

Online Catholic Opinion



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News, Views, Events and Developments

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Synod Report: *A Church that involves everyone and is close to the world's wounds* (Part 1)

After four weeks of work, which began on 4 October, the General Assembly concluded its first session. The Synthesis Report of some forty pages is the result of the work of the assembly. "The cry of the poor resounded among us, of those forced to migrate and of those suffering violence and the devastating consequences of climate change." (Foreword).

Looking ahead to the second session in 2024, the text offers reflections and proposals on topics such as the role of women and the laity, the ministry of bishops, priesthood and the diaconate, the importance of the poor and migrants, digital mission, ecumenism, and abuse.

LISTENING TO ALL, BEGINNING WITH VICTIMS OF ABUSE

The synod assembly reaffirms an "openness to listening and accompanying all, including those who have suffered abuse and hurt in the Church", which "addressing the structural conditions that abetted such abuse, remains before us, and requires concrete gestures of penitence".

THE FACE OF A SYNODAL CHURCH

Synodality is a first step. It is "a term unfamiliar to many members of the People of God, causing some people confusion and concern" (1 f), including fears of a departure from tradition, a



debasement of the hierarchical nature of the Church (1 g), a loss of power or, on the contrary, immobility and a lack of courage for change. "Synodal" and "synodality" are instead terms that "speak of a mode of being Church that integrates communion, mission, and participation". So they indicate a way of living the Church, valuing differences and developing the active involvement of all. This begins with deacons, priests, and bishops: "A synodal Church cannot do without their voices" (1 n) "We need an understanding of the reasons for resistance to synodality by some of them".

MISSION

The document continues explaining that synodality goes hand in hand with mission. Hence, it is necessary that "Christian communities are to enter into solidarity with those of other religions, convictions and cultures, thus avoiding, on the one hand, the risk of

self-referentiality and self-preservation, and on the other hand the risk of loss of identity" (2 e). In this new "pastoral style", it would seem important to many to make "liturgical language more accessible to the faithful and more embodied in the diversity of cultures" (3 l).

THE POOR AT THE CENTRE

Ample space in the Report is devoted to the poor, who ask the Church for "love", understood as "respect, acceptance, and recognition" (4 a). "For the Church, the option for the poor and those at the margins is a theological category before being a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical category" (4 b), the document reiterates, identifying the poor not only as those who are materially impoverished, but also migrants; indigenous peoples; victims of violence and abuse (especially women), or racism and trafficking; people with

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Pope's November prayer intention: *For the Pope*

Pope Francis asks the faithful to "Pray to the Lord that He will bless me," saying, "Your prayer gives me strength and helps me to discern and to accompany the Church, listening to the Holy Spirit."

Pope Francis reminds the faithful that *"The fact that someone is Pope doesn't mean they lose their humanity."* On the contrary, my humanity grows each day with God's holy and faithful people."

He adds, "Being Pope is also a

process. The person becomes aware of what it means to be a pastor. And in this process, he learns how to be more charitable, more merciful, and, above all, more patient, like God our Father, who is so patient."

Knowing that popes are often "judged harshly" and will have to render "a serious account" of their ministry to God, Pope Francis asks his listeners "to judge benevolently" and "pray that the Pope, whoever he might be – today it is my turn

– may receive the help of the Holy Spirit, that he may be docile to that help."

Specifically, *he asks for prayers for the Pope "so that in the exercise of his mission, he may continue to accompany in the faith the flock entrusted to him by Jesus, always with the help of the Holy Spirit."*

And, hearkening back to the night of his election ten years ago, Pope Francis repeats his request for a "silent" prayer over him, concluding "And pray for me! Favourably!"

"Ruby"

The recent staging of the religious drama "Ruby" by Fr. Richard Ho Lung and friends was attended and applauded by thousands of Jamaican school children and adults.

The Roman Catholic Church in Jamaica is blessed to be able to evangelize many who are otherwise only exposed to secular and hedonistic entertainment.

Fr. Richard Ho Lung, now ministering in the Philippines, remains an icon of Catholic Commitment to the poorest and most rejected in our society, following the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, The Man for Others.

What you think?

Considering the Synod Report.

The Synod Report summary (elsewhere in this issue of C.O.) gives the essential points of that 42-page Report. In looking through it, some things stand out more than others as applicable to our situation in Jamaica. One of the first things to strike me was *"make liturgical language more accessible to the faithful and more embodied in the diversity of cultures."*

I immediately thought of the changes to the Creed some years ago. After Vatican II, some adjustments had been made, so that we said *"one in being with the Father"*, then a few years ago that was reverted to *"consubstantial with the Father."* Why would we go back to a word that was less accessible? We should restore the *"one in being."*

As encouraged after Vatican II, we should also step up making

the liturgy more embodied in our culture. We have done so with some aspects of the music and with praise and worship that resonates with most in our congregations (though not all!) but there are other things we could introduce. One of the things that some denominations make sure of is to have Bible study as part of their service.

We Catholics tend to have less familiarity with the Bible and hence less able to defend our faith. We could introduce focused Bible study as part of our liturgy, and maybe would attract more persons. Sermons could also immerse themselves more with aspects of our culture and use illustrations based more on our cultural realities.

