

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED



Fr. Antony Parankimalil VC

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

**“I WILL NOT REJECT ANYONE WHO
COMES TO ME” (JN. 6:37).**

**BY
FR. ANTONY PARANKIMALIL VC**



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DEDICATION

TO THE MOST FAITHFUL WOMAN THAT EVER
LIVED IN THE WORLD:

MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

TO MY DEAREST BROTHER-PRIESTS

REV. DR. P.D. JOHNY SDB

He loved me, cared for me and inspired me
For what I am today from my early childhood.

REV. FR. GEORGE PARANKIMALIL

For being an example in prayer, penances and holiness.

REV. FR. PETER PARANKIMALIL MSFS

For being my immediate brother with a great heart
And care. He is one of the most practical persons
I have ever met in my life.

VINCENTIAN CONGREGATION AND CONFRERES

The most wonderful congregation that made
me a Priest of Christ.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

PREFACE

God has rejected me! There is probably no Christian on earth who has not at some time been haunted by the feeling of rejection either by God or his or her fellow human beings. Rejection is a painful experience and worse still, for devout Christian to feel rejected by God can be devastating and even terrifying. Can God reject anyone? We get the answer in the book of Isaiah 49:15 *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.”* God loves us not because we are good but because we are His children. God is terrifyingly holy and yet more loving than we could imagine. So if we could accept that God’s love is unconditional and that it can renew us and wipe away our guilt and feelings of rejection, any reason for our feeling of the Holy Lord rejecting us would vanish. All that would be left is our experience of God’s incomprehensible love for each one of us. *“I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.”* So we can say with confidence, *“The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?”* (Hebrews 13:5).

As a priest when I listen to people, I sense that many people live with painful wounds of rejection. They feel rejected by their loved ones and even by God. “I am disappointed, my life is meaningless because nobody is there to understand and love me as I am.” Rejection is one of the most painful human experiences and it is the root cause of a host of other negative emotions. How do we handle rejection and other negative experiences of life? The book, *YOU ARE NOT REJECTED*, by Rev. Fr. Antony Parankimalil proves that Jesus the Healer can never reject you. His unconditional forgiving love can fill all your emptiness and dissolve away your feelings of rejection.

Fr. Antony’s Book is a very timely effort, providing a great hope for many who are buffeted by the vicissitudes of life that diminish their experience of God’s love for them. *You are not Rejected* is a call to take up the challenge to follow Christ more closely by keeping away from sin, to reach heaven by carefully climbing the ten commandments of God, following the golden rule of loving and forgiving one’s enemies, and actively participating in the Sacramental life of the Church and tapping into the power of prayer that goes beyond our imagination.

Fr. Antony is a man of prayer and is a simple and hard working priest. This book is based on his personal and prayerful encounter with God and it reflects how, as a priest, he has allowed that encounter to affect his ministry of helping those he serves to be reconciled with God, with others and with themselves. Being the Director of the Vincentian Prayer House, a prayer centre located in the big city of Nairobi, Fr. Antony has come very close to the suffering of the people he serves and therefore this book is a fruit of a direct encounter with human experience. He has had the opportunity to talk to people of diverse backgrounds and status. That is why he made this wonderful effort of putting

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into writing his lived experience as a servant of God's people who are in search of healing and love.

You are not Rejected is a great asset for your spiritual life. Fr. Antony's personal and pastoral experiences and prayerful thoughts shared in this book will surely be a great help in communicating God's unfailing love especially for those who feel rejected. It is my great hope that as you read this book you will experience God's unconditional love, experience integral healing of your wounded mind and heart, and find consolation in God. You are now in the place He has called you to be. He has made no mistake in leading you. Even in the hard places He is working out what is best—not only for you and for others, but also for His entire Kingdom. He is not looking at your statistics or programs to measure you. He is looking at your heart to see if you are faithful. He wants you to know that the outcome of your obedience and acceptance of His love is ultimate restoration and healing. Be assured that it is His presence that will keep you and make you strong. As you embark on a journey through this book, my sincere advice is not to gulp this book in one sitting. Instead, take your time to read and reflect on your life in the light of the reflections in this book; through this book, you will experience the powerful love of God who cares for you all the time.

YES.....,

You are not alone—

For God is with you.

You are not defenseless—

For God is your protector.

You are not inadequate—

For God is your sufficiency.

You are not useless—

For God has a purpose for your life.

You are not worthless—

For God sent His Son to die for you.

You are not without hope—

For God has a place prepared for you.

You are not unloved—

For God loves you with an everlasting love.

You are not rejected, or abandoned—

For God calls you His own.

Prayerful Wishes

Fr.Biju ValliparambilVC

REGIONAL SUPERIOR

VINCENTIAN FATHERS –EAST AFRICAN REGION

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A Word of Appreciation

In everyday living, we are faced with sufferings, trials and tribulations. Many a time we feel dejected and are in despair. We develop negative feelings and attitudes towards self, others and to God. We think we are alone, and that nobody cares. We decide that no one is listening to us and conclude that we have been rejected. Have you ever been rejected? Maybe by someone you loved or someone you respected and looked up to. Maybe you have been rejected by family and friends when you went through difficult times and needed them the most. It's usually when you go through tough times that you find out who your real friends are. Maybe you were rejected and didn't get that job, promotion, raise or bonus you were looking forward to getting. Maybe you have been rejected by people because of mistakes and bad choices you have made. You may even be rejected for not doing anything wrong. Maybe you have been rejected because of your tribe or race. Maybe you have been rejected because of an imperfection or handicap.

