *tôlēdôt* formula “These are the descendants of Isaac” (v. 19), the marriage formula “when he took Rebekah as wife” (v. 20), and the birth formula “conceived, bore and called” (conception, birth and naming) (vv. 21-26).

Some of the examples of the birth formula found in the Book of Genesis are: “These are the descendants of Noah” (Gen 6,9); “These are the descendants of the sons of Noah” (Gen 10,1); “These are the descendants of Shem” (Gen 11,10); “These are the descendants of Terah” (Gen 11,27). In contrast to the examples cited above, in the *tôlēdôt* formulae in Gen 25,12 and 25,19 the sons are overshadowed by the father (Abraham). “These are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham’s son whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maid, bore to Abraham” (Gen 25,12). Similarly, “These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham’s son; Abraham was the father of Isaac” (Gen 25,19).

The common formula for marriage is ‘take someone as wife’ (e.g. Gen 12,19; 28,9; 34,4.21; Exod 6,20.23.25). In

Gen 25,20, it is expanded and loaded with information concerning Rebekah. She is the daughter of Bethuel, the Aramaean of Paddan-aram. The formula also includes information about the brother of Rebekah (Laban the Aramaean). Providing such information is quite unusual in the Bible.

The usual birth formula is to state that the husband had relations with the wife, she conceived and bore a child and called him so and so: e.g. “And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben” (Gen 29,32). Like the marriage formula, the birth formula is also expanded. In this expanded version there are two important details: the sterility of the woman and the birth of the twins. Between these two details there is an oracle from God on the future of the children. In order to introduce the oracle, the fact of difficult pregnancy has been mentioned. The sterility of the matriarchs is typical, e.g. Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, as well as the mothers of Samson and Samuel. The physical disability is mentioned to highlight the extraordinary intervention of God. In the face of the sterility of Rebekah, Isaac pleads God and in the case of difficult pregnancy, Rebekah consults God. “The first came forth red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came forth, and his hand had taken hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob” (Gen 25,25-26). These names are aetiologies rather than etymologies. Esau’s name is given due to his appearance (static), and in the case of Jacob, it is on his action (dynamic).

The three formulae furnish the reader with the required information to enter into Jacob stories. The struggle of the twins in the womb will flow into the future, Jacob will have a stake with Laban, and Paddan-aram will figure as an important location in the story. In the next section (Gen 25,27-34) the scene will be set for the deadly animosity between the twins worsening in their lifetime and later exploding into national proportions in the course of Israelite history.

### **Genesis 25,27-34**

In this section the names Esau and Jacob appear in each sentence and Jacob is presented in sharp contrast to Esau. Esau is a hunter and Jacob is a shepherd. Apparently, there is nothing pejorative about these livelihoods. But the narrator intends to accord a superior status to Jacob. First, Esau is rough. He came in from the field (v. 29) and he went his way (v. 34). He came in famished and went his way satiated. He disappears after eating bread and the pottage of lentils. The verse is cinematographic. He eats, and drinks and rises and goes his way. Second, Esau is not serious about his privileged status as the firstborn. He sold his birthright for a plate of food: “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me” (v. 32). The narrator insinuates that the right of the first born is as worth as life itself. He places the birthright and life itself on par. Furthermore, in a rare remark the narrator states: “Thus Esau despised his birthright” (v. 34). In other words, Esau does not deserve the birthright. Thirdly, in comparison to Esau, Jacob is presented as a quiet figure (Heb. *tām*),

someone worthy to hold the birthright. The narrator does not say that Jacob *bought* the birthright, but that Esau swore and *sold* the birthright to Jacob. *En passant*, the preferences of the parents are also mentioned. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game. Both the fact and the intention are given. But the motive of Rebekah's preferential love for Jacob is not indicated.

## **Part II**

### **Esau and Jacob or Hunter and Shepherd**

Although the thrust of the present text is not to highlight an age-old tradition of animosities between hunters and the shepherds, it could be a residue of such memories. The narrator seems to underline the transfer or the sale of the birthright and to justify it. The hunter lives in the forest or the steppe, and his relationship with animals is hostile and by the dynamics of his profession he has to learn to be violent. It is a condition for survival in the forest or the steppe. He lives far away from his family and clan. In the case of the shepherd, he lives in tents and lives with his family. He raises domestic animals and relates to them gently. He learns domestic arts. In the case of Jacob he is close to his mother and has even learned culinary arts. The right of the first born is exercised in a family setup. Hence what value is there of the birthright to someone who lives all his days far away from the family?



## **Esau and Jacob or Edom and Israel**

Just as Jacob was considered to be the ancestor of Israel, Esau was the ancestor of Edom. The land of Edom was situated on the south and east of the Dead Sea and it had become a monarchy before Israel. On their way from Egypt to Palestine, Israelites sent messengers to the king of Edom to obtain his permission to pass through his territory. But he refused to give Israel passage through the territory of Edom (Num 20,14-21). The history of Israel records bitter rivalry between Edom and Israel. Saul fought against Edom (1 Sam 14,47) and David subdued Edom (2 Sam 8,13-14). During the reign of Jehoram, the king of Judah, the Edomites revolted (2 Kgs 8,20,22). At the time of the Babylonian invasion, Edom sided with the enemy and barred the Judeans fleeing from the Babylonians (Ezek 25,12-14; Obad 10-14).

Gen 25,19-34 is an aetiology of the conflict between Edom and Israel. Hebrew thought reads the past in the light of the present; if Edom and Israel are in conflict now, it is because it has been so from the very conception of the two ancestors of these nations. The conflict between these two brothers precedes even their birth, and a conflict before birth is possible only if the brothers were twins, conceived at the same time in the womb of their mother. The theology of primeval history in the Book of Genesis (Genesis 1-11) claims monogenism for all humanity. Ultimately the human race sprang up from the descendants of Noah (though Noah's family goes back to the first parents Adam and Eve, only Noah and his family

were spared in the flood in which rest of the descendants of Adam and Eve disappeared). All nations are blood relatives and Edom and Israel are even more so as they are twins. Yet bitter rivalry between these two nations could be explained, because it was so from their very conception.

### **Rights of the Firstborn**

The first-born was considered to be the might of the father: “Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the first fruits of my strength, pre-eminent in pride and pre-eminent in power ...” (Gen 49,3). The Joseph story dramatizes the prerogatives of the first-born: “they sat before him, the first-born according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth” (Gen 43,33). The first-born is dedicated to God (Exod 22,29) and when the inheritance was divided up, the first-born received a double share “he shall acknowledge the first-born ... by giving him a double portion of all that he has ...” (Deut 21,17). The double share is twice as much as given to any other brother. The narrator of Gen 25,19-34 seems to indicate that such prerogatives should not be enjoyed by someone like Esau who does not value such traditional privileges. An irresponsible first-born who despises his birthright is not worthy of the rights of the first-born.

Recapitulating, the construction of the opening sections of the Jacob cycle is in parallelism with the opening of the Abraham cycle. Gen 25,19-34 could be divided into two main sections: Gen 25,19-26 and Gen 25, 27-34. The first

section is dominated by three formulae, namely the *tôlédôt* (genealogy) formula, the marriage formula and the birth formula and in the second section, Esau and Jacob have been presented in sharp contrast to one another. Although Esau has been tricked by Jacob, the narrator presents him (Jacob) as a quiet man compared to the clumsy elder brother Esau and worthy of possessing the right of the first-born. Although the story could be a faint memory of the age-old animosities between hunters and shepherds, it reflects the historical rivalries between the kingdoms of Edom and Israel.[]

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## JUBILEE YEAR

Pope Francis inaugurates the Jubilee Year 2025 of salvation with the theme: **Pilgrims of Hope** based on Rom 5:5 (Hope does not disappoint. He also appeals to us to answer the calls for hope coming from different parts of the world from different difficult situations.

## **Pope St. Paul VI Banned the Latin Mass and Excommunicated the Lefevre Sect for Continuing to Celebrate it; WHY?**

**Aloysius Pieris, s.j.**

### **Preamble**

The renewal movements of several decades that prepared the church for Vatican II concentrated on three areas: **Liturgy**, **Church** and **Scripture**. Pope Pius XII responded positively and creatively to these three movements by issuing encyclicals on each of them: *Mediator Dei* (on **Liturgy**), *Mystici Corporis* (on the **Church**) and *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (on **Scripture**). This Pope truly prepared the church for Vatican II which Pope John XXII declared open and Paul VI brought to a conclusion. In this article I concentrate on what followed in the area of the Council's **Liturgical Renewal** which was inseparably linked to the renewal in the other two areas: (a) **Scripture** which revealed the original character and the true nature of the liturgical celebration of the Lord's Supper and (b) the **Church's** history which threw light on the earliest tradition of celebrating the Holy Eucharist. It was this new understanding of the authentic liturgical tradition (from Scripture and Church history that led the post-conciliar church to question the orthodoxy of the message conveyed by the general structure of the so-called "Latin Mass".

