



ABOUT US

News Bulletin of the Diocese of Ratnapura

Volume:18 Issue: 01 January - March 2018

“Jesus says
that we need ‘to
pray always, without
growing tired,’”

Pope Francis





Badge Giving Ceremony of the Holy Childhood Society.

This Ceremony was held on the 14th of October 2017 at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Gurugalla



Convocation Ceremony of the Post A/L Batch.

This convocation Ceremony of the Post A/L batch who followed the English Course at the Integral English Academy was held on the 12th of December 2017 at the Integral English Academy, Buluthota



Bishop's Message



Per Crucem Ad Lucem Through the Cross to the light



Dear Rev Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

The Year 2018 has dawned on us. We look forward to the future with the firm hope of having at least some of our cherished dreams realized. With that hope, I wish each one of you the Blessings of God Almighty for a Prosperous Year 2018.

During the weekly general audience on the 20th September 2017, Holy Father Pope Francis advised all of us, particularly young people, to remain full of hope. He said “no matter where God has planted you, hope, always hope”. The Holy Father further said “the enemy number one is not somewhere out of us, but within ourselves; do not make room for bitter and dark thoughts; never believe the struggles here on earth are in vain; God wants that seed He has planted in everyone to bloom and blossom forth”.

The above are some thoughts from our Universal Shepherd, which will certainly make our lives happy and fruitful for ourselves and for others. It would be an inspiring spiritual exercise for us to reflect on them, particularly at times when disappointment, despair and depression enter into our lives and life-situations, causing demoralization and tepidity in us.

The Christians, the clergy, religious and the laity, should be people of hope. The loss of hope, in any circumstances, should not enter into the life of a follower of Christ, our Savior. The Birth of Christ took place in the stable as an event, bringing hope to human society. Christ came into the world as a Prince of Hope, bringing the message of hope to the whole of humankind: hope to the captives, hope to the sick, and hope to the hungry and thirsty, hope to the sorrowful and good news of hope to the poor.

Let us, priests, religious and lay Christians, be men and women who radiate hope, standing as the witnesses of hope, emerging as a silver- lining in the dark clouds, thus overcoming the eclipses of the light of Christ in today's human society and in our own lives.
















+ Cletus C. Perera OSB
Bishop of Ratnapura



Catholic Liturgical Calendar for Lent



Lent is a time of preparation for the death of Christ on Good Friday and His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is a period of 40 days of repentance, with prayer, fasting and abstinence, and Confession. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 46 days before Easter Sunday. (For an explanation why Lent begins 46 days before Easter but is only 40 days long, see *How Are the 40 Days of Lent Calculated?*) For Eastern Rite Catholics, Lent begins two days earlier, on Clean Monday. The following is a list of the dates of the Sundays and major feast days that fall in Lent 2018

-  Clean Monday (Monday, February 12, 2018)
-  **ASH WEDNESDAY (WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2018)**
-  First Sunday of Lent (Sunday, February 18, 2018)
-  Second Sunday of Lent (Sunday, February 25, 2018)
-  Third Sunday of Lent (Sunday, March 4, 2018)
-  Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) (Sunday, March 11, 2018)
-  Feast of Saint Patrick (Saturday, March 17, 2018)
-  Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passion Sunday) (Sunday, March 18, 2018)
-  Feast of Saint Joseph (Monday, March 19, 2018)
-  **PALM SUNDAY (SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 2018)**
-  **HOLY THURSDAY (THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2018)**
-  **GOOD FRIDAY (FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2018)**
-  **HOLY SATURDAY (SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2018)**
-  **EASTER (SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2018)**
-  The Annunciation of the Lord (Transferred to Monday, April 9, 2018, because March 25 is Palm Sunday)

Is our God just or merciful?



“The works of His hands are faithful and just, trustworthy are all His precepts. They are ordained to last forever, to be performed in faith and uprightness.” (Psalm:111: 7-8)

The term ‘just’ means behaving according to what is morally right and fair. In other words ‘just’ means ‘what is right’ or ‘as it should be’. The scriptures reveal God as “the righteous Judge” who demands righteousness since “justice” is one of God’s attributes and flows out of His holiness.