How do you cope with rejection? How do you react to rejection? How do you respond to rejection? How do you process and work through rejection? When we feel abandoned and rejected, we start to engage in the blame game, which only serves to increase our misery and life seems only to get worse. We face problems everywhere we turn - in health, family, work, money, society.... We entrap ourselves in this vicious cycle of a life that is of no worthiness. We soon find ourselves in a state of bondage, from which we need to be freed. We realize that if we are to start living again, we must escape this harshness (life's cruelty). Sometimes we search for solutions, and sometimes we don't. Many times we look for human solutions and find more human problems. Sometimes we ask for help and sometimes we don't. When we do get help, it is for a short time only and the problems return – many times they are worse than they were before you went for that help. Sometimes we do not know where to look for help, and so we keep it to ourselves. With time this gets buried deep within us, and slowly simmers while it waits for an opportune time to erupt. Sometimes we do not even know that we have a problem (inner wounds). Sometimes it is not us; it is in somebody else, perhaps someone we know – a friend, a relative, a workmate. Sometimes we come to a conclusion that it is done, it is final and it is over! We go on with life, negative as it were, thinking that is how it should be. Unfortunately, in due course something will

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trigger a reaction to this denial, and sadly it could be tragic. Especially when it so happens that we are hit by the most dreaded fear, and we say, “Even God has rejected me”!

Is this true? Does God really reject us or is it we who reject God? When we have financial concerns and quickly turn to banks and lenders; when we have health problems and we go to doctor after doctor seeking ‘expert opinion’, including from witch doctors; when we have problems with our children and we seek institutions and professional people to deal with them; when we have spiritual problems and yet never visit a chapel! Where is the rejection? *You Are Not Rejected* attempts to enlighten us on what we can do when faced with such circumstances. In this epic narrative, Fr. Anthony uses examples of true stories from people he has encountered in carrying out his priestly duties. Different topics are discussed, some arising from questions that are frequently asked during counselling sessions. The reader is taken through circumstances that manifest as physical, emotional and spiritual problems that result from separation from God. With separation from God comes separation from others and separation from self, which basically defines the basis for suffering. As you go through the various chapters, you come to realize how suffering, no matter what form it takes in our lives, is not from God. It results from original sin - a genetic defect which we all inherit from our fore-parents (Adam and Eve). You will recognize that it is sinfulness which brings a start to the problems that we face, and that continuing in this state of sinfulness - whether knowingly or unknowingly - creates the circumstances you find yourself in. You will learn how confession of this sin plays a big role in the return journey to freedom, and how to make that good confession. You will discover the need for forgiveness (really and truly forgiving others, forgiving yourself and even forgiving God) and appreciate the relief that comes with it (being forgiven by God, by others and by yourself!). You will comprehend the value of repentance in making a new start. You will embrace salvation and make your return journey to God’s Infinite Love and to the real freedom of living life.

You Are Not Rejected is truly an inspiring read, which calls on us all to return to God and experience His infinite Love and Mercy. In this book, Fr. Anthony reminds us that through Jesus Christ, we all have the ability to conquer the genetic defect and be reconnected to God eternally. He uses scripture (the sword of the Spirit) to explain situations and give solutions

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to the various problems. In scripture we find the promise that total removal of sin is possible – not just some time in the past when your sins were less blatant, but even now when you have abused the grace of God more than ever before. According to *You Are Not Rejected*, this divine miracle becomes ours not by works – not influenced by our achievements or shameful repeated failures or depravity – but solely by faith. Fr. Anthony outlines the role of prayer as a backbone to stability in life and achieving serenity which we all strive for. He also gives suggestions on how you can get started on creating a heaven here on earth in our daily lives. Above all else he helps us to discover that not only did people in the Bible also suffer such feelings, it is actually a manifestation of God’s loving goodness. It was in feeling that God had rejected them that various heroes that we find in the Bible were catapulted to spiritual greatness.

You Are Not Rejected has been written for all congregations and all categories of people, although it embraces Catholic doctrine. It leans heavily on the word of God (the Holy Bible) and draws on Christian values and morals. It does not however choose male or female, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black or white, religious or non-religious. It speaks to all of us, to the whole family. It invites us all to the family of the children of God. It is my sincere hope that as you begin to put into practice what remedy you find, you will experience this newfound freedom and will definitely want to share it with others.

Praised be Jesus!

Dr. Pamela Mandela Idenya
(M.D, MMed(ENT), MPH)



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Introduction

Heaven is not for good people but for holy people; it is exclusively for saints and angels. Unless we become holy we cannot see heaven for “nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev.21:27). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews encourages us to “pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb.12:14) And the apostle Peter instructs:

Instead, as he who called you is Holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘you shall be holy for I am Holy.’

- 1Pt.1:15-16

One day after preaching, I came off the stage and a woman approached me and said, “Father, congratulations, your preaching was so good and very touching, keep up the good work. I only wish my husband were here to listen to you. You know,” she continued, “everything that you said was just about my husband, it is such a pity that he was not here. Anyway the next time I will make sure I bring him along. But Father, when I bring him will you please repeat everything that you said today for his sake?” I told her, “I did not mean to speak anything



***Heaven is not for good people;
it is exclusively for
saints and angels.***

about your husband but about you to become a better wife.” That is why the Lord tells us: “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev.2:11). Preaching would be very effective if the listeners took it personally and implemented it in their own lives. In Kerala, India we have a custom of singing funeral hymns and prayers before the church burial as the body lies in state. The songs symbolize the mortality of human life and the invitation of repentance for all. But unfortunately the participants for the

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funeral think that the hymns are meant for the dead body to repent. Many a time we face this problem as we automatically think this sermon is meant for my cousin, my old uncle, my mother-in-law etc. St Paul says,

See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven!

- Heb.12:25

He points out that we shouldn't neglect the one who speaks personally to us. The following small anecdote of Dorothy R. Jones always fascinates me:

“Your task - to build a better world,” God said.

I answered, “How?”

This world is such a large, vast place - so complicated now!

And I so small and useless - there's nothing I can do!”

But God, in all His Wisdom, said, “Just build a better you!”