## Lesson from the Past

Catholics of my generation would remember how we celebrated the Last Supper on Holy Thursday and the Crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday. Though they were events that took place in the evenings, their liturgical celebrations were conducted in the early hours of the morning! But, when Pius XII ordered them to be celebrated in the evenings, objections came from traditionalists that it was blasphemous to receive communion in the evening after one has already consumed breakfast and lunch! In other words, these objectors were so ignorant of church history that they failed to see that this liturgical renewal was not a rejection of tradition but a return to tradition. This is exactly what happened when Paul VI banned the Latin Mass and introduced the *Novus Ordo* ----a result of several decades of research. It was not “Latin” that was on trial; the issue was the theologically dangerous message which that ritual promoted. The uninstructed Catholics (including clergy) did not realize that this ritual was regrettably the pagan Rome’s aberration of the Table Fellowship which Jesus instituted. In that Latin ritual the celebrant acts as the *sole priest* who prays on behalf of a silent congregation of humans (a secular and lay audience rather than a sacred and priestly co-celebrants as taught in the Scriptures ) before a divinity located somewhere far above in front of the Celebrant. This, according to the conciliar renewalists, is a pagan distortion of the Last Supper.

## **Earliest Tradition**

According to the earliest Tradition, *the lay congregation consists of co-priests concelebrating with the presbyter a sacred meal* ---a meal which becomes Jesus Himself, *thanks to the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit invoked at the Epiclesis* --- and not magically at what are heretically called “words of consecration” as if the presbyter brings the Presence of Jesus by uttering the word “This is my body ....This my blood etc.” expecting people to immediately kneel down and adore what is still just bread and wine..... insinuating that the celebrant does this transformation by pronouncing these words. If Jesus obeys the clergyman’s words, how much more should the laity be subservient to the clergyman? A fountain of clericalism! No wonder this anti-biblical tradition is still adhered to by presbyters ---despite Pope Montini’s ban which included a subtle message he circulated by changing vocabulary:- substituting the misleading expression “words of consecration” with “words of the Lord” (*verba Domini*) and “ account of the supper” (*narratio caenae*).

## **A Confirmation of Pope Monini’s Stand**

Cardinal Ratzinger, as the CDF chief, ceded to Latin worshipers by allowing them to celebrate the Latin Mass under certain conditions but was later confronted by some Catholic theologians who begged him for a clarification about a certain oriental church whose mass was traditionally regarded as valid by Rome, fostering Catholic participation in it. For only when their canons

were translated into modern languages, did it dawn on Catholics that the **“words of the Lord” (this is my body....this is my blood) are conspicuously absent in their Eucharistic Prayer!!!** Those words were sung during communion after the species were changed into the Body and Blood of our Lord. Cardinal Ratzinger referred the question to the Pope of the time, John Paul II and his papal verdict was clear: *their Eucharistic Prayer is valid!*. Does this not mean that our church had officially acknowledged that the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord is not the result of the priest uttering those words?

### **A Personal Note**

I too was relieved to hear that their canon was valid because during my sojourn in India I had (like all other Roman Catholics) participated in the Syro-Malankara Mass which followed the aforementioned oriental tradition. In fact all the Eastern Churches that are in communion with Rome seem to attribute the change of bread and wine to the body and blood of our Saviour exclusively to the intervention of Holy Spirit invoked during the epiclesis. Hence in the weekly mass at Tulana, the lay participants ----being **priests consecrated by the Holy Spirit at Baptism**---- remain seated during the narration of the Lord's supper but extend their hands over the bread and wine during the epiclesis and it is after the doxology (*through Him, with Him and in Him*, etc.) that the whole congregation (including the presiding priest) fall on their knees and adore the precious body and blood of our Lord. We abide by Pope St. Paul VI's teaching which has been re-confirmed by his successor St. John Paul II. []



# **The Transformative Power of Personal Prayer in Seminary Formation**

***Rev. Fr. Danushka Silva, CMF***

(Director, St. Claret Minor Seminary, 90, Baseline Rd.,  
Kattuwa, Negombo)

## **Introduction**

Prayer is a fundamental practice in many religious traditions, serving as a means of communication with the divine. It is an act that transcends mere ritual, becoming a vital connection between the individual and God. Among the various forms of prayer, personal prayer holds a unique and profound significance. Unlike communal or liturgical prayers, personal prayer is an intimate dialogue, allowing individuals to express their innermost thoughts, desires, and struggles directly to God. This form of prayer is crucial for deepening one's spiritual life, providing a foundation for growth, reflection, and transformation.

For seminarians, personal prayer is not just a spiritual exercise but an essential aspect of their formation. Seminarians, who are in the process of preparing for a life of ministry, find in personal prayer a source of strength, guidance, and clarity. This period of preparation involves rigorous academic training, pastoral experiences, and spiritual development. Personal prayer acts as a cornerstone, integrating these diverse aspects of formation, ensuring that the seminarian remains grounded in their faith and connected to their vocation.

This article will explore the multifaceted role of personal prayer in the life of a seminarian. First, it will delve into how personal prayer fosters spiritual growth, enhancing the seminarian's relationship with God. Next, it will examine the integration of prayer with academic pursuits, showing how prayer aids in understanding and internalizing theological concepts. The article will also discuss how personal prayer prepares seminarians for pastoral duties, helping them develop empathy, compassion, and resilience. Finally, it will address the impact of personal prayer on the seminarian's personal well-being, offering strategies for maintaining a consistent and enriching prayer life amidst the demands of seminary education.

## **1. Spiritual Growth**

Personal prayer is a cornerstone in the spiritual formation of seminarians, playing a fundamental role in their journey toward becoming ministers of the faith. This intimate practice is essential for deepening one's relationship with God, raising a daily habit of prayer, and enhancing discernment and clarity of vocation.

### **Role of Personal Prayer in Spiritual Formation**

Personal prayer fosters a profound and personal connection with God, essential for any seminarian. It allows for an intimate dialogue where one can share their deepest thoughts, concerns, and aspirations with the Divine. In the New Testament, Jesus models this relationship, often withdrawing to solitary places to pray

(Luke 5:16). This practice signifies the importance of personal communion with God, which is indispensable for a seminarian's spiritual growth.

Developing a habit of daily prayer is crucial. Regular, disciplined prayer creates a rhythm that aligns a seminarian's daily life with spiritual reflection and growth. It becomes a source of strength and guidance, as illustrated by St. Paul's exhortation to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Consistent personal prayer helps seminarians remain grounded in their faith, amidst the academic and pastoral challenges they face.

Furthermore, personal prayer enhances discernment and clarity of vocation. It provides a space for seminarians to seek God's will for their lives, facilitating a deeper understanding of their call to ministry. In discerning his own path, Jesus spent time in prayer before making significant decisions, such as choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12-13). This discernment through prayer is echoed in papal documents, such as Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation "*Christus Vivit*," where he encourages young people to "make time each day for personal dialogue with Jesus" to discover their true vocation.

## **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

The importance of personal prayer is deeply rooted in scripture. Jesus' prayer life serves as the ultimate example, emphasizing solitude and personal communion with God. His prayers in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46)

highlight the necessity of seeking strength and guidance from God, especially during times of trial.

The teachings of the Church Fathers and modern theologians further underscore this. St. Augustine, for instance, viewed prayer as the heart's dialogue with God, an essential practice for nurturing a relationship with the Divine. St. Thomas Aquinas emphasized the importance of prayer in seeking divine wisdom and guidance.

Contemporary voices, like Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical "*Spe Salvi*," reminds us that "prayer is a school of hope" and that through it, believers open themselves to the transforming grace of God. Pope Francis, in his apostolic letter "*Patris Corde*," stresses the importance of prayer in the life of St. Joseph, encouraging the faithful to emulate his example of silent and humble communion with God.

## **2. Academic and Pastoral Integration**

### **Prayer and Academic Life**

Prayer plays a significant role in the academic life of a seminarian, particularly in theological studies. Theological education is not merely an intellectual pursuit but a journey that requires the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Personal prayer invites divine wisdom, making complex theological concepts more accessible and meaningful. In John 14:26, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will "teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you." Through personal prayer,

seminarians open themselves to this divine teaching, allowing their studies to transcend mere academics and become a deep, spiritual journey.