There are various sections in the Report that stress the equality of women and the respect due them, but on the question of women deacons, the Report kicks it down the road and asks for *"further research,"* piously hoping *"If possible, the results of this*

research should be presented at the next Session of the Assembly" (i.e. next year October).

There is the exhortation *"promoting the use of inclusive language in liturgical texts and Church documents."* Again, the changes to the Creed come to mind, as we had reverted to *"who for us men and for our salvation"* thus reinserting the male exclusivity. If we are to take the exhortation to heart, we should drop *"men"* rather urgently, so as to ensure the inclusivity of all the congregation.

These adjustments to the Creed are simple and easy to make, consistent with the synod tone.

The Report calls for the Church to be committed to public denunciation of injustices in a more activist involvement in socio-political realities.

Where has our Church spoken out on the injustice of sending back Haitian refugees to the violence of their society as we have done twice this year? How does this relate to the

Report's statement on refugees: *"We are called to practice an open welcome, to accompany them in the construction of a new life."*

Where is our welcome to these Haitian refugees, where does our Church stand on their treatment? For that matter, where is the Church's denunciation both of the Hamas attack on Israelis and the ongoing savage murder by Israel of over ten thousand Palestinians, including over 4,000 children?

Indeed, the Synod Report gives not only much to consider but also much for us to take action on, since the work of the synod must continue in our daily church life. It is not something to shelve for the next year and await another document. Will the Church in Jamaica now advance the cause of *"communion, mission and participation"* based on the Synod Report?

<https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report.pdf>

POPE TO ATTEND CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

"It is urgent to develop policies to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and highly polluting gases"

Pope Francis



binding targets to slow climate change before it's too late, warning that God's increasingly warming creation is fast reaching a "point of no return." He lamented that once again, the world's poor and most vulnerable are paying the highest price.

"We are now unable to halt the enormous damage

we have caused. We barely have time to prevent even more tragic damage," Pope Francis warned.

Climate change is already affecting Jamaica and other Caribbean islands, especially with increasing sea levels and coastal erosion, but also with the risk of more severe droughts and storms. We need to accompany the Pope with our prayers and pressure our representatives to activism to get developed states to roll back emissions.

Pope Francis called attention once more to the challenges of climate change in advance of the upcoming COP28 conference on the global response to climate change, beginning in early December in Dubai. *"In addition to war, our world is threatened by another great danger, climate change, which endangers life on earth, especially future generations,"* the Pope warned. This, he said, *"is contrary to the plan of God, who created everything for life."*

"The time for seeking global solutions is running out. We can find suitable solutions only if we act together and in agreement."

- Pope Francis



Pope Francis will become the first Pope to attend a COP gathering when he arrives in the United Arab Emirates on Friday, 1 December. He expressed his gratitude to "all those who will accompany this trip with their prayers," while also thanking them for "their commitment to take the protection of our common home to heart."

In October, Pope Francis shamed and challenged world leaders to commit to

Immaculate Heart of Mary
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ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CELEBRATES FEAST-DAY INDUCTING 6 ALTAR-SERVERS

There was much to celebrate at St. Martin de Porres parish at Gordon Town on Sunday, November 5. The Feast-day of our St. Martin was marked with a special Mass on that Sunday, celebrated by our pastor, Fr. Roger Graham. There was a large turnout, including teachers and students of the church-run St.

Martin de Porres Primary School. The students rendered a hymn during Mass.

The Mass was the first to be served by six new altar-servers, who were inducted into service during the Mass by Fr. Roger. They are: Daniel David, Dwemari Dunn, Cameron Redwood, Amerah Shaw and Imani Williams.

They were trained by Simone Dunn, Church Council President. For some months, the parish had been without an altar server, as the lone server, Marissa, had gone away.

Blessing of graves.

Also on November 5 after Mass, being close to All-Souls day, Fr. Roger carried out the blessing of graves in the surrounding graveyard, with many family members accompanying him. This had

not been done since Covid.

Pot-luck repast.

As a culmination to the feast-day, members of the congregation and guests enjoyed a meal of various dishes prepared by members. This included delicacies like salt-fish fritters, roast breadfruit, chicken, salad and sandwiches. Again, this was the first proper and most welcome social gathering held by the parish since Covid.



Newly inducted Altar-servers at St. Martin de Porres with pastor, Fr./Roger.



Students from St. Martin de Porres Primary render an item during Feast-day Mass.



An Interactive seminar on Practical Synodality
Answering the question:

**HOW WILL THE
SYNOD AFFECT
JAMAICAN
CATHOLICISM?**

Date:
Thurs,
December 7th,
2023
Time:
5 PM
Venue:
College Hall

Panellists:

FR. KINGSLEY ASPHALL
Holy Cross Catholic Church
Chairman of Archdiocesan Synod Committee

MR. JOSEPH PEREIRA
St. Martin dePorres Church
Chairman of St. Michael's College

MRS. GRACE BASTON
Sts. Peter & Paul Church
Educator

DEACON PETER ESPEUT
St. Anne's Church Pastoral Administrator
Dean of Studies St. Michael's College

A FI MI HEALT!

Welcome! This month of November is dedicated to **PARENTS AND PARENTING!** Yaaaay! Let's love up all the parents/grandparents/guardians/teachers/coaches/those who supervise all the extra-curricular activities! **Nuff, nuff BIG UP!!** The theme for this year's celebrations is "The POWER of parenting: raising HAPPY, HEALTY and HOPEFUL children". Here in Jamaica the spin on this is "POSITIVE PARENTING: impacting the generations". Let's explore some definitions so that we get a better understanding of the goal.