The Bible says that He will one day judge the world. Many of us are confused over the thought of God as a judge because the judges we experience in our day to day life are either corrupt or even when their intentions are good, they can make mistakes. However, the fact that “God is just” assures us that when He acts as a judge, He will administer justice perfectly because God has the ability to discern the truth in every situation and see into the hearts and minds of men, His wisdom, His strength, His authority, and His moral character in establishing what is right and wrong are reasons which make him a ‘ Just’ God .

The Bible tells us that God is just. This means that He is fair and impartial. It also means that He hates sin. He hates lying, cheating, and other forms of mistreatment of others. The fact that God is just means that He can and He will judge between right and wrong and He will administer justice in accordance with His standards.

Where do we see injustice on earth? It is at the hands of men, not of God. God has given men free will, but most men do not exercise it responsibly or in a way that lines up with God’s character as a just God. As discussed above, the time will come when God will judge the world and the people in it. He will dispose of evil and injustice and He will punish those who have turned away from Him and His standards. However, in His wisdom, He is not doing that yet. The Apostle Peter tells us that God is waiting because He is patient and wants everyone to have an opportunity to accept His Son’s sacrifice rather than paying the penalty that justice requires for their sins (2 Peter 3:9).

But if God is Just , isn’t He merciful? Can someone be extremely merciful while being extremely just? Can God so merciful be Just? If He is merciful all sinners should be sent to heaven . If this happens how can we say that God is just? How do we get over this conundrum? let’s ponder dear friends...

We ,human beings are prone to sin. We are weak, slaves of our own emotions. We give in to sin, failing to keep our senses under control. This is human nature. At the same time we know that God demands righteousness. How are we going to face our God who is just when we are living in sin? This is where we have to understand God’s ability to see into the hearts and minds of men and His merciful heart which melts for tears of a repentant heart. Our God is not a dreadful Judge but a merciful judge. When a man admits his faults, accepts his sinfulness, repent wholeheartedly and long to reconcile with God, won’t our merciful Father act justly and forgive us embracing His prodigal sons and daughters into His bosom?

But if we are cold hearted to accept our sinfulness, unworthiness , be proud and continue to accuse others for our wrongdoings , how can we expect God to be merciful ? God who is just has the ability to make all crooked lines straight...He knows our weakness and that is why is waiting with open arms to embrace us but He also demands us of a repentant heart . His judgement will be merciful then. We will get to experience how Just our God is . God hates sin. He never encourages His children to live in sin therefore we should also hate sin and fight against it remembering the Great sacrifice made by Jesus our Saviour in order to pay for our sins.

He used to spit on those going to Mass – now he's a priest



Madrid, Spain, Dec 27, 2017 / 03:07 am (CNA/EWTN News).- After an anti-clerical childhood and adolescence, filled with hatred for the Church, Fr. Juan José Martínez says he discovered “that God exists and wants me as his priest.” “Sunday mornings I would peer out of the balcony of my house, and when the people were going by on their way to Mass, I would spit on them. I told them that the Church was a sect that wanted their money,” explained the priest, who ministers in the Diocese of Almeria, Spain.

Fr. Juan José’s parents were not believers, and he had received no religious formation, but he said they did not raise him to be intolerant. In fact, he says he does not know where he got all those ideas, because the perception he had of the Church and God was that of a “multinational corporation with branches in every neighborhood to extract money, like a sect.”

“I was absolutely anticlerical, I was the first student in my school and the town of Carboneras, Almeria Province, to never be taught Religion because when I was 8 or 9, I chose the alternative course which was Ethics. In the following years, I went on convincing my friends to quit Religion classes and to take Ethics with me. In the end, my whole class ended up being taught Ethics and none of them Religion.”

But what he never imagined is that the end of his journey would be to help his friends to come back to the Church. Fr. Juan José remembers quite well that the first day he went into a Catholic church, “I went to make fun of those who had invited me.”

“It was in January 1995, some friends from class invited me to a Catholic Charismatic Renewal prayer group at the parish. Obviously I told them I wasn't planning on going because I didn't want them to brainwash me. For a whole month they persisted. I finally gave in – it was a Thursday in February 1995 when I went into a Catholic church for the first time.”

A golden box

A lot of his friends were there, and he was surprised because “they were all looking at a golden box at the back of the church. I didn't know what it was, but I thought it was where the parish priest kept the money.”

That golden box was the Tabernacle.