Personal prayer enhances understanding and integration of academic material by providing a contemplative space to reflect on and internalize what is learned. It transforms theological study from a rote exercise into a dialogue with God. As seminarians pray over their studies, they seek not just intellectual comprehension but spiritual insight and application. Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation "*Evangelii Gaudium*," emphasizes that prayerful reflection on the Word of God leads to a deeper understanding and living out of the Gospel.

Balancing prayer with academic responsibilities is crucial. The demands of seminary education can be overwhelming, and without the grounding force of prayer, students may find themselves spiritually depleted. By dedicating specific times for personal prayer, seminarians ensure that their academic endeavors are continually rooted in their spiritual life, creating a harmonious balance. As Paul advises in Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

## **Prayer and Pastoral Formation**

Personal prayer is equally vital in preparing for pastoral ministry. It equips seminarians with the spiritual tools necessary to shepherd their future congregations

effectively. Through prayer, seminarians cultivate empathy and compassion, essential qualities for pastoral care. In Mark 1:35, Jesus is depicted rising early to pray, demonstrating the importance of seeking divine guidance and strength for ministry.

Developing a prayerful life helps seminarians to connect deeply with the people they will serve. It fosters a heart of compassion and a listening spirit, enabling them to respond to the needs of their community with genuine love and understanding. Pope Francis, in "*Gaudete et Exsultate*," underscores that a prayerful heart is one that is open to the pain and joy of others, a necessary disposition for pastoral work.

Examples abound of how prayer supports pastoral challenges and successes. In times of pastoral difficulty, personal prayer offers solace and direction. It allows seminarians to bring their burdens before God, seeking His wisdom and comfort. During moments of success, prayer becomes a space of gratitude and humility, acknowledging God's hand in their ministry.

## **Institutional Support**

Seminaries play a crucial role in fostering a culture of personal prayer. They offer resources and programs designed to encourage daily prayer practices. Retreats, spiritual direction, and courses on prayer are common features that help seminarians deepen their personal relationship with God.

Balancing community prayer with personal prayer is essential. While communal prayer strengthens the bond among seminarians and enriches their liturgical life, personal prayer remains a private sanctuary for individual communion with God. Both forms of prayer are necessary, as they complement each other and contribute to a well-rounded spiritual formation. As Pope Benedict XVI highlighted in "*Deus Caritas Est*," both communal and personal prayers are vital expressions of a deep, living relationship with God and the Church.

### **3. Personal Well-being**

#### **Mental and Emotional Health**

Personal prayer is a vital component of mental and emotional health, particularly for seminarians who face the rigors of academic, spiritual, and pastoral training. Engaging in regular personal prayer provides a sense of peace and stability, offering a refuge amidst the challenges and stresses of seminary life. Techniques for maintaining a consistent prayer life, even during stressful periods, include setting aside specific times each day for prayer, creating a conducive prayer environment, and using scripture or spiritual readings to guide prayer sessions. Additionally, integrating prayer into daily activities, such as short, spontaneous prayers throughout the day, can help seminarians stay connected to God even amidst busy schedules. Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation "*Gaudete et Exsultate*," encourages believers to cultivate a habit of prayer, emphasizing that "a prayerful person can carry out little daily tasks with a

loving and grateful spirit, bringing out the best in themselves."

## **Conclusion**

Personal prayer is indispensable for seminarians. It serves as the bedrock of their spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation. By maintaining a strong personal prayer life, seminarians can navigate the challenges of their journey with grace and strength. As seminarians grow in their prayer life, they become more attuned to God's will, better equipped to serve their future congregations, and more resilient in the face of trials.

Encouragement and practical tips for maintaining a strong personal prayer life include establishing a regular prayer schedule, finding a quiet and dedicated space for prayer, using spiritual resources such as the Bible and writings of the saints, and seeking spiritual direction. Engaging in community prayer while prioritizing personal prayer helps balance individual and communal spiritual growth.

I encourage seminarians and readers to prioritize personal prayer in their daily lives. Reflect on your current prayer practices and seek ways to deepen your prayer life. Make time each day to connect with God on a personal level, allowing His presence to guide and strengthen you. As Pope Francis reminds us in *"Evangelii Gaudium,"* "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness."[]



Embrace personal prayer as a means to encounter Jesus more deeply, finding joy, peace, and purpose in your journey. Through personal prayer, may you be strengthened in your vocation and inspired to serve with a compassionate and loving heart.

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## POPE’S ADVICE TO NEW CARDINALS

On December 7, (2024) When Pope Francis named 21 new Cardinals, he had told them, *“You will be a radiant sign in the midst of a society obsessed with appearances and power.” “Our hearts can go astray, allowing us to be dazzled by the allure of prestige, the seduction of power”.* *“The Lord is looking to you, who come from different backgrounds and cultures and represent the Catholicity of the Church. He is calling you to be witnesses of fraternity, artisans of communion and builders of unity”.*

Among the new Cardinals, there were two who had opted to forgo the traditional scarlet vestments and to continue to wear their simple white religious habits rather than the more ornate Cardinalatial regalia. They are two Dominicans – Archbishop Jean-Paul Vesco of Algiers and British Fr. Timothy Radcliffe with special permission from the Pope.

- Christopher White, NCR

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## **POPE FRANCIS' DUAL MESSAGES TO DONALD TRUMP**

Pope Francis delivered dual messages to Donald Trump on his inauguration as president, urging him to reject "hatred, discrimination or exclusion" and denouncing Trump's migrant deportation plan as a "disgrace."

The pontiff delivered the back-to-back messages on Jan. 19 and Jan. 20.

The pope's brief remarks came in a Sunday night Italian television interview on the eve of Trump's inauguration for another term as president of the United States where he has vowed to evict millions of immigrants from the country.

"If it is true, it will be a disgrace, because it makes the poor wretches who have nothing pay the bill for the inequalities," said the pope of Trump's plans for widespread deportation. "It won't do." Francis — who has become one of the most vocal global champions of migrants since his election as pontiff in 2013 — described the incoming president's plans as "not the way to solve things."

In [a message delivered](#) hours before Trump took the oath of office, Francis said, "Inspired by your nation's ideals of being a land of opportunity and welcome for all, it is my hope that under your leadership the American people will prosper and always strive to build a more just society, where there is no room for hatred, discrimination or exclusion."

Francis offered prayers for Trump's second term "that Almighty God will grant you wisdom, strength, and protection in the exercise of your high duties," the papal statement said.

"At the same time, as our human family faces numerous challenges, not to mention the scourge of war, I also ask God to guide your efforts in promoting peace and reconciliation among peoples," he said. Trump, who was elected in November, has vowed to carry out the largest deportation program in American history.

Ahead of Trump's first term in office, in 2016, the pope suggested that the then-presidential contender was not a Christian for his plans to erect a wall blocking migrants from crossing the southern U.S. border. "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian," [said](#) the pope at the time.

Trump will be sworn in as president for a second term of office Jan. 20 and tentative plans are underway for a massive migrant round-up in Chicago.

In a Jan. 19 statement, Chicago's Cardinal Blase Cupich also condemned those plans as "deeply disturbing." "The Catholic community stands with the people of Chicago in speaking out in defense of the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers," he said. "Similarly, if the reports are true, it should be known that we would oppose any plan that includes a mass deportation of U.S. citizens born of undocumented parents." "If the indiscriminate mass deportation being reported were to be carried out, this

would be an affront to the dignity of all people and communities, and deny the legacy of what it means to be an American," he stated.

**Christopher White**, Vatican Correspondent, NCR  
Jan., 19, 2025.

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### **ADDRESSING TRUMP BISHOP BUDDE DID WHAT A CHRISTIAN IS OBLIGED TO DO**

The words that Episcopal Bishop of Washington Mariann Budde spoke to the newly, second-time elected president of the United States during a widely covered prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral:

*In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country. ... The people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labor in poultry farms and meatpacking plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals. They may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes, and are good neighbors. They are faithful members of our churches and mosques, synagogues, gurdwara and temples. I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away, and that you help those who are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands to find compassion and welcome here.*

NCR Editorial Staff, January 24, 2025

## **BEING PRO-LIFE WITHOUT EXCEPTION**

There are some who, while fervently believing that life begins at the moment of fertilization, would take away the right to life if conception occurred through rape or incest. But how can a human being become disposable because of the circumstance of conception? The child is still created in the image and likeness of God, just as any other human being. Yet, the woman has been victimized – a devastating life-changing event-- but the child is not the criminal. Should we destroy this new, innocent life and increase the violence by making the child a second victim?