I receive many comments like this one I just shared from those who listen to my teachings. It is hard for me to repeat my teachings word for word every time I stand on stage, since the words that I speak are the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Also, most times, once I leave the podium, I almost never remember what I said. Whenever I stand to speak to people, my one aim is to give them *Jesus*; whatever I say is meant to bring them closer to the Lord. During retreats, I get to speak a lot to the people who come. But many other people desire to come to listen and participate in these retreats, but for one reason or another they are not able to attend. For those who attend, many come to me saying they never knew that this or that was wrong in the eyes of our God. For example, to be a second wife is a sin yet I notice that in many African cultures, being a second, third or even eleventh wife is not uncommon. Many do not know that this is wrong in the eyes of God. Our lives are so dominated by our cultural practices and traditions that most of the things we do, we grew up doing them not knowing that we were doing something sinful.

It is for these reasons and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that I thought of coming up with a book with some of the teachings I give during

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my retreats and whenever I stand up to preach the word of God. In this way I will be able to reach out to so many who long to know Jesus much more deeply. We hope that it will help bring his teachings closer to the people. We wholeheartedly pray that Jesus may speak personally to each and every one of you who read this book. May He answer questions regarding various issues in your lives to which you have never known the answer.

This book has been written with the help of many other sources, teachings and materials. I have acknowledged some but not all. The sole intention of this book is to help the people of Africa to become aware of certain unnoticed sins and blocks so as to live a more fulfilled Christian life. This book is also based on real life experiences I have encountered in my priestly ministry. I have also included scripture verses, for it is through scripture that Jesus directly and really speaks to us.

CHAPTER ONE



THE REJECTED STONE



GOD'S PLAN FOR US

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you will seek me with all your heart". - Jer.29:11-13
God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has He spoken, and will he not fulfil it?

Num.23:19

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MY CHILDHOOD

I come from a family of ten children. Three of my brothers and I are Catholic priests. The other four brothers and two of my sisters are married with children. I am the ninth born. As I was growing up, my parents struggled to raise us. They did not have much money; therefore as a family went through a lot of struggles. It was really hard. As a child I suffered all the pains, sorrows and hardships that a poverty-stricken life brings. Our house happened to be near the parish church. This church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and my whole life as a child was centered on the parish. Now that I am a priest of my most beloved Jesus, I have come to realise through the word of God the wonderful ways of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

- Rom.8:28

It came to dawn on me that all the pains and sorrows I went through were the plan of the Lord, that I may be His instrument to other poor people. This is probably why the Lord specifically called me to join the Vincentian congregation whose charism is evangelisation to the poor. When I was in the seminary I had a crisis and decided to leave the seminary but later went back. When I went back, my rector asked me why I did not go and join any other congregation. I told him that the Lord called me specifically to join the Vincentian congregation. I believe all these happenings were not mere coincidence. It is for this same reason that the Vincentian Prayer House in Nairobi where I currently serve conducts various retreats free-of-charge; to give a chance to poor people to receive Jesus freely. We may go through various troubles and tribulations, but in them all God has a plan, a good plan for us. If we remain patient enough, in due time He will unfold His wonderful plan(s) for us (Cf. Jer. 29:11).

This plan and purpose of God in our lives can never be thwarted by anyone - not our parents, religious superiors, or teachers. As the word of God says in Job, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (Job.42:1-2). Sometimes we try to defeat God and His plans by following our designs and doing what our mind tells us. "The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will

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be established” (Prov.19:21). In other words we may scheme, plot, plan thousands of things but God’s plan will ultimately over-ride all these. We therefore have to stand firm in the Lord knowing that no matter what comes our way, whether good or bad, especially the bad, the Lord is fully aware and His ways remain sovereign in our lives.



Sometimes we try to defeat God and His plans by following our designs and doing what our mind tells us.

One day a girl came to me crying because the boy she loved had left her for another girl. I told her, why should you cry? You should thank and praise the Lord for revealing to you the truth about your ex-boyfriend. You undermined the plan of the Lord thinking that you would never get another boyfriend. She then said, “Actually Father that is true, I never thought I could get another male friend like him.”

During hardships we have to wait patiently upon the mercy of the Lord for the Lord will never reject us.

The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

- Lam.3:25

For the Lord will not reject for ever. Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

-Lam.3:31-33

You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life.

- Lam.3:58

FROM STAMMERER TO PREACHER

When I was a child, I went to school near our home. The school was called St. Mary’s Lower Primary School and was run by a group of religious sisters. It had standard one to standard four. One time the school was to hold its

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anniversary. As usual for such occasions guests and parents are usually invited and the children entertain them. The sister-in-charge of the school wanted one of the students to make a speech about the school on that day. One afternoon, she asked all of us to shout aloud anything so that she could choose the student with the best voice. Our classrooms were four partitioned rooms made from one big room and were separated by thin wooden partitions. I was in standard four. As the speeches went on, I too joined the rest of my colleagues in shouting, “Our dear invited guests, teachers, parents and my fellow pupils. We are gathered here to celebrate St. Mary’s ...” on and on I went speaking as loudly as I could. Meanwhile, the sister in charge was walking around listening to the various voices. Suddenly she rushed to my classroom. Seeing her we all kept quiet as we were very afraid of her. She then asked the class who was shouting with a stutter. She knew that I had the problem of stammering and it is probably the reason why she charged to my class and not any other! Some of my classmates pointed at me and told her it was me. “You naughty boy! You cannot represent our school with all that stammering,” she said. “You will start to say something and then stop in the middle and it will instead spoil the name of the school!” My classmates laughed but I cried feeling so humiliated. Later on the Lord consoled me saying, “Antony, you will represent me not this school.”

Today I am a priest of Jesus and I stand in front of many people, preaching to them the message of my Jesus. In my opinion, this is the greatest privilege anyone could ever have, to stand up and talk about Jesus to others. Whenever I stand to preach for the Lord, I never stammer. Even if I stammer slightly in my normal speech, I am not ashamed of it. After that incident who would ever have thought I would ever raise my voice again in front of hundreds of people? If the Lord can use a stammerer to preach His Good News, He is the real *El Shaddai* - the one who is more than enough. See, the Lord will never reject us. He wants us to come to Him with all our weaknesses, sins and shortcomings just the way we are. Even if other people find us useless, the Lord will make use of us.