Fr. Juan José says that he came to make fun of them because “I thought they were crazy. Inside, I was laughing at them a lot, but I was polite and concealed it. But I decided to come back the following Thursday to laugh at them some more.”

And so one Thursday after another, Fr. Juan José was letting go of his prejudices against the Church and religion.

“The pastor seemed to me to be a very wise man who was helping the people,” he told CNA. And little by little, the love of God was penetrating his heart: “I was 15 years old and I started to sing at Mass, which meant I would attend Mass on Saturdays. I liked being in front of the tabernacle and little by little, I realized that God existed and loved me. I felt the love of God. The Charismatic Renewal group, which I had come to make fun of, helped me a lot.”

“My eyes were being opened and I saw that God was not a legend or story for the weak, but that he existed and that he was supporting and guiding me. I experienced that he loved me so much that he wanted me for himself and was calling me,” he recalled.

'I am yours for whatever you need'

Fr. Juan José had been baptized and made his First Communion because of his grandparents' wishes, but he did not have a relationship with God after that. "I made my Confirmation as I was right in the midst of the process of conversion, and it was a genuine gift. That day I told the Lord, 'I am yours for whatever you need.' My mother came but my father did not. It was a unique moment in my life to receive the Holy Spirit and to put my trust in the Lord."

For months, the young Juan José was resisting the call to the priesthood. "I told the Lord that I didn't want any hassles and to quit talking to me. Until I had to make a decision and it was to follow him, becoming a priest."

One Saturday afternoon when he was 17, Fr. Juan José told his father he wanted to go to the seminary. His father beat him and said that "he would be a priest over his dead body."

"They did not understand that I would want to be a priest. In fact, my father offered to pay for me to go to college in the United States but (he told me) he would never pay for the seminary."

In such a difficult moment, Fr. Juan José recalled that all he could think of was the prayer of Saint Teresa of Avila: "Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you. All you need is God" and when his father stopped rebuking him, the young man gave him a hug and said to him, "I knew you were going to react like that, but I also knew that one day you'd understand."

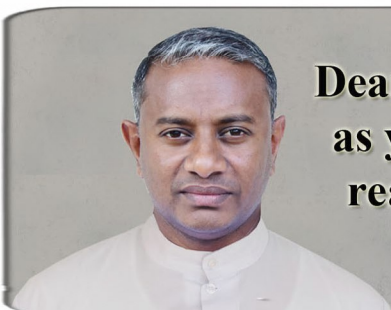
'Welcome'

In fact, his father went so far as to threaten to report the pastor to the police if kept helping his son discern his vocation. "My father was trying everything, but the Lord is stronger," he said. To obey his father, Fr. Juan José could not start the seminary, and so he began to study teaching at the University of Almeria. For years he was patient, and continued to be faithful to his vocation to the priesthood. Until one day in May 1999, as he recalled, his mother told him that she had spoken to his father and that finally he would let him enter the seminary. "I began to cry and cry. I remember when I told the pastor about it he said "welcome" and gave me a great big hug." In September 2000, he finally entered the seminary.

In 2006, Fr. Juan José was ordained in the Almeria cathedral and his father even attended the ceremony. "In no way did he want me to become a priest, but he saw that I was happy and even though he was totally anticlerical, he decided that the happiness of his son came before his ideology and if I was happy, even though he didn't understand it, he would have to accept it. "In fact, he recalled that two years ago, "before dying, my father received the Anointing of the Sick. And it was I who administered it to him."

"When somebody tells me he doesn't believe in God, I always tell him that neither did I believe in Him, but I was mistaken, because I have discovered the genuine happiness that Jesus has given to me. If you're not completely happy, ask the Lord to help you, because only He will give you the happiness that your heart needs."

This article was originally published on CNA March 6, 2017.



Dear Fr. Roshan we wish you all success and blessings as you are getting transferred to Ampara Parish. we really appreciate and thank you for the wonderful work that you have rendered to the Diocese

Interact Club of St. Bridget's convent Visits Hemingford children

Girls from St. Bridget convent came on the 14th of December 2017 to share the Christmas joy with the Children those who follow the Life Education Course at Hemingford



Kegalle Education Zone Christmas Gathering

The Christmas get-together of the school children of Kegalle Education Zone was held on the 07th of December 2017 at Hewadiwela Madya Maha Vidyalaya



Death penalty is 'contrary to the Gospel,' pope says

Marking the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church at the Vatican Oct. 11, Pope Francis said the catechism's discussion of the death penalty, already formally amended by St. John Paul II, needs to be even more explicitly against capital punishment.