We should all, be appalled that a woman has suffered the outrage of rape or incest. The man has used her as an object, without recognizing that she was created by God in His image and likeness. Fists shaken in anger by sympathetic people slam down at the thought that she might have to give birth to the perpetrator's child. Without doubt, the offender bears the moral responsibility for the barbaric abuse endured by this woman. But the child cannot be identified as an enemy. The only criminal in this case is the victimizer, not the baby.

She has been violated; however, she must not violate the rights of the human being growing within her. When fertilization takes place, a new person springs into being, and this new individual remains apart from the man; and although in the woman's body, the child is a separate

person developing within her even when conceived through an immoral, criminal act, the child is as much the image and likeness of God as everyone else. Those pro-life supporters who insist on the exception clause send a double message: A baby is definitely a precarious life, except when it isn't. The difference centres on the circumstances of conception. However, circumstances cannot change the fact that this new life is a human being. To deny this individual's right to life produces an incoherent logic where how the child was conceived takes precedence over the child.

In an attempt to come to the mother's aid, well-meaning individuals can default to the deception of abortion. But abortion cannot rid her mind of the memory of the attack or of incest's entrapment. True pro-life advocates respect both the woman and the child, and they walk with her through this difficult time, helping her to find therapy from a suitable pro-life psychologist as she grapples with a difficult past. Carrying a child is time-limited, but who knows how long she might carry the vicious memory of the aggression if she fails to receive the proper help?

OSV

Courtesy: *Messenger*, October 27, 2024

# Colours of the University Hill

Senior Lecturer Wijith Rohan Fernando -  
Fr. Roshan Fernando



Dr. Shirley Lal Wijesinghe

The title of this article is borrowed from the farewell address of Dr. Shirley Lal Wijesinghe to the members of the Senate of the University of Kelaniya<sup>1</sup>: “Our gardens are too academic, hardly any flowers around. But our students bring colour to our landscape and our lives year after year. It is a blessing unparalleled. They learn from us to journey beyond the stars. That is our vision and mission. May their roads lead far away.”

The Physicist and Philosopher, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker once wrote: “There is one thing I would like to tell the theologians: something which they know and others should know. They hold the sole truth which goes deeper than the truth of science, on which the atomic age rests. They hold a knowledge of the nature of man that is

more deeply rooted than the rationality of modern times. The moment always comes inevitably when our planning breaks down and we ask and will ask about this truth ... This truth will be convincing when it is lived.”<sup>ii</sup>

Dr. Wijesinghe has lectured and written extensively to communicate the truth and riches of the Sacred Scriptures. *Primeval History, Patriarchs and Matriarchs: Essays on Genesis, Biblical Symbols for a People's Theology* (Sinhala), and *Prophets and Justice* (Sinhala) are three of his important works. He has authored 11 books and 52 articles and co-authored one book and five articles covering Biblical Exegesis, Contextual Hermeneutics and Peace Studies. He has also attended 37 international conferences/seminars abroad<sup>iii</sup> and 14 national/international conferences/seminars in Sri Lanka.

Shirley Lal Wijesinghe was an Oblate Scholastic (1980-83), and having left on regency in 1983, he pursued Biblical Studies encouraged and recommended by His Lordship Bishop Edmund Fernando OMI. He holds a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome (1984-88), Élève titulaire from the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem (1990-91) and a doctorate in Biblical Exegesis from the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve) (1993-97)<sup>iv</sup>.



Since 1997, assisted by the Oblates, Dr. Wijesinghe has been conducting a Course in Contextual Theology frequented by religious and laity. Invited by Fr. Bernand Quintus OMI, he served as a consultant to the Oblate Formation Committee (1999-2007) and invited by the Oblate Province of the Philippines he preached the annual retreats of the province in 2006. He also conducted the annual study session of the Oblates in Japan in 2008. Contributing to the volume written by Oblate scholars in preparation for the 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter in 2010, he wrote on “The Oblates and the Prophetic Mission of Re-establishing Justice”<sup>v</sup>. He also collaborated with Fr. Oswald Firth OMI in founding the Oblate Institute of Higher Learning (OIHL) and has served as a visiting lecturer at the Oblate Institute of Theology (AIT). He regularly contributes articles to the *Missionary Oblate*, the biannual publication of the Colombo Province.

Dr. Wijesinghe was appointed to the post of Senior Lecturer at the University of Kelaniya in August 1998 and subsequently as Professor in October 2007. He was instrumental in introducing the postgraduate taught course MA in Christian Studies and served as its first coordinator from 2008 to 2016.

He collaborated with the staff members of all the faculties whenever his services were called for and served as a member (non-affiliated) of the Ethics Review Committee

of the Faculty of Medicine (2014-2022) as well as a member of the first Board of Studies of the Faculty of Computing and Technology (2016-2021). He also served as the University Development Grant (UDG) Deputy Coordinator – Ethnic Cohesion of the Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century (HETC) World Bank Project – University of Kelaniya (2011-2013).

Dr. Wijesinghe has served as a Visiting Lecturer at national and international institutes of higher learning: National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Ampitiya; East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI), Manila, Philippines; Istituto delle Scienze Religiose, Bologna, Italy; Diploma Course in Conflict Resolution conducted in Sri Lanka by the Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK and the Social Scientists' Association, Colombo; Postgraduate Diploma/Master in Conflict Resolution, Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Colombo.

His involvement in Peace and Conflict Studies included the research "Response of Grassroots Christians in Situations of Violent Conflict" organized by the Center for Mission Research and Study at Maryknoll, New York (1999-2002)<sup>vi</sup>, and the Leverhulme Research "Compromise after Conflict" of Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland and University of Aberdeen, UK (2010-2013)<sup>vii</sup>. He was also a member of the Comité

scientifique du Centre de théologie et d'éthique contextuelles québécoises (CETEQ) of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences of the University of Montreal, Canada (2004-2019). At present, he is the General Secretary of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) (2018-2024) and a member of the Asian Forum of Theological Movements (2020-2024).

Let us conclude with a quote from his farewell address stating the ultimate purpose of university education: “We affirm the equal dignity of all human beings, of women and men. We long for a world where the powerful will serve the weak, a world without poverty and destitution. We wish that together with our students we will be able to achieve this level of human liberation and create a better world for us all.”

We thank Dr. Wijesinghe for his contribution to academia, the Church, and society at large. We wish him well in his future endeavours.[]

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<sup>i</sup>Senate held on 27 November 2024.

<sup>ii</sup>H. KÜNG, *On Being a Christian* (London 1976) 83.

<sup>iii</sup>His research on Biblical Exegesis, Contextual Hermeneutics, and Peace and Conflict Studies has taken him to Asia, Africa, Europe,

North and South Americas, from neighbouring India to even far distant countries such as Brazil, and Chile beyond Andes.

<sup>iv</sup>The doctoral thesis was entitled: *Jeremiah 34,8-22. Structure and Redactional History of the Masoretic Text and of the Septuagint Hebrew Vorlage*.

<sup>v</sup>In *Trailblazing Evangelization in the 21st Century. Challenges to Oblate Mission Today* (ed. O.B. FIRTH) (Centre for Society and Religion, Colombo 2010) 207-229.

<sup>vi</sup> S.L. WIJESINGHE, "Prophetic Initiatives amidst Deadly Conflict", *Artisans of Peace. Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities* (eds. M.A. CEJKA-T. BAMAT) (Orbis, Maryknoll, New York 2003) 166-195.

<sup>vii</sup>J.D. BREWER – B.C. HAYES – K. DUDGEON – N. MUELLER-HIRTH – F. TEENEY – S.L. WIJESINGHE, *The Sociology of Everyday Life Peacebuilding* (Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict; Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2018).

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## **MEDITATION AND PSYCHO-THERAPY CENTRE FOR NARRATIVE AND ECOLOGICAL HEALING**

**Fr. Emmanuel Fernando, OMI**

### **MISSION VISION**

Inspired and energized by the Word of Our Lord Jesus Christ who said, ***“I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full”*** (Jn 10:10) and motivated by the words of St. Irenaeus, ***“The glory of God is man fully alive”*** and of St. Eugene de Mazenod, ***“Love embraces all, for new needs, it invents new means when necessary”***, the Centre for Narrative and Ecological Healing at Andiambalama, Katunayake, is committed to give glory to God by assisting people in pain to live joyful lives, using the Narrative Therapy.