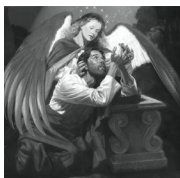
The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

-Ps.118:22-23

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True indeed, if you allow Him, the Lord will use you in a way that will make others marvel at His works in your life.

My parents did not want me to join the seminary, because in our culture, it is usually the youngest son who has to stay at home and take care of the aging parents. Three of my brothers were also to become priests. Therefore, being the youngest son, this duty was to automatically fall on me. I also wanted to stay at home and help my parents because I loved them very much, and I saw how they both struggled so much to raise us. To me, my parents were the most wonderful parents on earth. I loved my dad very much; when I did something wrong he would never beat me. As for my mother, any small mistake I made called for a beating, and a thorough one for that matter. Every now and then she would beat me thoroughly, of course out of love and discipline – to beat the mischief out of me.



***He wants us to come to Him with
all our weaknesses, sins and
shortcomings just the way we are.***

A BROKEN FLASK AND A BROKEN HEART

When I first joined the minor seminary, I had so much zeal that I would do anything for anyone. But the Lord does not want us to do everything; rather only that which He asks us to do.

For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

-Eph. 2:10

I had a best friend and we helped each other a lot, he and I. In the minor seminary, we had to pay all our fees for our studies. We also had to do all the work ourselves such as cooking, cleaning and washing. One day my friend was cleaning the windows and broke one of them. He was very distressed since he had done other wrong things before. If the rector found out he feared that this time he would be sent home or be given some heavy punishment. He

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came to me and told me, “Antony you have to help me please. I have broken a window, but I cannot tell the rector that it was me. For sure he will send me home. Please I beg you as my friend, kindly go and tell him that it was you who broke the window.” I loved my friend dearly, and seeing how desperate he was, I felt his being sent home was a serious thing. So I agreed to take the blame for the broken window. Also, I had that fire in me for doing anything for anyone. I told him I would take the blame for the broken window. “Father forgive me, I have broken a window pane.” The rector got so angry that he shouted and said so many things to me. “I have noticed that you have a destructive spirit. I have no faith in you and I doubt your vocation!” he said. On hearing these words, I was heart broken. I really got scared. “Maybe it was not such a good idea to take on the blame”, I thought. “Today you have broken a window. What will you break tomorrow? You will have to go home and get money from your parents to repair the window,” he said. At the sound of these words, my broken heart sank even more. “My goodness,” I thought, “if I go home and tell my parents that they have to pay for a window broken by my friend, they would break both my legs!!” “Anyway this is the last chance I give you, get out!” I quickly stood up and ran out of the room before he changed his mind.

I went to my friend almost in tears and told him of the horrible reaction of the rector. I told him that maybe he should just own up, because I did not imagine having to go home and facing my parents about this problem. My friend however consoled me, “Please Antony, I cannot own up now because it is too late. The rector and everyone else know it was you; you cannot change the story now. Anyway Antony, don’t worry, you are my best friend. When you happen to be in a dilemma, I will pay you back for the favour you have done for me, and I will prove my friendship to you.”

As I said earlier, seminarians usually do everything for themselves. One day as we were doing the chores, I was in the kitchen washing the dishes. While I was washing the priests’ milk flask, it slipped from my hands and fell to the floor. As the flask crashed to the ground and broke into pieces, so did my heart. The flask made such a noise that it seemed to me the whole seminary was shaken. Within no time, word had gone round the entire seminary that Brother Antony had broken the priests’ milk flask. I then remembered my friend, who swore to stand by me in my time of distress. I rushed to him before the news of my misfortune reached the rector’s ears. When I finally

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found him I told him, “My dear friend, you told me that when I am in trouble you would stand by me. Now is the time. I have broken the priests’ flask. Kindly go and tell the rector that it was you who broke it.” To this my dearest friend replied, “Antony! Don’t forget that what I broke was just a window pane. Your case is different. You have broken the priests’ milk flask which is so expensive.” “But you told me you would help me when I was in trouble and now is the time. I am in trouble!” I told him in tears. “I am afraid you will have to tell him yourself. If I tell him for sure I will be sent home and besides everyone knows it was you who broke it,” my friend replied. I was so distressed and sad and felt so alone. Then I remembered I had a very good prayer book of the Way of The Cross. So I took the book, went to the chapel, and said the prayer of the way of the cross fervently. This was the first time I really prayed from my heart. I knelt down reverently at every station, lifting my hands, trembling and in tears. The rector had already found a destructive spirit in me, had given me the last warning and also, he had doubted my vocation. When I finished saying the prayer of the way of the cross, I went to the rector. Once again I knelt down before him and told him, “Father, forgive me once again for I have broken the milk flask. Please forgive me.” The rector said, “Antony, do not worry. Anyway, it was an old flask and we were thinking of replacing it. It is okay.” At the mention of these words, I felt such relief. I know that the only way I got off the hook was by the power of the prayer of the way of the cross.



“Antony! Don’t forget that what I broke was just a window pane. Your case is different. You have broken the priests’ milk flask which is so expensive.”

With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me? The LORD is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in mortals.

-

Ps.118:6-8

We have so many people that we can trust, but human beings are by nature selfish. Each one cares about his own interests. This is why many a time we

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become hurt and feel rejected. We place our trust in others who do not really care for us. One of the reasons why people suffer from rejection and hurtful feelings is that they place their trust in other human beings.

We are all social beings and we need others by our side. However, as much as we need others we should be aware that all of us are selfish by nature. We care first and foremost for our own welfare. The best one to place our trust in is God; who will never disappoint us and will always give us first place in His big heart. To Him our welfare comes first. Many of us fail to understand this fact. It is only when we repeatedly get hurt and wounded by others that eventually it dawns on us that there is no one worthy to be loved and trusted other than God Himself.