HAPPY: feeling or showing a pleasing countenance or contentment; a sense of trust and confidence.

HEALTHY: in good physical, mental, social and spiritual condition.

HOPEFUL: having optimism about the future.

As parents/guardians etc. we need to be able to pass these very wholesome conditions on to our children, so we need to be in these states even if situations do not always embrace all the conditions all

the time. We are not likely to be in full 100% embrace of all these states all at once, at all times. But bear in mind that all three states are very much interconnected and are in constant flux.

So yes, our children need to be in this state of happiness, health and hopefulness. And we as parents need to be able to make this happen. We can only give/pass on what we have and SO we need to work toward being in that state. It is our responsibility, therefore, to define these particular conditions as wholesomely as possible. And here are some hard questions for us adults: -

- *Are we using soap operas and celebrity shows to determine our values and our dreams?*
- *Are we looking solely to world views to keep us centered?*
- *What are we chasing? Is it real and achievable? Are we watching the Jones who are watching the Jones?*

All of us will, no doubt, have different dreams and hopes as it pertains to achieving happiness, good health and

hopefulness. And that's quite okay! We just have to be **REALISTIC** and level-headed and prudent. So, here's the thing, we have to **be careful not to lose ourselves** while chasing the dreams. We as parents etc. need to keep our sanity, need to maintain good health, need to stay spiritually grounded and need to stay **CONFIDENT** in the values and principles we are desirous in passing on.

As parents, if we aim to stay focused, we are likely to be energetic, even-tempered, driven and happy to take on the challenges of life as we remain hopeful. If we're are **CONFIDENT** about what and how we eat, then we are more likely to encourage our children to eat like us. If we are diving in and sticking to our exercise plans, our young ones will want to copy that. If we are NOT SHY about what we embrace as faith and spirituality, our children will be **CONFIDENT** about what they embrace. If we deal with conflict in a manner that is not angry nor violent then our children are more likely to handle conflict in a non-violent

way. And the "if's" can continue on and on and on. The truth is that we as parents etc. all desire to see our children become their **BEST SELF**. So let us remember that if we are hopeful to have balanced and healthy children then we need to hold fast to the song "*children live what they learn; children learn what they live*". Let us therefore take the stand to be **powerful, positive parents, committed to raising happy, healthy and hopeful children who will in turn positively impact the generations to come.** Parents! Let us raise healthy minds, healthy bodies, healthy souls!

And with that "beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul." 3 John 1:2

'ARTful Vibes
November 2023



Living Waters Fellowship Group of
BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHEDRAL
invites you to
An evening of
Psalms Prayer and Praise

zoom
MEETING ID 817 9417 9004
PASSCODE: 282713

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Thursdays
7 pm



MOP Graduation

On the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, The St. Michael's College held a graduation ceremony for the class of 2023, and the event was nothing short of inspiring!

The ceremony began with a Holy Mass celebrated by the Most Reverend Dr. Kenneth Richards, Archbishop of Kingston, alongside several other esteemed reverends and deacons, such as Principal at St. Michael's Theological Institute Rev Deacons Ronald Thwaites and Dean of



Deacon Ronald Thwaites, Archbishop Kenneth, Deacon Peter Espeut, Fr. Collin Henriques and Fr. Peter Hunter



Br. Raul Millena Lorena being presented award by Archbishop Ken



Deacon Ronald Thwaites

The ceremony concluded with a thought-provoking hymn, "Shine Jesus Shine". This event was a beautiful collaboration of faith, music, and liturgy.

The graduates of the class of 2023 are now equipped to continue inspiring and fostering new vocations. The ceremony reminded us of the vital role that theological education and faith play in our lives and the world. Congratulations to the class of 2023! Continue to inspire and foster new vocations and those currently enrolled to stay the course and help them renew their "Yes" during this study time.

By: David Villafana.

Seminarian for the Archdiocese of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.



Br. Ranjit Pradhan being presented award by Deacon Espeut

Homilist Rev. Fr. Peter Hunter, OP reminded the graduates of the importance of separating oneself and entering into silence and prayer. His message was emphasized by his encounter with Christ while doing his studies as a novice on a Christology paper. It was a touching moment that reminded the graduates to check in with the source of their faith constantly. While struggling to complete his assignment, he mentioned that he forgot to "check in with the source" (Christ) as he encountered the words "Who is like Christ?" during his silent time. How fitting as it spoke about the Archangel Michael and the meaning of the angel's name,



Br. Jovanie Demil being presented award by Mr. Joe Pereira

Studies Peter Espeut. The music was supported by the Brothers of the Missionary of the Poor, and liturgy was assisted by both the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Kingston and Mustard Seed Communities.

After distributing certificates, Archbishop Richards emphasised the need for a solid theological education to become influential pastors in the ministry God has called each of us to serve. That day was also His Grace's 38th year of Priestly ministry.

"The Calling- Mission to Evangelise"

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." Mt. 28:19 What an awesome charge we are given. As a catechist in the Catholic Church, I am ever mindful of the call to evangelize. This responsibility was highlighted when I participated in a course organized by St. Michael Theological College in collaboration with the AEC catechetical leader in coordination with the catechetical leaders of the Archdiocese of Kingston and the Dioceses of Montego Bay and Mandeville. This course had two parts: Spirituality of catechists and Methodology in catechesis, and over 200 catechists from the region participated.