### **NARRATIVE THERAPY**

Narrative Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that seeks to enable people in pain through a respectful and non-blaming approach to identify the basic values and skills in their lives. It seeks to provide the people with genuine awareness of themselves, gradually resulting in the ability to face their present and future problems and situations of anxiety constructively and in serenity. It is a spiritual adventure into the dignity, sanctity and the mystery of human life.

### **IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD OF GOD,**

In the Holy Bible, we read Jesus’ ministries of caring (curing and healing). He fed the hungry, cured the

sick, healed the wounded, consoled and comforted the disturbed and associated with the people who were socially and religiously marginalized.

In today's fast evolving world, we meet people who are hungering for wholeness, justice, peace, joy and contentment in their lives. We meet people who are exposed not only to the vagaries of weather but also to the vagaries of economic exploitation, injustices and discriminations. We also know of persons who are treated as strangers and outcasts who do not enter into our definitions of the categories of social esteem and respectability. We can also think of persons who are trapped in the many prisons of human suffering, oppression, anguish, loneliness and distress. We meet people, who are un-employed and under-employed and facing also the skyrocketing of prices of food items and of medicines thereby experiencing malnutrition and sicknesses. We meet poor parents unable to provide meaningful education to their children thereby causing enormous pressure on the individuals and their families.

The wounded-ness, depression and the anxiety of many Sri Lankans, caused by the above-mentioned realities, cannot but draw people of good will, especially the faith communities, to become beacons of hope, committing themselves to try and bring solace, comfort and joy to such individuals. ***“We desire and we ask the Lord to give us a gaze capable of discerning the signs of the times, to know ‘what works of mercy our people need today’ in order to feel and savour the God of history who***

***walks among them.***” (Pope Francis). There is need for mystics in the heart of the world.

### **OBLATES ENERGIZED BY THE SPIRIT JESUS CHRIST**

Enlightened and energized also by the theme of the 37<sup>th</sup> Oblate General Chapter, “*Pilgrims of Hope in Communion*”, the Oblates of the Province of Colombo are dedicating themselves at the Meditation and Psychotherapy Centre for Narrative and Ecological healing at Andiambalama, Katunayake to become a beacon of hope (a) for the new poor- the vulnerable- who are affected by physical, mental and spiritual pain, anxiety and wounded-ness and living bereft of hope and also (b) to assist the individuals and groups to discover their inner worth and to lead lives worthy of human dignity.

### **MEDITATION AND PSYCHOTHERAPY CENTRE.**

The Meditation and Psychotherapy Centre is a place of scenic beauty with nature- friendly environment to envisage Narrative Therapeutic empowering. Fresh air and quietness add significant identity to the Centre. Lodging facilities for meditation are designed providing maximum taste of the natural environment. Opportunities for occupational therapy to discover one’s own worth and meaning of life are also made available at the Centre. To lead a simple lifestyle with minimum needs is considered vitally important to experience inner peace, joy, tranquility and beauty of life.

The Meditation and Psychotherapy Centre provides a congenial environment for personal meditation and retreats based on the Word of God for individuals and groups. The above-mentioned Centre has also its new desired goals and preventive therapies through Retreats, Live-in sessions and Encounters for those who are married, those non-married as well as for extended families.

Fr. Reginald Jayamaha, OMI, (ph: 0776114444), the Director of the Meditation and Psychotherapy Centre and Fr. Marius Fernando, OMI, his Collaborator, through the Narrative Therapeutic empowerment, would strive to enable individuals, families and groups to tread the paths of peaceful and joyful living and in turn become agents of diffusing such a life-culture of peace, serenity and contentment.[]

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### **A non-stop process of renewal**

Aloysius Pieris, SJ writing about Pope Francis' way of life says, "His vision-cum-mission is the implementation of VaticanII's mandate to trigger off *a non-stop process of spiritual and pastoral renewal of the Church as dictated by the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus*. Consequently he is determined to remove the *theological barrier* that has distanced the **Magisterium from the Masses**, the class barrier that separated the **Shepherds from the Sheep**, the language barrier that stood between the **Church and the World** and the barrier of bias that obstructs both **ecumenism and inter-religious collaboration.**" (*Helping Francis renew the Church*, p 09).



## INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF THE APOSTOLATE FOR CHILDREN

### *La-Kri-Vi Children's Movement (IMAC Sri Lanka)*



Fr. Felix Mevel, OMI

### **Introduction**

**Identity:** The La-Kri-Vi movement (IMAC – Sri Lanka) is an action orientated Roman Catholic volunteer Organization working for the integral development of the Sri Lankan children irrespective of Race, Religion or Sex. This is open to all children between the ages of 5 & 15, and it is run by the children themselves under the guidance of volunteers who serve as promoters (Animators) of the movement. After the prescribed age concludes, eventually the membership will be extended to youth as YCS movement. La-Kri-Vi and YCS come under the International Catholic Organisations for which all guidance is given by the Secretariat of the Holy See. The name Lakrivi is an abbreviation with the initial letters in Sinhalese which mean ‘Valiant Children of Action.’”

## History

**Rev. Fr. Guston Kurthua started the International Movement of the Apostolate of Children (IMAC) in France, in 1929 for the children affected by the French revolution.** In Sri Lanka this Movement was begun by a French Oblate Missionary, Rev. Fr. Felix Mevel OMI in (1954- 1994), together with French Sister Elizabeth Marture of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) and a lay associate Ms. Lorna Wijeyasinghe (nee de Alwis) with the support and blessings of the Church and was affiliated the IMAC in 1968. Lakrivi celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2024.

## Vision

**The vision of the Lakrivi Movement is to create a new world through the children.** Its desire is to develop spirituality in the children through physical and mental transformation and also to develop their personalities and leadership qualities. Its educational approach is based on the conviction that the children are persons who are capable of transforming the world around them. The Movement accepts and respects the child as a person with certain inalienable rights. Such a vision endeavors to create an atmosphere for the children belonging to all races, cultures and nationalities to be united in love and live their own religions while respecting the other religions. The need is to unite in order to change the present society which is noted for evil and injustice and

accumulation of wealth and power, at the expense of the poor masses.

## **Mission**

The Lakrivi Movement is based on the belief that the children everywhere can form themselves into groups for activities such as games and which provide a forum for them to come together in an atmosphere of freedom to share their joys and sorrows as well as on matters impinging on their lives. Pedagogically, the Movement attempts to harness the capacity of the children to initiate “transforming” action, namely action that can bring about positive changes in their physical and human environment.

The methodology of learning in the Lakrivi Movement consists at looking at the world with sensitivity in order to understand what needs to be done through mutual exchange of ideas and by deciding on some course of action. Evaluating its success and failures, its strength and weaknesses, experiences and ways of improving values inculcated are also important. Finally celebrating the successes and failures in a creative way with gratitude to our Founders of our Religions.

The young volunteers who serve as Animators in the Lakrivi Movement are also provided with adequate training in child-centered community development work. They are enabled to update themselves through refresher courses and other ongoing orientation programmes.

### **Five Principles of Lakrivi to abide by:**

1. A cheerful person
2. I am a law abiding person
3. I live in harmony with nature (cf. Pope Francis – *Laudato Si*)
4. A brother/sister to every one
5. I love and live according to my religion

### **Objectives of Lakrivi**

- (a) To promote physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development among children in a healthy and stimulating environment.
- (b) To promote leadership, and self-development capacity through practical community oriented action and to enable them to play an active role in their civic and in their religions.
- (c) To promote and safeguard the rights of children and denounce all forms of child abuse and violence.
- (d) To lay a solid foundation for nurturing values of multi-religious cultures through a life based on religious formation, exposure and appreciation of one another's religious beliefs and traditions.
- (e) To promote inter-racial harmony and appreciation of diverse cultures.

### **Activities:**

The activities of the Lakrivi Movement are focused on an annual theme. For example we had in the past, themes such as:

- 1990 Education in human values
- 1991 The co-existence with nature
- 1992 Love and esteem for our parents
- 1993 Treat with respect those who guide us in life
- 1994 Rights of the child

### **The Programmes conducted by the Movement:**

- (1) Training sessions for the children on the annual theme / programme based on see-judge-act (action, reflection, action) methodology at different levels such as the cell, regional and the Province.
- (2) Communication skills and leadership training for a selected group of children at Provincial levels.
- (3) Sports meets, drama, speech, essay, drawings, poster creations, singing and other skill development contests at district, regional and national levels.
- (4) Training sessions for animators on the annual theme/ programme.
- (5) Training of new animators.
- (6) Establishing libraries at the cells.
- (7) Scholarship fund to help deserving children in education.