One of the reasons why people suffer from rejection and hurtful feelings is that they place their trust in other human beings.

I know of a single mother who had one child. This mother worked so hard to educate and bring up her daughter. She managed through her hard work to send her daughter for further studies abroad. She fell sick, but her daughter who was now abroad never called her to find out how she was. She totally neglected her mother, at a time when her mother really needed her. To the broken-hearted mother the Lord spoke through Heb.6:7; “Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.” The farmer plants the seed in the soil. The seed then grows as a result of rain frequently falling on the soil. God is the one who provides the rain, which falls on the soil and waters it. This then makes the soil yield crops from the seed planted by the farmer. Even though the farmer takes away all the fruits of the soil, he never thanks or rewards the soil for that. The blessing of the crop is not from the farmer, but from the Lord. All blessings that we receive are from the Lord and not from people. Even our children are a blessing from the Lord.

Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

- Ps.127:3

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IN SEARCH OF A GOD-EXPERIENCE

In the tenth year in the seminary, with just about two years before becoming a priest, I realized that I had never had a God-experience (a special vision of God). How was I going to dedicate my life to the service of one whom I had never seen or felt any love for? This really troubled me. I told my Jesus, “Jesus, I hear that you are a loving God, that you are this and that. But I have never seen you nor experienced your love nor heard your voice like other people say they have. I have no evidence that you are a living Master. See, I have only one life. I do not want to waste it serving you whom I have never seen? So if you want me to serve you, show yourself to me.” One thing was certain for me, if I was to become a priest, I had to see or experience Jesus. I prayed a lot about this dilemma, asking Jesus to speak to me or show himself to me. All the while Jesus kept absolute silence. I made up my mind to leave the seminary. But before I left, I had to be sure that priestly life was not the vocation God was calling me to. So I attended many retreats with one aim in mind - to hear that the Lord was not calling me. In all these retreats, I went for counselling. In all, I saw 17 different counsellors, some saying I was called and others that I was not called. This put me even in more confusion. One lady counsellor told me, “Make sure that when you get married you do not beat or mistreat your wife. Do not dominate her, be kind-hearted and humble.” Later I came to know that this particular counsellor was married to an ex-seminarian who was mistreating and torturing her! This is the time I came to know that there are some really fake counsellors. Time passed and still no answer from Jesus. During one of the retreats I was touched by the word of God from Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.” I heard a voice speak into my ear, “Brother Antony, I am the same. You doubt your vocation but I have not changed. If I called you yesterday, today, tomorrow and even forever I will call you.”



“Brother Antony, I am the same. You doubt your vocation but I have not changed. If I called you yesterday, today, tomorrow and even forever I will call you.”

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UNLESS I SEE YOU FACE TO FACE...

Although I heard the voice of Jesus I still decided to quit the seminary as I did not see Him face to face. There were three reasons for this:

- (i) I loved my father so much and wanted to go and help him at home.
- (ii) I never had any special encounter of God like a vision. I really wanted to see my Lord, if only just once and not depend on hearsay.
- (iii) I also saw many priests living unfaithful lives and misleading the faithful. Then I thought, if other priests are straying I may also be inclined to do so.

With these reasons, I decided to leave the seminary. I once heard that when one left the seminary he would never be taken back and would not be successful in life. It is in fact true that once a religious candidate leaves the seminary or convent, it is very difficult for that candidate to be taken back. If they are taken back it is a miracle, a mighty intervention of the Lord. The thinking is that when one leaves, it is a sign that they might be having doubts about their religious vocation, or that it is just not their calling and so many questions are raised about that person. Aware of all these things, I still did not reverse my decision to leave the seminary. I wrote a letter directly to the provincial superior saying, “Dear respected Father, after nine and a half years of my formation in the Vincentian Congregation seminary, I have decided to leave. I am so grateful to this Vincentian Congregation for all they have taught me and for making me what I am now. I truly learnt a lot and I ask you to bless me to live a good life and to be a good and faithful citizen. Please allow me to leave the Congregation.” I signed the letter and copied it to the superior general and to the rector. The then Provincial superior, Rev. Fr. Varghese Parappuram VC blessed me to leave the Congregation. I left the Congregation for good. I left with all the evidence and written documents, after closing all the doors for a second chance.

I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD

As soon as I sent the letter Jesus spoke to me saying, “I called you Antony, why have you decided to leave?” I got very angry and told Jesus, “You have spoken too late! All that time I called to you asking you, “speak to me, speak to me,” Where were you? Now I do not want to hear your voice because it is too late.” I tried to close my ears with my hands; but the voice just got louder,

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because the voice of the Lord does not come through the ears but through the heart. From then on, sleep became an illusion. I was so disturbed. This voice kept on ringing in my head saying, “You are called, you are called, you are called.” I began praying very hard to God about this. Actually the day I left the seminary, I lost sleep completely. This is extra-ordinary because I was one of those people who at the sight of their bed would feel sleepy and once asleep would sleep like a log.

Anyway, what had been done had been done. By then I figured that the whole congregation knew what I had done and did not even think about reversing my decision. What? And be the laughing stock of my batch mates? No way! I packed my belongings and left the seminary. In my heart I reassured myself that at least I was going to help and be with my dad whom I loved so much.

WHAT IS REAL LOVE?

When I reached home, I explained to my father what had happened. I asked him to do me a small favour; that in case my cousins, relatives or neighbours asked why I came back home, he would explain on my behalf. My dear loving father whom I loved so much and for whom I had left the seminary said in return, “Antony, you came back on your own, so you have to explain to them yourself why you came back.” On hearing these words, I was heartbroken but I did not show it. I silently went to my room, sat on my bed and cried my heart out. Jesus also questioned me, “Antony is it for this father that you came back?” Only then did I realise how selfish my dad was. I found him selfish because I made such a great sacrifice of leaving my ten years of formation just to live for his welfare. I was torn beyond anything and turned to God in prayer.