Each Wednesday at 6:00 I would prepare a space free from distractions and, armed with a journal and pen, I would sign in half an hour early, as I could not miss the prelude of meditative music and iconoclastic illustrations which had been carefully selected to set the tone for the sessions.

Spirituality of Catechists was the course that I believe put so many things into perspective for me. I became aware that my faith must be reflected in my teaching; that I must be joyful, encouraging, humble, compassionate, and non-judgmental. Also, that I should manifest Christ in my daily life through both words and actions. I must teach people "to listen with their hearts", to hear the words behind the words. Since, as Catechists, we are promoting growth in morality and fidelity to the Church, I must make a habit of praying, reading scripture, encountering Jesus in the Eucharist, and in Adoration. My relationship with Jesus must be

born from a conscious connection to Him, so I can say after Paul Gal. 2:20 "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me". The Spirituality course helped me to see how I live my life in Communion with Christ.

As the weeks progressed, I eagerly looked forward to inspirational, erudite, and passionate presenters, all experts in their fields and my expectations were far exceeded. It had been my hope that I would learn how to be a good Catechist. Needless to say, after the very first session, I realized the extent to which I lacked the basic "awareness" of how to approach catechesis. Luckily for me, the presenters were competent, creative, and exciting. They presented material that was easily accessible; church doctrine, the Liturgy, the Gospels, the sacramentals and so much more. So, I began to feel equipped with the tools to carry out the mission of catechesis.

Pedagogy in Catechesis, Part 2 of the Course, reinforced my views that teaching must have an effect on people. Jesus sends the "twelve" out Mt. 10:1-10 to teach the truth with love. In this way, we accompany rather than direct, as Jesus himself did on the Road to Emaus.

I was so happy to be introduced to the Ecclesial Method for writing lessons. This proved to be an affirmation of the method we have been working on for the past two years in the Catechetical Office with Sister Barbara and her team. It follows a 5 step method: Preparation, Proclamation, Explanation, Application, and Celebration.

Our Presenters reminded us that for every challenge, there is an opportunity; and that it is invaluable to catechesis that we connect faith to the human experience.

Mine was indeed a meaningful journey. Not only were the

participants given the opportunity to be part of something so much bigger than ourselves, but also we were given new information and introduced to techniques to help us succeed at our vocation of catechesis. The meetings created spaces for us to engage in conversations, share ideas and listen to and encourage each other. Some of us chose to listen to what others had to say. I found amazing the chorus of voices expressing delight at the opportunity to learn from each other, and to be assured by our peers that we are united in this process of learning to be good and faithful stewards.

So, what did I learn from my participation in this course? That I am commanded to teach my Catholic faith! That I have been given the tools by which I can fulfil this mission. That, in the role of Evangelist, I follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Angela Alcock, Member of the Catechetical Core Team

Upper Room
PRAYER GROUP

ADVENT
Hope... Peace... Joy... Love

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zoom
"prayer"
PASSWORD

November 25
Deacon Ronnie Thwaites

December 9
Deacon Pierre Douyon

December 2
Deacon Michel Du Chaussee

December 16
Deacon Derek Walcott

TRIBUTE TO S.T.G.C. OLD BOYS

Deacon Ossie Tai, Mr Herman Athias and Mr. Christopher Berry recipients designate of the Monsignor Gladstone Wilson Award, Father. Tulloch Chairman of the STGC School Board, Mrs. Margaret Campbell principal of our great alma mater, president of the STGC Old Boys Association, members of the St. George's Family, friends and well-wishers.



Mr. Christopher Berry

is a member of the famed STGC Class of 76. He was an avid tennis player representing STGC on numerous occasions. He was a major supporter of the initiative to establish the James Hosie Tennis Centre in honour of our mentor who served as principal of STGC. He has played an important role in supporting other sporting activities at the school including the track team to which he has given generously.

As a student he demonstrated a flair for things mathematical and scientific. Berry attended the prestigious Georgia Tech where he was trained as an engineer.

Chris Berry would have brought honour to any institution.

Christopher Berry took a fairly modest brokerage company which his father Maurice Berry founded and named after his wife almost forty years ago and largely through the unwavering support of his younger sibling Conrad Mark Berry converted into a financial powerhouse.

Most of Berry's giving is beyond public scrutiny. His charity and philanthropy is not animated by a sense of self-aggrandizement but is more consistent with the biblical tenets on how you give which he learned at St. George's. Berry seeks neither accolade nor credit for his numerous contribution to various medical, sporting and educational causes.

Herman's Athias



contributions span across the domains of education, the church, business, and technology, and they are nothing short of remarkable.

He served as a member of the Church Council, the Stella Maris Foundation Board, and the Street Feeding Program Ministry – where he packages and delivers food to the less fortunate. Additionally, Herman is an active member of the Men's Fellowship group.

His advisory role to the Ministry of Science and Technology, and involvement in various boards, including the Scientific Research Centre, Jamaica Business Development Centre, and Universal Service Fund, has significantly shaped the nation's technological landscape.

affectionately known as "Ossie" or "Bunny."