### **Conclusion**

**The International Movement of Children's Apostolate is recognised by the Holy See of the Vatican. MIDAD ((Mouvement International d'Apostolat des Enfants)**

**has the official status of legal representation, according to canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law.** The International Headquarters is in Paris, France.

I served as the International Chaplain of *International Movement of Apostolate of children* from 1995 to 1998. My appointment was conveyed to me by Cardinal Sodano, the Secretary of State, Holy See. I also participated in the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Conference of International Catholic Organisations from 27<sup>th</sup> October to 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1997 in Corazones de Conocoto, Ecuador.[]

**Fr. Justin Silva OMI**

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**Fr. Asanga Aruna, OMI**, the present National Director of Lakrivi in Sri Lanka, participated in the IMAC Indian Ocean Regional Meeting in the island of Rodrigues of the Republic of Mauritius, in December, 2024.

## **Promoting a dignified life through St. Vincent's Technical School**

**Fr. Dhanushka Fernando OMI**

Director/Principal  
St Vincent's Technical School,  
Maggona

Children are a blessing from GOD and they are the torch bearers of our legacy and of our future. Like a seed of a grape wine they too need to be nourished, nurtured and guided in order to experience a fruitful human existence. Unfortunately many children in our country have no parents to shepherd them. Some are orphans or born into broken families or into unacceptable living conditions. Their future is uncertain and their unguided actions steer them towards social rejection, unimaginable situations or even Death.

A juvenile delinquent is a term coined to discriminate and judge an unguided child or minor. In most cases, children who fall under this classification are constantly subjected to unavoidable circumstances and lead to a lifetime of pain and suffering; a lifetime which they did not choose but is forced upon them. It is our duty to shepherd these children of God, guiding them towards a more promising life style. As guides, we must come together in order to make a difference in their lives with God's grace.

**St. Vincent's Technical School at Maggona was founded by French Oblate Fathers in 1891. Since that**

time, it has pledged to guide misguided children and minors towards a nobler future away from sinful ways through sincere repentance.

### **Building Resilience**

**The** methodology of St. Vincent's Technical School is a simple three steps process that ensures a positive outcome for these children in need. The boys who are residents at the Technical School are cleansed spiritually and mentally of their sinful ways through a process of meditation, daily prayer, spiritual seminars and one-on-one discussions.

During the 2 year rehabilitation period the boys who are residents participate in various programmes, for example:

- Personal Building Programmes, Team Building Programmes ,Weekly Students Meetings, Secretarial Youth Meetings, Anti-Narcotic & Anti-Alcoholism Programmes, Trauma Healing, Psycho sexual Programmes, Motivational Programmes, Annual Excursions and Social Events & Picnics

### **New Beginning**

The Residents are introduced to Vocational Educational Programmes in order to help them renew their lives for a joyful future. For example:

- 1) Complete Training Course in Auto mobile Mechanics Electricians and Electrical Repair and Maintenance Course. 2) Industrial Welder &



Mechanical Engineering Programme. 3) AC Technician Training. 4) Carpentry and Everyday Applications. 5) Weekend Course in Information Technology. 6) Sinhala Language (Spoken and Written) Classes. 7) English Language (Spoken and Written) Classes.

A three- month basic workshop seminar followed by a nine-month course in the above-mentioned vocational Educational Programmes.

Once the candidates qualify with essential credentials they are systematically introduced into the social system called Implant Programme. Our affiliates and donors guarantee job enrolments in reputed business establishments after completion of the above-mentioned programmes. Food and lodging are provided to these candidates upon completion of the programmes until they establish themselves in the society socially and financially.

### **What to achieve during (two year) Programme**

1. Basic literary competency, sociable personality, good ideal regarding life. 2. Provide Internationally Recognized vocational Certification. 3) To complete legal documents. 4) Guaranteed Permanent Employment and Recruitment (by our Affiliates or Companies of their choice).

### **Background of our Residents**

1.Convicted Juveniles from Courts and Probation. 2) Children from unemployed and illiterate families. 3) Orphans and children from broken families. 4) School drop outs. 5) Under age labour victims. 5) Hyperactive Children. 6) ADHD Children. 6) Special Needs Children.[]

## **Reaching out through Dialogue at Mazenod College, Anuradhapura.**



The Oblate presbyters / priests and Oblate Brothers stationed at Rajabima Oblate Centre at Jayanthi Māwatha, Anurādhapura have since its inception on October 27<sup>th</sup> 1987 been engaged in inter-religious dialogue with Buddhists through their social concern for the poor, education in the university and at the Rajabima Oblate Centre. Through regular meetings with the Buddhist Clergy and Buddhist laity they strived to establish cordial relationships of good will and cooperation. Further, they have been reaching out to the Buddhist families affected by floods while supporting them with financial assistance from the benefactors.

The Oblates at Rajabima Oblate Centre have been able also to foster this dialogue with the Buddhists by embracing the spirituality of service through love, taught by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-34) and in his teaching regarding the Last Judgment. (Mt

25; 36-41). According to the teaching of Jesus, even those who are not baptized but practice compassionate love towards those in pain and need can partake of the blessings of the Kingdom of God and thus attain salvation. Affirmation of such a Christian spirituality enables the Oblates to appreciate the meaningful religious rituals and practices of the Buddhists, the Hindus and the Muslims which reflect authentically their foundational values both spiritual and moral and also their virtues.

### **Dialogue through Education**

The Oblates at Rajabima Oblate Centre in Anurādhapura adhering to the above-mentioned spirituality, were energized in 2019 to re-enter the field of education through the inauguration of Mazenod College in Anurādhapura, and dedicate their lives to foster also dialogue of life with the students, their parents and the teachers, while respecting the rituals of their respective Faith-traditions.

The official opening of Mazenod College took place in the premises of Rajabima Oblate Centre on January 07, 2019 in the presence of Very Rev. Fr. Irwin Morais, OMI, the then Oblate Provincial Leader and Rt. Rev. Bishop Norbert Andrādi, OMI, Bishop of the diocese of Anuradhapura. Among those present on that special occasion were Venerable Nugethane Pagnānanda Thero, the chief Incumbent of Sri Sambuddhi Jayanthi Vihāraya. Anuradhapura and Sivashri Bālachandran, the Hindu Gurukkal of Anuradhapura.

Affirmation of the spiritual values and virtues fostered by Religious Faiths can facilitate also promotion of holistic education, concern for common good while excluding violence. Any socio-cultural and religious value is best initiated also in the environment of school / college which becomes a powerful agent of social change and social transformation. Buddhism has at its core teachings such as mettā (loving - kindness to all living beings) and karunā (compassion for those in pain). Hinduism teaches to go beyond ritual to help the poor and respect the dignity of every human being. Similarly Islam emphasizes concern for the poor, peace and the sense of community. Today, inter-religious institutions can prove to be such effective means in attaining these goals.

### **Motivation for holistic and dialogical education**

Firmly convinced that in Anurādhapura, the children (boys and girls) have the felt-need of an holistic education in English-medium in today's digital world and spiritually energized and empowered by the Word of God, preached and lived by Jesus Christ (Mt 25:36-41 and Lk 10:29-34), the Oblates have committed themselves through Mazenod College, Anurādhapura to try and unlock fuller life also through dialogical education which would spiritually energize the students. Sinhala and Tamil Languages are also included in the curriculum. At present (in 2025), there are 458 students (boys and girls) and 36 teachers on the staff.

Regular meetings at Mazenod College with the parents of the students and with the teachers also provide opportunities to foster mutual respect and concern for their well-being, thereby to facilitate also the emergence of a brotherly / sisterly ethos as the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* of Pope Francis advocates. The collaborative approach of the Oblates not only enriches their spiritual life but also helps to build bridges of human relations between diverse religious traditions at Anurādhapura, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious community of people of different living Faiths.

Rooted in the Christian spirituality, the motto of Mazenod College, Anuradhapura, “*Servire in amore*” (To serve with love) proclaims service as the inseparable twin of love. Hence the Oblate educators commit themselves not only to help the students attain academic excellence but also to empower them to act with dignity, with good discipline and decorum, thus maintaining equality and a sense of inclusion among them. Such a mission-vision extends also to the teachers and the parents of the students. The embodied message of the motto of Mazenod College includes respecting the values and virtues of the Founders of the Faiths of the students, the teachers and the parents of the students.