STUNNING ENCOUNTER WITH THE DIVINE

The night I was rejected by my own father, my real father, Jesus, appeared to me in a vision. Jesus spoke to me saying, “Antony, don’t worry. I have called you and I will take you back.” I felt such great relief, security and protection. I was totally depressed, down and indecisive but the moment I had the vision, I felt very peaceful. Even though I was sure that I would never be taken back, I did not feel lonely for the Lord was with me. I felt such a great love for Jesus. I decided that I would live and die exclusively and absolutely for Jesus. With this re-assurance, I packed my belongings and went back to the seminary.

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I found him selfish because I made such a great sacrifice of leaving my ten years of formation just to live for his welfare.

JESUS SAID IT, SUPERIORS HEARD IT!

On reaching the seminary, I went straight to the rector and told him that I left the seminary and now I had come back because Jesus told me to do so. He told me if at all I was lucky to be taken back I would have to begin all the way from the minor seminary. I told him to me that was not a problem. I was ready to be His servant no matter what anyone said or what it took. He asked me to leave his office while he liaised with the other priests on the matter. Meanwhile I went to the chapel and prayed, “Lord, I came back because you called me back. I have now come.” As I was praying, the rector came into the chapel and told me that they had decided to take me back, provided I wrote a letter explaining everything that had happened in detail. He added that if I did anything wrong, I would be sent home. Eventually I was taken back to continue from where I had left, after a lot of hesitation and reluctance from my rector.

I GOT A SECOND LIFE?

When one commits suicide that is it, he does not get a life after that. As for me, I committed suicide and I got life after that. It is my second life, a life restored by Jesus and exclusively for Jesus. I therefore came to know that the only person worthy to be loved and lived for is Jesus Christ. The earlier we all know this my dear brothers and sisters, the better. Today I feel I am the most privileged person on earth, to be a servant of Christ – a priest. King David says in Ps.16:2, “I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”

LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS!

The problem is many of us get hurt, disappointed and even give up hope in life and in ourselves because of what others say to us and about us. “So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’” (Heb.13:6). What people say about us is not

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important. What is important is *what the lord has to say to us*. One day a boy came crying, saying someone had called him a hippopotamus. He said calling him a hippo was not the issue but when he went for a visit to the zoo and saw a real hippo, he could not believe that he was as ugly as that! This is what saddened him and made him cry. People may call us all kinds of names, but we will never be those things they call us. We are God's creation, made in His own image and likeness.

Listen to me, you who know righteousness, you people who have my teaching in your hearts; do not fear the reproach of others, and do not be dismayed when they revile you.

- Is.51:7

After my priestly ordination, I was appointed to a retreat centre in Bombay. When people came to register, they paid a fee which covered accommodation, meals, notebooks, pens and hymn books. These retreats are attended by people from all walks of life; learned-unlearned, poor-rich, Christians-non Christians etc. On the first day of the retreat, I conducted the first class. After the class, a man came to me. He was a linguist, highly educated and he was fluent in seven different languages. He asked me to give him another notebook. This made me happy to think that just after one class someone had filled an entire notebook. Usually for the five days of retreat, not even half the notebook is filled. I asked him why he needed another notebook. He told me, "Father, do not be offended, but your English is very poor. Your phonetics are horrible and your grammar is pathetic! Here, see." Looking into his filled-up notebook were all the mistakes and errors I had made while giving my talk. This gentleman put them all down. The errors must have been so many that he had to have another notebook. But he reassured me, "Do not worry, I will teach you proper English." I told him that I was aware of my poor English and I always asked my Jesus this question, "Lord how is it you chose me to be a preacher of your word knowing that my English is so poor?" God called me to be His servant, to preach His word to His people, to give Jesus to His people. Jesus did not call me to teach English; otherwise I would have been an English professor and not a priest of my most beloved Jesus.

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For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' Where is the one who is wise? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

-1Cor.1:19-20



***What people say about us
is not important.
What is important is what
the Lord has to say
to us.***

We thank and praise God for all our weaknesses. Even my stammering, I no longer see it as a disability but I thank and praise God for it. Because it is in weakness that God's power is made perfect.

Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

-2Cor.12:8-10

CHAPTER TWO



SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM



As long as they did not sin against their God they prospered, for the God who hates iniquity is with them. But when they departed from the way he had prescribed for them, they were utterly defeated in many battles and were led away captive to a foreign land. The temple of their God was razed to the ground, and their towns were occupied by their enemies.

-Jdt.5:17-18

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My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

-1Jn.2:1-2

Sin is a very big problem even though many people do not realise it. It breaks our relationship with God and with one another. The consequences of sin can bring untold damage to lives and even diminish happiness. Therefore is a big problem as “apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn.15:5). Sin is selfishness, a deliberate option to do evil. The word of God teaches us that “If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice” (Sir.15:15). Sin blocks our life and prosperity as seen in Isaiah 59:1: “See, the LORD’s hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.” It’s our sins that make the Lord not answer our prayers. Sin doesn’t just affect the one who commits it, it has a social impact. Sin is ingratitude, failure to acknowledge the goodness of God.

For though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened.

- Rom.1:21

When we fail to honour God in our lives, sin and all forms of wickedness creep into our lives.



***When we fail to honour God
in our lives,
sin and all forms of wickedness creep
into our lives.***

I’M JUST COMING DOWN TO GET MORE CHALK!

We are all sinners, there is no one without sin and no one is born a saint.

What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under

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the power of sin, as it is written: “There is no one who is righteous, not even one.”