Our honouree grew up in the vibrant neighborhoods of Allman Town and Woodford Park, very close to his beloved alma mater, St. George's College.

He answered the call to serve in the Church. Inspired by the late Monsignor Kenneth Mock Yen and then Bishop of Montego Bay, Charles DuFour, he pursued the Diaconate, eventually being ordained in 2001.

Ossie's dedication extended to leadership roles, including Chairman of the Deacons' Association of the Archdiocese of Kingston, Vice President and President of the Old Boys' Association, and board positions at St. George's College, Sts. Peter & Paul Preparatory School, and the Holy Family Primary School in Downtown, Kingston. Ossie also serves as the unofficial historian of the OBA.

The St. George's College Old Boys Association recognizes Rev. Deacon Oswald Tie, for his exceptional contributions and his commendable service to St. George's College, the nation and the region. We honour him for his unwavering dedication to making the world a better place. He is, indeed, a testament to the power of commitment, and selfless service to others, and, therefore, a most worthy recipient of the St. George's College OBA Monsignor Gladstone Wilson Award.

Rev. Deacon Oswald Tie,



Sr. Theresa Lowe Ching, RSM



Sister Theresa Lowe Ching, named at birth Irene Theresa Lowe Ching by her family, was born in Gordon Town, St. Andrew, Jamaica. She is predeceased by her parents along with four brothers and three sisters. She is survived by several nieces and nephews that she loved very much and kept in touch with especially in her later years.

Theresa was a dedicated tertiary educator who also served for a time in our High School, Convent of Mercy Academy, Alpha. She received her MA from Notre Dame University in 1970. From 1970 to 1977 Sister Terry served in formation for our young sisters coming into the community.



Archbishop Edgerton Clarke and Sr. Theresa at a press briefing 2002

Theresa became the Director of St. Michael's Seminary in 1978 at the request of then, Archbishop Edgerton Clarke and served in that capacity for the next 12 years. She was instrumental in St. Michael's College being linked to the University of the West

Indies so that the students would benefit from a degreed programme through St. Michael's.

Also, during this time, Terry completed her Ph.D. from the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto Canada in 1986. Shortly thereafter, she was elected to the Leadership Team in the Cincinnati Province from 1990 to 1998.

Her deep love for Our Lady of Guadalupe lead Terry to be able to attend the Canonization of



Sr. Theresa with the staff of St Michael's Theological College

Juan Diego on July 31, 2002 in the Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico.

In 2012 Terry was invited by SEDOS: Documentation and Research Centre on Mission, to be a presenter at their seminar in Rome. She was also asked by Bishop Paul Boyle to accompany him to Rome for a Bishop's meeting as an advisor throughout the course of these meetings. This was indeed a great honor for Terry.

Terry lived her life as a Sister of Mercy serving her community, the Church, and the world. She was a dedicated educator, formation director, theologian, and served in community leadership as well as seminary administra-

tion. As a Director of Formation for the Sisters of Mercy of the former Cincinnati Province, Theresa was both inspiring and challenging. She took the Second Vatican Council's call for renewal in all areas of life seriously and helped young women in formation understand and respond both to the call to religious life and the Church's universal call to holiness.

Despite all of Terry's educational and theological successes, she felt that the formation of the



Sr. Theresa at Sts Peter and Paul, speaking on St. Michael's College 50th anniversary.

authored numerous articles for theological journals that speak about Christian life from this vantage point in relation to the signs of the times. Terry said she tried to live by and teach the words she once wrote; *"suffering in today's world means primarily the suffering of people who are being crucified, and the purpose of theology is to take these people down from the cross"*.

As a Sister of Mercy, Theresa wanted the story and heritage of the Sisters of Mercy in Jamaica to be remembered and celebrated, and she had a significant hand in the creation of the Alpha Mercy Historical Center on the Alpha campus. For Terry, the story of the life of the Sisters of Mercy in Jamaica reflected liberation theology lived out in its fullest expression in the context of the time.

We, her sisters left behind had hoped that she would live to see the completion of the (AMHC) Alpha Mercy Historical Centre. We know she will continue to give us the "direction and oversight" we need to complete this very important legacy of the entire community.

May her soul and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

Mercy Association was one of her highest achievements. The Jamaican Mercy Association was formed in 1988 but had a couple year hiatus due to Hurricane Gilbert, which took a significant toll on the country and its infrastructure. The group came together a year later and now has 17 Associates throughout Jamaica.

As a theologian and educator, Theresa grounded herself within the liberation theology that emerged from Latin America and the Caribbean after the Second Vatican Council. She was committed to a theological perspective that emphasized and focused on a "preferential option for the poor" and the oppressed. As such, she gave presentations and

Transgender baptism: Is this something new? Not really.

By Father Patrick Briscoe
Editor, Our Sunday Visitor

It felt like there was a seismic shift in Church teaching concerning transgenderism in recent weeks. And that's because so many headlines got the story wrong. The New York Times, for example, reported: "Pope Francis, who has made reaching out to L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics a hallmark of his papacy, has made clear that transgender people can be baptized, serve as godparents and be witnesses at church weddings, furthering his vision of a more inclusive church."

So what actually happened?