### **Oblate Educators: Not strangers in Anurādhapura**

It needs to be noted that the Oblate Bishop Christopher Bonjean OMI who transformed the Catholic School Society of Jaffna devoted also his time and energy

for the education of Catholics and non-Catholics also the District of Anurādhapura. **For example, the local language school, begun by Bishop C. Bonjean in 1874 in Anurādhapura with fifty students and three teachers, became a registered Government English school on March 19, 1898 under the leadership of Oblate Bishop Henry Joulain, with the name St. Joseph's College since the Church-building in the vicinity had been dedicated to St. Joseph. Fr. Paul Matthew Francis OMI became the Rector of St. Joseph's College, Anurādhapura in 1898.** When the Senior School Certificate (SSC) classes were offered in all the three languages in Sri Lanka in 1940, St. Joseph's College was the only school in the North Central Province (NCP) to do so. So in the field of education, the Oblates are not strangers in Anuradhapura. **In 1914 the college changed from a co-educational institute to an all-boys' school. The girls of St. Joseph's College were enrolled in the Holy Family Convent (Swarnapāli Bālīka Vidyālaya).** St. Joseph's College, Anurādhapura, was also taken over by the Sri Lankan Government in 1962.

**Fr. Emmanuel Fernando, OMI**

## **Pope appoints Sr. Simona Brambilla as Vatican's first female prefect**



Pope Francis appoints Sr. Simona Brambilla, an Italian-born religious sister from the Consolata Missionaries, as Prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, along with Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime as Pro-Prefect.

Sister Simona Brambilla, who will turn 60 on March 27, previously served as the Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries. Pope Francis appointed her on Monday, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, as Prefect of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. She has served as Secretary of the same Dicastery since October 7, 2023, and becomes the first woman to be appointed Prefect of a Dicastery of the Holy See.

Pope Francis also chose Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, 65, whom he created Cardinal in the Consistory on September 30, 2023, as Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery.

Sr. Brambilla was the second woman to be appointed Secretary of a Vatican Dicastery, following the 2021 appointment of Sr. Alessandra Smerilli to the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

She has a background that includes missionary experience in Mozambique. She was a professional nurse before joining the Consolata Missionary Sisters Institute, which she led from 2011 to 2023. On July 8, 2019, the Pope for the first time appointed seven women as members of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Later, Sr. Brambilla was first chosen as Secretary of the Dicastery and now as Prefect.

Since the beginning of Pope Francis's pontificate, the presence of women in the Vatican has increased. According to overall data covering both the Holy See and Vatican City State from 2013 to 2023, the percentage of women has risen from 19.2% to 23.4%.

A pathway outlined by the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* of 2022, the Pope has made it possible for laypeople, including women, to lead a Dicastery and become Prefect, a role previously reserved for Cardinals and Archbishops.

In Vatican City State, Pope Francis has appointed two women to leadership positions during his pontificate. In 2016, he named Barbara Jatta as Director of the Vatican Museums, which has traditionally been led by laypeople. In 2022, he named Sister Raffaella Petrini as Secretary General of the Governorate, a role usually held by a bishop.



There are also several female Undersecretaries, such as Gabriella Gambino and Lina Ghisoni at the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, while Sister Carmen Ros Nortes of the Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation serves as Undersecretary at the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Emilce Cuda is Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America; Nataša Govekar heads the theological-pastoral department of the Dicastery for Communication (our parent organization); Cristiane Murray is Deputy Director of the Holy See Press Office; and Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhof is Deputy Coordinator of the Council for the Economy. The General Secretariat of the Synod also has a female Undersecretary, French-born Sister Nathalie Becquart.

On December 13, 2024, the Pope appointed Sister Simona Brambilla and María Lía Zervino, former president of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO), as members of the 16th Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat. María Lía Zervino had already been appointed as a member of the Dicastery for Bishops in 2022.

**By Vatican News**

## POPE FRANCIS' NEW LIFE STYLE

"Papal trips let Francis showcase a 'poor church for the poor. It's often when Francis is on the road that he's able to underscore the simplicity that he expects from church leaders," wrote Christopher White, NCR's Vatican correspondent, on Sept 19, 2024, writing about regarding Pope Francis' four-country trip to S.Asia.

"In Jakarta, through his car, humble gestures and his cheap watch, the pope caught the heart of millions of Indonesian Muslims. In this country, with the largest Muslim population in the world, Francis generated a huge enthusiasm among the general public, which did not seem to receive enough international attention. For many Indonesians, Francis exemplifies what a selfless and virtuous leader should be," wrote Michel Chambon, NCR, Sept 24, 2024.

**Pope Francis during his trip in Indonesia, praised Indonesians on Sept 4, 2024 for their large families and suggested that people in other countries are choosing to have pets rather than bring up children.** The 87-year-old pontiff was speaking alongside Indonesia's president Joko Widodo in Jakarta on the first stop **on a four-country trip to Asia.** "And your country...has families with three, four or five children that keep moving forward, and this is reflected in the age levels of the country," he said. "Keep it up, you're an example for everyone, for all the countries that may be, and this might sound funny, (where) these families prefer to have a cat or a little dog instead of a child. Sept 4, 2024 (Reuters)

According to the late theologian **Hans Kung**, Pope Francis connects with St. Francis of Assisi. From the first moment of his inauguration, he chose a new style. Unlike his predecessors, he wears no mitre with gold and jewels, no ermine-trimmed cape, no red shoes, no magnificent throne. He speaks the language of the people, avoiding high-flown rhetoric.

## REV. DEACON KINSLEY D. COORAY, OMI



Rev. Deacon Muthuthanthri Patabandige Kingsley David Cooray, OMI, a member of the Oblate Province of Colombo, passed away peacefully on November 24, 2024. Born on July 24, 1936, he was the beloved eldest member of our Oblate Province at the time of death and a dedicated missionary of the Oblate Congregation.

Rev. Brother Deacon Kingsley Cooray was born to the late Sother Kius Cooray and Victoria Silva and he hailed from St. Joseph's Church at Uyana, Moratuwa in the Archdiocese of Colombo. Brother Kingsley's early education was at St. Joseph's Junior School at Moratuwa, at St. Sylvester's College, and at St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa.

Bro. Kingsley entered the Oblate Juniorate, Kohuwela in 1958, followed by the Oblate Novitiate at Mont Eden, Kalutara. He made his first profession of vows on August 15, 1959 and proceeded to the Oblate Scholasticate, Ampitiya until 1968. After a brief hiatus, he returned and made his final profession (perpetual Oblation) on

September 8, 1976. At the Oblate Scholasticate, his active and cheerful disposition and his contribution to the community life with his artistic talents were very much noteworthy. He was ordained a Deacon on October 7, 1977 at the church-building of Sts. Peter and Paul, at Ragama.

Throughout his life, Brother Deacon Kingsley served in various apostolates, beginning as an Assistant at Sts. Peter and Paul, Ragama. His dedication took him to several Oblate communities, including Oblate Preachers' community, "Nazareth", Wennappuwa, and Sacred Heart Novitiate, "Sidupiyanila", Bandarawela. He had been also an intrepid missionary in several countries, including Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa and Bangladesh, significantly impacting communities across and Asia from 1990 until 2017.

Noted for his artistic talents – decorator, painter, and musician - Brother Kingsley embellished the physical environment and made the human environment joyful and cheerful. During his stay at the Oblate General House in Rome, he had beautifully decorated the chapel for liturgical celebrations and for the “get-togethers”. At Sylhet in Bangladesh, he had skillfully arranged the Oblate Bishop's House. He had also very generously carved out the Oblate coat of arms in several Oblate communities in Sri Lanka and abroad during his apostolates.

During his retirement at “Marian Grove”, Kohuwela, Brother Deacon Kingsley who was a cherished member,

was noted for his deep faith and commitment as a service-person. His joyful disposition and infectious smile brightened the lives of those around him.

His contributions to faith and community will always be remembered. May Rev. Brother Deacon P. Kingsley D. Cooray, OMI, rest in peace, cherished in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

The memorial Mass and the funeral service for Rev. Brother Deacon P. Kingsley D. Cooray, OMI, were held on November 25, 2024 at 3.00 p.m at the church of Our Lady of Fatima, Colombo 10. Very Rev. Fr. Roshan J.L. Silva, OMI, the Provincial Superior of the Oblate Province of Colombo presided over the Service. A large group of the clergy, the Religious and the Lay faithful were present on that occasion. May Brother Kingsley Cooray's soul rest in peace and may he inspire us.

**Fr. Assisi Devasiri Fernando, OMI,**  
Secretary to the Oblate Provincial, Colombo.

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**“Synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it can be radiating the light of Christ”** (Final Document of Synodality, no 28).