-Rom.3:9

A man dreams that he is at the gates of heaven. He is handed a piece of chalk to draw a line on the wall for every sin he had committed and write a few words to explain why he committed that particular sin. As he draws the lines he notices that they form the steps of a ladder. It was the Lord’s gracious design to allow the truly repentant sinner to climb to heaven by these steps. To confirm this he sees all the walls filled with similar ladders. To give him even greater joy and comfort, he sees a man descending one of the ladders. First into view comes a pair of purple socks, then the purple of a bishop and finally the mitred head. Overjoyed, he asks if he is coming down to take him to heaven, and inquires what it is like up there. “Up where?” asks the bishop. “Up in heaven,” comes the reply.

“I was not in heaven,” said the bishop. “I’m just coming down for more chalk!”

We all have our own weaknesses. As St. Paul aptly said, “*All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ*” (Phil.2:21). However, we are all children of God. But if we do not believe in Christ, we do not become His children. If we do not become His children then we automatically become children of the Evil One and fall prey to his tactics. The word of God says,

We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them.

- 1Jn.5:18

As already noted sin, is a universal problem and affects all categories of people. David made an open confession about it: “Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.” (Ps.51:5).

But thanks be to God, who in his mercy sent His Son so that we may be liberated from sin and be born to new life. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3: 16). Furthermore, through his passion, death

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and resurrection Jesus has given us a rebirth in the Spirit so that we can rid ourselves of our bad habits and master out sinful nature. St. Paul teaches us to:

Live by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Gal.5:16-21

In order to cleanse ourselves of the sinful natures of the flesh, we require a spiritual re-birth (Cf. Jn. 3:3).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments are guidelines for the mode of life the Lord wants us to lead in order for us to enjoy happiness here on earth both as individuals and as a community. The first three commandments have a vertical dimension and show how to relate with God. The last seven have a horizontal dimension and deal with our relations with others. Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments thus:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

-Mt.22:37-3

WORSHIP ME ALONE FIRST COMMANDMENT

I am the Lord Your God; (Dt.5:7)

I am the Lord Your God; You Shall Have no other gods before Me.

-Dt.5:7

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In the first Commandment we are instructed to worship the One, True, and Living God.

Hear O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

-Deut 6:4-5

It means we should put God our creator at the centre of our lives and not any other thing or even a human being for all these are mere creatures. The pre-requisite to love God is to have deep faith in Him. The sins against our faith in God include everything that makes us put our faith in creatures and not in God. Faith is a gift and a great gift indeed. But faith is a gift which can be lost if we neglect our spiritual duties, read bad books, jump from one church to another, and take part in the services or prayers of other religions that do not recognise the one true God.

The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent the works of their hands or give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk.

-Rev 9:20

It is a serious transgression against the first commandment to worship false gods or idols, and to give to any creature the honour that belongs to God alone.

For though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

- Rom.1:21-23

Money, sex, power, position, name, fame, studies, degrees, can become our little gods. That is why Jesus, the fullest revelation of the one true God insisted: “worship the Lord your God, and serve only him” (Lk.4:8).

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED



***Money, sex, power, position, name,
fame, studies, degrees,
can become our little gods.***

“WHY SHOULD I LIVE? MY WIFE DESERTED ME!”

Once I was conducting a popular mission retreat in Kerala, India. During such retreats, the priests are divided into groups and the arch priest is supposed to visit all the families in the area assigned to him, praying with the family members and blessing their home. On the last day, the priest is supposed to have visited all the homes in the area assigned to him, and to come in procession to the retreat centre, together with all the families he will have visited for the Eucharistic celebration.

I visited all the families assigned to me and on the last day, together with all the family members I had visited, we marched in procession to the retreat centre. As we were walking, someone touched my hand. I looked behind and saw a man who said, “You have not visited one house.” On enquiring more about the house I had missed, I found out that it was in an area not assigned to me. So I told the man, “I did not come to visit the house because it was not in my area.” However, the man insisted that I should go and visit the house and he began to get angry. “Okay,” I told him, “I will come with you to visit the house.” I instructed my group members to go on with the procession, I would join them later. If they arrived at the centre before I came back, the priests were to go ahead with the Eucharistic celebration.

I accompanied the man to the house and on arrival, I saw a man quietly sharpening a knife. I immediately knew that he was not attending the retreat. I greeted him and he murmured a reply. I asked if I could sit down and he pointed to a seat with his knife. I told him that I was a Catholic priest and one of those who were preaching at the popular mission retreat that was taking place and I had come to visit his house. Even as I spoke, he did not look up and just continued to sharpen the knives. Finally he stopped sharpening his knives and looked up at me and said, “I hate everyone, especially priests. I do not want to see anyone. No one understands me!” I told him, “No one may understand you, but Jesus understands you.” “Who is this Jesus?” he asked.

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This man was a coconut harvester. He was married with three children. His wife had left him because of his drunken and abusive behaviour and had taken their three children with her. This desertion brought him a lot of bitterness and anguish. Worse still, the parish priest blamed him, saying that if it was not for his drinking problem, his family would never have deserted him. The parish priest had never come to his house to visit him. In fact no priest had come to visit him. He had no one to share his sorrows with. According to him it was the parish priest who influenced all the other priests not to visit him. In order to get rid of the loneliness, he would sharpen his knives for almost the entire night.

When I asked him if I could pray for him, he said, “Yes you can pray and leave me alone.” As I was praying he started to cry. He was the eldest son of his parents. He left school when he was in Standard Five and could barely read and write. He showed me a notebook with the date his wife left him. He was waiting for her to come back. “Is it wrong that I love my wife so much? Yes I know I beat and tortured her, but it was all because of my love for her!” This poor man so dearly loved his wife and thought she also loved him. It was a big shock for him when she left him for somebody else. He never thought it was sinful to love the wife more than God. I told him, “Even if you love your wife so much, it does not mean that she loves you the same way.” He then said, “Father, I now know that it is wrong for me to love my wife more than Jesus.” He then took me to his room. On that very day, when we were ending the retreat, he was planning to commit suicide in the evening. He had hoped that the retreat would change his life. However, since no priest had come to visit his home, he had given up and was ready to take his life by drinking poison.