Responding to pastoral questions

in a doctrinal note issued from the Vatican, Pope Francis and Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández offered a nuanced response to several pastoral questions. The document, signed on Oct. 31 and posted on the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's (DDF) website on Nov. 8, addresses the participation of "transsexual and homo affective persons" in baptisms and weddings. For our purposes here, I'll just address the question of whether or not a transgender person, even one who has undergone medical intervention, can be baptized.

Before we get to that, recall that Pope Francis has consistently and unequivocally denounced transgender ideology throughout his pontificate. Speaking in Hungary in April, the Holy Father warned Hungarian civil authorities from falling prey to the "ideological colonization" of gender theory. A month before, he said the same thing to the journalist Elisabetta Piqué of La Nación: "Gender ideology, today, is one of the most dangerous ideological colonizations." In 2016, Pope Francis told the bishops of Poland, "Today children — children! — are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching



this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible!" His encyclical letters — including *Amoris Laetitia* and *Laudato Si'* — warn against gender ideology. The pope has not reversed Catholic teaching. We receive our bodies as male or female. This is settled perennial Catholic teaching, grounded in Scripture and sound philosophy. Under no circumstances can the note from the DDF be read as approval of transgender ideology or the idea of gender identity.

So what exactly does the note say?

How to interpret the note

Regarding baptism, the document provides nuanced guidance, emphasizing pastoral prudence. It urges that each situation be carefully considered to safeguard the sacrament, prevent scandal and address any doubts about the moral or subjective disposition of the person involved. The document instructs that a transgender person be admitted to baptism under the same conditions as the rest of the faithful. What are those?

In order to be baptized, the Church teaches in the Code of Canon Law: "For an adult to be baptized, the person must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, have been

instructed sufficiently about the truths of the faith and Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian life through the catechumenate" (Canon 865). Accepting Jesus Christ and seeking baptism means renouncing error, rejecting Satan and embracing Catholic teaching, including teaching on human sexuality.

The note reaffirms the Church's teaching that baptism, when received without repentance for serious sins, imparts a "sacramental character" that is indelible but does not in that instance confer sanctifying grace. It would remain, on my reading of the note, inadvisable to admit a postoperative transgender person to the sacrament who has not clearly embraced Church teaching. In such a case, scandal and confusion would inevitably ensue. Additionally, as the document clarifies, no sanctifying grace would be conferred.

In essence, the Vatican's recent guidance does not signify a substantive change in Church teaching but rather emphasizes the need for pastoral prudence, careful discernment and an unwavering commitment to perennial Catholic teaching. In a word, it underscores the Church's duty to accompany her sons and daughters on the path to conversion while upholding the sanctity of the sacraments and avoiding scandal among the faithful.

REACHING THE UNREACHABLE

Gilbert K. Chesterton, an English writer and philosopher once said "To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless."

One of the first realisations that we will come to as we grow up, is that it is not always easy to build relationships with those around us. It may be uncomfortable to try and befriend persons who are difficult and rude, or persons who may have done things in the past that makes you distrustful of them. However, it is important to remember that the reason why people behave so differently from each other is that each person experiences life quite differently. For those who have had a sheltered and peaceful life, being loving and kind comes easily. On the other hand, those who have had to suffer and fight for everything in their life will tend to adopt a cold and unfriendly disposition.

Our God and his love provide us with an anchor so that no matter what difficulty we face, we do not lose the values that define who we are. Making a difference in this world means being willing to remind each person you meet that the world is not such a bad place, regardless of how they treat you. It means that you are willing to reach into each person and bring out those qualities that life has made seemingly unreachable. The purest and deepest forms of love challenge both the person who gives it and the person who receives it, making them both better in the process. "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?" - Matthew 5:46

Renika Anand, *Catholic Standard*, November 24, 2023.

MoBay Diocese Events



Giving blessings

Most Rev. Burchell McPherson Bishop Emeritus of Montego Bay blessing a visiting couple from Los Angeles California on the occasion of their 35th wedding anniversary. It was such an overwhelming experience for them as explained afterwards that they wanted a nuptial blessing and wasn't sure if that was done without giving prior notice to the church. To God be the glory!

Bishop Emeritus Most Rev. Burchell McPherson blessing visitors from Los Angeles on their 35th wedding anniversary



RALLY OF THE SAINTS



The very supportive audience at the Rally from all across the Diocese of Montego Bay

Blessed Sacrament Cathedral choir performing at the Rally of the Saints at St. Josephs Falmouth



Youth meeting at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral



Relaunch of the choir

The re-launch of the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Youth choir

The Blessed Sacrament Cathedral youth ministry re-launched its Youth choir under the spiritual leadership of Fr Edward Mutunga. They are now holding regularly weekly meetings with a variety of activities to keep the youth fully engaged in church life and to know the relevance of Jesus in their lives.

MoBay Diocese Events **Cont'd**



Servite Sisters 45th anniversary

After 45 years of the Servite Sisters speaker was Servite Sr. Rose Chang who leaving the Brown's Town community and the governance of the Servite Primary school, a celebration of Thanksgiving was held recently at the St. Ignatius Catholic Church in Brown's Town. The Mass was celebrated by Fr. Peter Gitumbu under the theme: "Honoring the past, celebrating the present and building the future". Keynote

speaker was Servite Sr. Rose Chang who lauded the community for keeping the name Servite even though the sisters were no longer active there. Among those sending congratulatory messages were Most Rev. Burchell McPherson, Director of the Ministry of Education Region 3, Chairman of the Board Mr. Ramadhin Bailey and Principal Mr. Nigel Palmer.