Capital punishment, he said, "heavily wounds human dignity" and is an "inhuman measure."

"It is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel, because a decision is voluntarily made to suppress a human life, which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of whom, in the last analysis, only God can be the true judge and guarantor," the pope said.

The death penalty, he said, not only extinguishes a human life, it extinguishes the possibility that the person, recognizing his or her errors, will request forgiveness and begin a new life.

The church's position on the death penalty, he said, is one example of how church teaching is not static, but grows and deepens along with a growth in faith and in response to modern questions and concerns.

In the past, when people did not see any other way for society to defend itself against serious crime and when "social maturity" was lacking, he said, people accepted the death penalty as "a logical consequence of the application of justice."

In fact, he said, the church itself believed that, and the death penalty was a possible punishment in the Papal States. It was only in 1969 that Pope Paul VI formally banned the death penalty, even though it had not been imposed since 1870.

"Let us take responsibility for the past and recognize" that use of the death penalty was "dictated by a mentality that was more legalistic than Christian," Pope Francis said. "Remaining neutral today when there is a new need to reaffirm personal dignity would make us even more guilty."

The first edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published by St. John Paul II in 1992, recognized "as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty." At the same time, it said, "bloodless means" that could protect human life should be used when possible.

But the language was formally changed in 1997 after St. John Paul II issued his pro-life encyclical, "Evangelium Vitae." Since then, the catechism has specified that the use of the death penalty is permissible only when the identity and responsibility of the condemned is certain and when capital punishment "is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor."

The development of church teaching, Pope Francis insisted, is not the same as contradicting or changing church teaching. "Tradition is a living reality and only a partial vision would lead to thinking of 'the deposit of faith' as something static."

"The word of God," he said, "cannot be saved in mothballs as if it were an old blanket to protect against insects."

The Christian faith, he said, always has insisted on the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. So, the church has a continuing obligation to speak out when it realizes something that was accepted in the past actually contradicts church teaching.

"Therefore, it is necessary to reiterate that, no matter how serious the crime committed, the death penalty is inadmissible, because it attacks the inviolability and dignity of the person," Pope Francis said.

Children's Christmas Get-together.

A Christmas get-together for the Neighbouring Children of the Bishop's House was held on the 22nd of December 2017 at the Bishop's House, Madola, Avissawella



Sangika Danaya and Christmas Celebration for the Buddhist Monks.
Buddhists monks of the area came together on the 18th of December 2017 to the Bishop's House to celebrate the birth of Christ



Rogationist Fathers took over the Administration of the Children's Home
St. Anthony's Boys Home at Hewadiwela was given to the Rogationists Fathers on the 12th
of December 2017. we wish them all the best for their new mission in Sri Lanka



Catechists' Christmas Get-together 2017

Christmas Gathering of the Catechists was held on the 9th of December 2017 at the Pastoral Centre, Avissawella

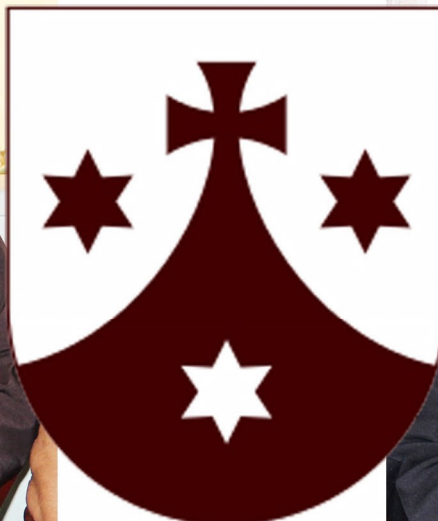


The Annual Retreat of the Priests 2017

The annual retreat was conducted from 11th to 17th of November 2017 at the John Mary Vianney Clergy House, Buluthota by Rev. Fr.Vimal Thirimanna CSSR



We, the Bishop, Priests, Religious and laity warmly welcome Carmalite Fathers in to our Diocese



Laying of the foundation stone.