## ගරු මයිකල් සිල්වා (නිමනි) පියතුමෝ සගයුව දිනති



දෙවිඳුන්ගෙන් ලද හැකියාවන් දෙවි මහිමය උදෙසාම කැපකරමින් ජනවන්දනාව අරුත් ගන්වන්නට අගනා ගීතිකා රැසක් දායාද කළ, දිවයිනේ බොහෝ ගම්නියම්ගම් වල පානහමින් ධර්මදූතවරයෙක් සේ මහඟු මෙහෙවරක් කළ ගරු පමුණුගමගේ මයිකල් සිල්වා පියතුමා සිය කැපවූ නිමනි පැවිදි පූජක දිවිය හමාර කරමින් ස්වගර්ථය වී වැදෑරුනි.

ජනවන්දනාව පොහොණි කරනුවස් හෙළ බසින් මනරම් ගීතිකා පැබැදුවත් අතර හමුවන ළබැඳි වර්තයක් වන ගරු මයිකල් සිල්වා පියතුමා ඇත එපිට ගම්පළාත් වල කළ දූත මෙහෙවර පිළිබඳ බොහෝ දෑ ඇතත් එතුමා සුවිශේෂී වනුයේ පන්හිඳ හසුරුවා පෑ පෙළහර නිසාය. ඒ ගීතිකා පදවැල් අතර කිසිදා වියැකී නොයන ගීතිකා කීපයක් නම්,

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# දියන සොයා දුව යමි

# අමා රජීදුණේ

ආදියයි. උත්තර භාරතීය රාගධාරි සංගීතය, හෙළ ගැමි ජන සංගීතය මෙන්ම බෞද්ධ සජ්ඣායනා නාද රටා සියල්ලෙන් සන්නද්ධ වූවත් පියතුමා ගෙවූයේ සරල නිහඩ අපිස් දිවියකි. ඒ නිසාම එතුමාගේ මෙහෙවර නිසි ඇගයුමකට ලක්වී නැති බවද පෙනේ.

කටුනායක මිසමි සංඝයාට අයත් ජෝන් සිල්වා සහ ජුලි ජර්නාන්දු යුවලට පුතුව 1938 මාතර් 14 දා උපන් මෙතුමා මග්ගොන සාන්ත විසෙන්ති නිවාසයෙන් සිප්පතර හදාරා නිමර්ල මරිය නිකායිකයෙක් වීමේ අභිලාෂයෙන් කොහුවල කණ්ඩු දෙවසත්හලට සම්බන්ධ වූයේය. ආධුනික පැවිදි පුහුණුව සම්පූර්ණ කළ එතුමා 1961 මැයි 31 දා කළුතරදී පැවිදි වේදි භාර දී තම දේව සේවයට අවතීර්ණ වූයේය.

පූජක පුහුණුව අවසන් කළ එතුමා 1968 අප්‍රේල් 19 දා අතිඋතුම් ෆර්නන්ස් මාකස් රදගුරු හිමිපාණන් අතින් මරදාන පාතිමා මවුන් සෙවනේදී පුද්ගල වරම් ලැබුවේය. මෙතුමා නවක පියතුමෙක් ලෙස පමණක් නොව ඉන්පසුකාලීනවද මිසමි ගණනාවක සහයක පියතුමා ලෙස සේවය කර ඇත. ඒ අතර කෝට්ටේ , හල්පේ, කුරුණෑගල ,පමුණුගම, දැණුරැඹය , තල්විල වැනි මිසමි වේ.

මිසම් එඬේරා ලෙස වග, තරාල, විල්ලෝරාවන්ත, මල්පිටිය,හාල්දඬුවන මිසම් වල සේවය කළ එතුමා ඊට අමතරව පිටිපන, දෙමටපිටිය හා ඉරණුවල දේවස්ථාන වලද සේවය කර ඇත. මිසම් සේවාවට අමතරව රෝහල් උපාධිය ලෙසත්, අනුරාධපුර රජබිම නිමනි මධ්‍යස්ථානයේ සාමාජිකයෙක් ලෙසත් සේවය කළ එතුමා ක්රියාකාරී දූත සේවාවෙන් පසු කලක් මග්ගොන සාන්ත විසෙන්ති නිවාසයේ නේවාසිකව හිඳ අවසන කොහුවල මේරියන් ග්රෝව් නිවසනයේ විශ්රාමිකව පසුවිය.

ගරු මයිකල් සිල්වා පිය නාමය එඬේරික සහ ධර්මදාන සේවාවෙන් පරිබාහිරව සුවිශේෂී වන්නේ හෙළ ගීතිකාවේ වෙසෙස් ලකුණක් ඉතිරි කරනට එතුමන් පෑ කුසලතා හේතුවෙනි. පැවිදි දිවියට වසර 60 ක් ඉක්මවා සේවය කළ ගරු මයිකල් සිල්වා පියතුමන්ට නිත්‍යා සැතපීම ලැබේවා.

එතුමන්ගේ දේහය අද එනම් දෙසැම්බර් 07 දා සවස මට්ටක්කුලිය නිමනි මූලස්ථානයේ දෙව්මැදුරේ තැන්පත් කෙරෙන අතර හෙට දහවල් 1.30 ට මරදාන පානිමා දේවස්ථානය කරා රැගෙන එනු ලැබේ. එහිදී සවස 2.30 ට පැවැත්වෙන අවමහල් දිවිය යාගයෙන් අනතුරුව බොරැල්ල කනත්තේ මිහිදන් කෙරේ.

- නිමනි.

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***“Do not allow the spark of youth to be extinguished in the darkness of a closed room in which the only window to the outside world is a computer and smartphone. Open wide the door of your life! May your time and space be filled with meaningful relationships, real people, with whom to share your authentic and concrete experiences of daily life.”*** (Pope Francis).



## **Vagdevi's Tribute to Fr. Michael Silva OMI (1938 – 2024)**

We join those who mourn Fr. Michael Silva's demise because of his contribution to the Catholic hymnody, complementing the creative contributions of the trailblazer Fr. Marceline Jayakody, also an Oblate followed by Sunil Santhi and Ivor Dennis of the Hela tradition inspired by the late Fr. Moses Perera.

But I have an embarrassing bit of news to publish about this deceased Oblate musician.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, there was a plethora of Catholic hymns in Sinhala composed here in our country and Fr. Schmitt, the Vicar General of Colombo, also an Oblate, demanded that these compositions be submitted to him for ecclesiastical approval. He sent all the new compositions to me for my comments because he had heard that I had a diploma in sacred music from Venice (Italy) and had also completed a course in Bharatha Music in India.

I sent my comments to him but I also insisted that it would not be my verdict but that of the People of God in the pews that will ensure divine Sanction. Fr. Michael also received (as many others did too) some critical comments from me.... Obviously from a liturgical perspective and he was hurt.

But I was thoroughly humiliated when the Praying Church in the pews passed his compositions *summa cum laude*.

These hymns helped them to pray. I, too started promoting some of Fr. Michael's lyrics. He is not "resting in peace" but "singing amidst the choirs of angels".[]

Aloysius Pieris,s.j

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## THE RELIGIOUS

Pope Francis is the first Pope from a Religious Congregation / Order since the Camaldolese monk Gregory XVI, who was elected in 1831. Speaking to young consecrated persons in September 2015 in Rome, he said: "Consecrated life can be sterile, when one is not allowed to dream. St. Therese of the Child Jesus never lost the capacity to dream. She never lost the horizons. Today she is the Patroness of Missions. She is the Patroness of horizons of the Church. Prophecy, capacity to dream is the contrary of rigidity; the rigid can't dream. We think of those great things that Jesus said to the rigid of his times, to the rigid consecrated of his times in Chapter 23 of St. Mathew."

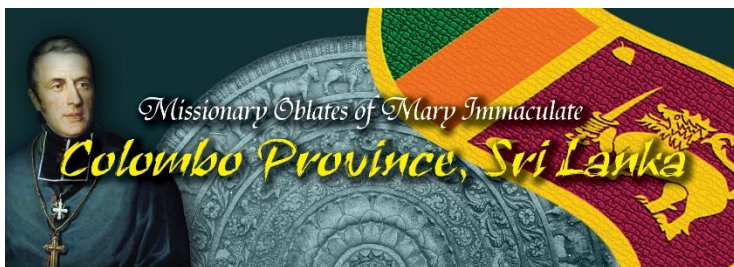
"Today's Religious men and women need to be prophetic capable of waking the world, of showing they are a special breed who have something to say to the world of today." (Pope Francis)

"Religious men and women are prophets. The charism of Religious people is like yeast. Prophecy announces the spirit of the Gospel" (Pope Francis).

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At a Mini-Congress of Oblates in 2024



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