Sr. Rose Chang delivering keynote address at Servite Primary 45th anniversary

Tragedy at Chetwood



In the wake of the double murder tragedy involving two students of the Chetwood Memorial Primary school, members of the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral church community led by Fr. Edward Mutunga showed prayerful and visible support by visiting the Principal Garvin Atkinson and the staff and students of the school. Pictured here

along with Fr Edward is principal Atkinson, Mrs. Yvonne Whyte Powell - Catechist, Brian Wiggan - Chairman of the Church Council, Mrs. Kayon Whyne Principal of Mt Alvernia High and parishioner and businessman Steve Serrao

Blessed Sacrament Cathedral members visiting with Chetwood Memorial Primary school Principal and staff

Caring for the homebound

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" -James 5:14 Here we see this verse being exemplified by the visitation to a homebound member

of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral community led by Fr. Edward Mutunga and parishioner Mrs. Kayon Whyne to the home of Maurice Calder much to the delight of his wife Olga.

Visiting of the homebound Mr. Maurice Calder and Mrs. Olga Calder by Fr. Edward Mutunga and Mrs. Kayon Whyne Principal of Mt . Alvernia High school



Catholic schools week Mass “Highlights”

Catholic Schools Week closed with mass at Holy Trinity Cathedral on Friday, October 27, 2023. In the absence of Archbishop Richards, the mass was presided over by Fr. Mario Burton. The concelebrants were Fr. Ricardo Perkins, SJ, and Fr. Joseph Lucas, two of our most recently ordained priests.

Most of the schools of the Archdiocese were represented at the mass and many had specific roles to play at various points in the liturgy. In particular, the girls of Holy Childhood High School, led by their Principal, Sr. Maxine McIntosh, FMS, provided wonderful musical support through their choir and their band.

Click the link below for all pictures :

<https://hibbyjpeg.pixieset.com/catholicschoolsweekmass/>



MoBay Diocese Events **Cont'd**

CENTENARIAN



Ms Carmen Pinky Foster receiving a Papal blessing on the occasion of her 100th birthday



The forever young centenarian Ms. Pinky Foster is all smiles prior to receiving a papal blessing from Pope Francis

Welcoming Members

Members of St. Paul's mission in Glendevon St. James were overwhelmed to have M/M James McCoughan turn up for Mass recently. They missed all the earlier masses but saw on the internet that service is held much later on in the day in this inner city community. "This is like a church in the wildwood" Mrs. McCoughan exclaimed. "I will certainly tell others to come when visiting the island" It was her desire to have her expected baby blessed and to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so although small in attendance God showed up to grant her the desires of her heart.



Members of the St. Paul's Mission in Glendevon St. James welcoming Mr. & Mrs. McCoughan to Mass

Synod Report: *A Church that involves everyone and is close to the world's wounds (part 1)*

(Continued from page 1)

addictions; minorities; abandoned elderly people; and exploited workers (4 c). Among "the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, [are] the unborn and their mothers", the document continues. "The Assembly hears the cry of the 'new poor', produced by wars and terrorism that plague many countries on several continents, and the assembly condemns the corrupt political and economic systems that cause such strife".

COMMITMENT OF BELIEVERS IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS AND FOR THE COMMON GOOD

In this sense, the Church is urged to be committed both to the "public denunciation of the injustices" perpetrated by individuals, governments, and companies; and to active engagement in politics, associations, trade unions, popular movements (4f and 4g). At the same time, the consolidated action of the Church in the fields of education, health, and social assistance, "without any discrimination or the exclusion of anyone", must not be neglected (4 k).

MIGRANTS

There is also a focus on migrants and refugees, "many of whom bear the wounds of uprooting, war and violence". They "often become a source of renewal and enrichment for the communities that welcome them and an opportunity to establish direct links with geographically distant churches" (5 d). Faced with increasingly hostile attitudes towards them, the General Assembly says, "We are called to practice an open welcome, to accompany them in the construction of a new life and to build a true intercultural communion among peoples". Fundamental in this sense is "respect for the liturgical traditions and religious practices of migrants" as well as respect for their own language. For example, a word like "mission", in contexts where "the proclamation of the Gospel was associated with colonization, even genocide", is laden with "painful historical memories" and "hinders communion today" (5 e). "Evangelising in these contexts requires acknowledging mistakes made, learning a new sensitivity to these issues", the document states.

COMBATING RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

Equal commitment and care is

required of the Church "to engage decisively in education, in the culture of dialogue and encounter, combating racism and xenophobia, especially through pastoral formation" (5 p). It is also urgent to identify "systems within the Church that create or maintain racial injustice" (5 q).

EASTERN CHURCHES

The Report considers Eastern Europe and the recent conflicts that have caused the flow of numerous faithful from the Catholic East into territories with a Latin majority. It is necessary "for the local Latin-rite Churches, in the name of synodality, to help the Eastern faithful who have emigrated to preserve their identity and cultivate their specific heritage, without undergoing processes of assimilation is the request of the Fathers" (6c).