The foundation stone was layed on the 16th of October 2017 by his Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Cletus Chandrasiri Perera to construct the new Mission House at St. Anne's Church, Ruwanwella



Donation of the House.

Dr. Silvia of Kegalle Parish donated her House to the Diocese on the 07th of November 2017 and the Carmelite Fathers who came to our Diocese will make it their residence



Birthdays in the months of January - March

- January 01:** Fr. Reginold Nonis (*Assistant Parish Priest, Kegalle*)
January 05: Sr. Deepani (*Convent of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus. Ratnapura*)
January 17: Sr. Benedict Mary (*Convent of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus. Ratnapura*)
January 20: Bro. Sameera (*National Seminary*)
January 27: Fr. Christopher Kurera (*Kegalle Home*)
January 28: Sr. Maureen (*St. Joseph's Convent. Kegalle*)
- February 03:** Fr. Priyantha CR (*Superior of the Rosarian Community at Thanjanthena*)
February 04: Sr. Fatima (*St. Joseph's Convent. Kegalle*)
February 06: Fr. Milton Wickramasinghe (*Parish Priest of Dehigahapitiya*)
February 10: Fr. Ranjanmal Moraes (*Parish Priest of Kegalle*)
February 11: Fr. Nishantha Rohan (*Parish Priest of Kudagama*)
February 15: Bro. Benedict (*National Seminary*)
February 17: Fr. Hariharan (*In Rome*) and Bro. Akalanka (*National Seminary*)
February 19: Fr. Sampath Presad (*Assistant Parish Priest of Ratnapura*)
February 22: Sr. Anne Gamage (*St. Joseph's Convent. Kegalle*)
February 27: Bro. Denzil (*National Seminary*)
- March 08:** Fr. Texi Dissanayake (*Parish Priest of Balangoda*)
March 18: Fr. Anton Maurice (*Diocesan Catechetical Director*)
March 19: Sr. Stella (*Holy Family Convent, Embilipitiya*)
March 22: Ensly Suranga (*Parish Priest of Ratnapura*)
March 24: Sr. Ernest (*St. Joseph's Convent. Kegalle*).

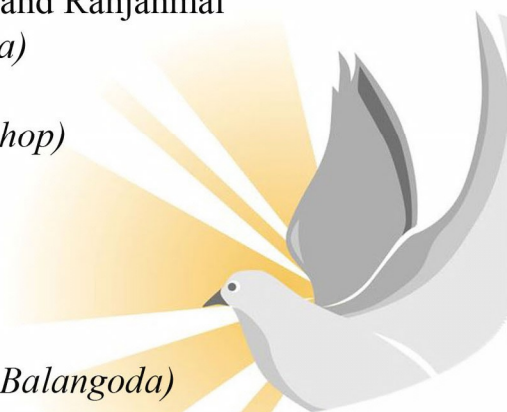


Ordination Anniversaries in the months of January - March

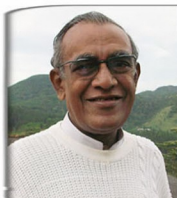
- January 01:** Fr. Lixion RCG (*Superior of St. Anthony's Boys Home, Hewadiwela*)
January 12: Frs. Sherwin (*Parish Priest of Ruwanwella*) and Ranjanmal
January 18: Fr. Roshan TOR (*Parish Priest of Rabukkana*)
- February 27:** Fr. Anushka Fernando (*Secretary to the Bishop*)
- March 19:** Fr. Anscar SSS (*Parish Priest of Mahena*)

Feast Days

- February 10:** Sr. Anuruddika (*St. Joseph's Elders Home, Balangoda*)



Death Anniversary of Fr. Nicholas Fernando



February 02

Dear Lord Jesus,
 Awaken Fr. Nicholas to your glorious resurrection and
 may we be united with him at the end of time . Amen





Religious Sisters' Christmas Get-together.

Christmas gathering of the Religious Sisters was held on the 11th of December 2017 at the Bishop's House, Madola, Avissawella



25th Anniversary of the Lay Missionaries.

Thanksgiving Holy Mass was celebrated on the 18th of October 2017 at St. Theresa's Church, Dehigahapitiya



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Dear Fathers and Sisters, please be kind enough to send your news articles and tit bits