ON THE ROAD TO CHRISTIAN UNITY

With regard to ecumenism, the Report speaks of a "spiritual renewal" that requires "processes of repentance and healing of the memory" (7c). It quotes Pope Francis' expression about an "ecumenism of the blood"; that is "Christians of different affiliations who give their lives for faith in Jesus Christ" (7d),

and it mentions the proposal for an ecumenical martyrology (7o). The Report also reiterates that "collaboration among all Christians" is a resource "for healing the culture of hatred, division and war that pits groups, peoples and nations against each other". It does not forget the issue of so-called mixed marriages, which are realities in which "it is possible to evangelize each other."

LAITY AND FAMILIES (PART II)

"Laymen and laywomen, those in consecrated life, and ordained ministers have equal dignity" (8b): this conviction is forcefully reiterated in the Synthesis Report, which recalls how the lay faithful are "increasingly present and active in service within Christian communities" (8e). Educators in the faith, theologians, formators, spiritual animators, and catechists, active in safeguarding and administration: their contributions are "indispensable to the mission of the Church" (8 e). The different charisms must therefore be "called forth, recognized and fully appreciated," and not be ignored, underutilized, or "clericalised" (8 f).

Mandeville Diocese Events



Members of the Friends of Good Shepherd (FOGS) and recipients at cheque presentation ceremony

Mrs Jeanne Robinson Foster - Chair of the Good Shepherd Foundation welcomes everybody to the presentation of donations from the Friends of Good Shepherd (FOGS) based in Miramar Florida. Cheques were presented to the Diocese of Mandeville, Village of Hope, the Hope Teaching clinic and the Good Shepherd Foundation. Here we see from left to right of Mrs. Robinson Foster: Most Rev. John Persaud, Bishop of Mandeville and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Montego Bay, Jacques & Clover Davis of FOGS, Mother Joy Surtida of the Hope Clinic and Ms. Angella Graham Manager of Village of Hope



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ENCOUNTER the LIVING WORD

A Reflection with the Servite Community

WHO ARE SAINTS?

Do you consider yourself a saint? The word 'saint' comes from the verb 'to sanctify' which means to make holy or sacred. A saint is therefore someone who has achieved great holiness. According to this definition most of us would say "No, I am not a saint!". In this Reflection I am going to challenge that answer. November 1st was "All Saints" day, the day on which the Church celebrates the holiness of its members who have died and who are now enjoying the reward of eternal happiness in heaven – this includes those who have been given the title "Saint" and the majority who have not.

WE ARE IN GOD

This is one level of understanding the



feast of 'All Saints', but St. Paul in his letters takes us further: Very often in his Letters to the early Christian Churches he addressed the believing Community as 'saints'. *"To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Phillipi, with the bishops and deacons..."* (Phil 1:1). *"To all the saints who are in Ephesus, grace to you and peace..."* (Eph 1:1). In his Letters he is writing to Christian believers who are committed to following Jesus, but he goes even further when in Acts 9:28 he addresses pagans (non-believers in God): "In Him (God) we (human beings) live, and move, and have our being".

SEEDS OF HOLINESS

If we are so intimately one with our God and Creator who is All-Holy, it must be that we too, in some way, share in the holiness of God. The seeds of holiness are in us by virtue of the Source of our being. When we encounter Jesus, the Word of God, the innate holiness in us comes to life and begins to mature and bear fruit in the way we live as Christians. The Christian journey of life can therefore be described as the gradual growth or development into sainthood or holiness. This journey does not end until we die and

enter into eternal life in the All- Holy One. Who then is a saint? ... a person who is in the process of gradually growing into his/ her perfect Self ...i.e. into the image and likeness of God, Creator and Source of our life. A saint is someone who is making this human journey with awareness of who he/ she is, the Goal towards which they are moving, and making the right choices to achieve that Goal.

ADVENT

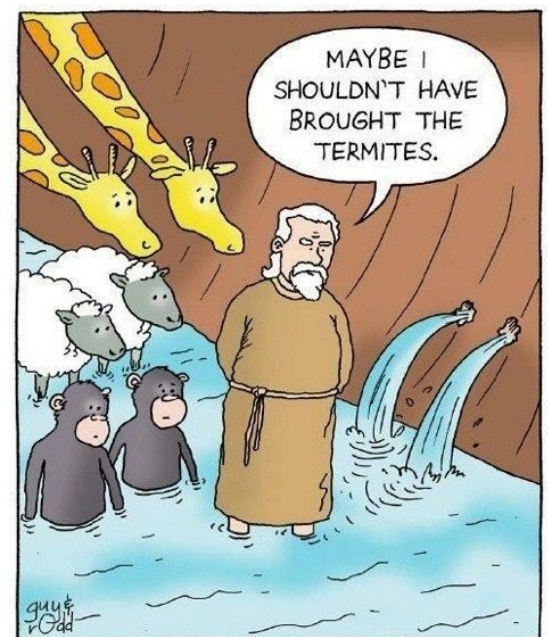
A saint, in the Christian sense, is someone who has encountered Jesus, the Living Word of God enfleshed in human life. God entered our human condition to make it possible for us to encounter Him in our context. This "explosion" of the Divine Word happened in history with the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and we celebrate it at Christmas time. It is the one most significant event in human history, the celebration of which has the potential to take us deeper into the meaning of our salvation. Such is its importance that the Church invites us to PREPARE for it during the four weeks of Advent for...

"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it" (Is 40: 5)

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