I knelt down before him and asked for forgiveness on behalf of all the priests who had neglected him. To which he quickly retorted, “No, do not kneel; it is the parish priest who has to kneel for forgiveness!” I told him, “The is no priest who died for you, but Jesus died for you and he knelt in front of his betrayer and washed his feet.” It should have been Judas to kneel before the master and wash his feet. But it is the master who knelt.

You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

- Jn.13:14-15

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

I took the poison which he had mixed with some liquor and poured it in the toilet. It was a large quantity. "If I would have drunk it, I would have died," said the man. After pouring the poison, we went to the retreat centre together for the Eucharistic celebration. This man totally changed and now he is a very good preacher back home in India.



***"Father, I now know that it is wrong
for me to love my wife
more than Jesus."***

DECISION MAKING AND THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

When making life's decisions, for example, deciding whether to go for family life or for religious life, do we consult the Lord? Does the Lord take first priority?

"Father," a girl once told me, "I have to become a religious sister. I have discovered that boys are not good. They cheat and are not sincere." Then I told her, "If boys are not good then girls are not good either. If ten boys are cheating girls, then ten girls are also cheating boys." I told her, "Your duty is to see to it that you should never enter into any unhealthy relationship with anyone. Your duty is to ensure that you will be a faithful wife."

There are people who run away from home and responsibilities at home to join religious life. This is wrong because even where they are running to they can face even worse problems. If they are not up to the task they will just take off leaving problems for the congregation. In all we do, the Lord has to take first priority and we have to wait on Him to lead us.

LOSS OF BUSINESS GAVE HIM TIME FOR PRAYER

A religious sister came to see me so that I could pray with her. She had many problems in her family. Her father was a very rich man who owned a very profitable business. Being a big businessman, he had no time even to go to church or even participate in family prayer. Her younger brother had tried severally to get a scholarship but in vain, and her elder brother was sick.

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I gave her scripture readings to read and claim for one month. After one month, she came back and reported that her father's business had totally flopped and there was no financial breakthrough. However, he had begun going to church and was now participating in family prayer. I told her it was the Lord who allowed her father's business to flop, so that he could get time to receive Jesus. When you pray to the Lord, He intervenes in your family, in the life of your children and in the entire generation. I told her she should pray for her dad to get a job that will not keep him from attending Sunday Mass, and then he would be assured of eternal prosperity. The Word of God guarantees prosperity to those who purposefully overcome sinful situations.

Who has had the power to transgress and did not transgress,
and to do evil and did not do it? His prosperity will be
established, and the assembly will proclaim his acts of charity.

- Sir.31:10-11

Therefore God should always come before our businesses, and our work; our spouses, children, mother, father, girl or boyfriends, sister, brother, superiors; before any thing and any human being.

THE COST OF BECOMING A RICH MAN

One day after a retreat a young man came with his wife asking for prayers. He was heartbroken. He had been married for five years. They were both HIV positive, childless and had lost a lot of weight. The man asked many questions, "Why is the Lord not merciful to us? Why did he give us this sickness? What is the plan of the Lord about our family life? Why has he not given us a child? Why is he punishing us?"

"Do you have any financial crisis?" was the question the Lord asked him as a response to many of his questions. He said, "I have a lot of money, but who needs the money? I need good health." Then he was asked about his marriage and family. He said, "I did not marry in the church. We just stay together because my wife is not a Christian. She was actually married to another man and was discontented so I decided to marry her as we were working in the same company." This young man was born into a staunch Catholic family, but he simply discarded the teaching of the Church as he got involved in this terrible relationship. He not only broke an existing family but also left his parents and home as they were opposed to his move. He left the faith,

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contracted AIDS and was childless. The word of God that was given to him was from 1Tim.6:9-10.

But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

He agreed saying, “Love of money destroyed my life.” He was born into a family of eight children. He was the seventh born. While his uncles and relatives were very rich his, family was very poor because his father was a heavy drunk. He did not have school fees while his relatives who were his neighbours travelled by car to their schools. His mother used to tell him, “We are suffering because we have no money. We have to become rich at any cost.” Always hearing these whisperings of his mother he decided to become rich. He left home, made false degree certificates and went for a job. At work he met this lady who was very rich but already married to another man. She was the only daughter of her parents with three huge flats in her name. He who was always looking for means to become rich had found this rich girl. He made her divorce her husband so as to marry him. She married him in court. He was shrewd in registering his marriage with her, but he never imagined the cost of becoming rich. He lost his parents, his faith, and his health. He amassed sorrows, childlessness, and HIV.

GREED - LOVE OF MONEY

Greed is also the work of the Evil One. Today people are very greedy. A woman once came to our prayer house for prayer. For more than ten years she was jobless and was in a financial crisis. She told me she needed a job, even a small job so that she could sustain herself. I gave her scriptures to read for one month. After one month she came back to me and I asked her if there was any progress. She said, “A little, I got a job that earns Kshs. 10,000 per month.” I asked, “Then how come you say there is a small change?” She replied, “This job is similar to being a house help, actually I expected a job with a minimum wage of Kshs. 40,000 shillings.”

Another man was constantly coming to the prayer house. He was jobless and

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was praying for a job. Then God blessed him with a job paying Kshs. 20,000 per month. After sometime this man came to me saying that he was jobless again. I asked him what happened and he said that the salary he was being paid was not enough to pay his house rent that was Kshs. 30,000 per month. The moment he got the job he moved into a very big house which he could not afford to pay with his small income. He kept asking his boss to increase his salary, which the employer did not. Later on his boss decided to fire him.

A certain lady kept on coming to the prayer house praying with one intention: to get a promotion and therefore an increase in salary. She was earning more than Kshs. 300,000 per month. "Father," she told me, "I have to get a promotion so that I can save for the future of my children. With my current salary I cannot do this. I need about Kshs. 600,000 per month." I told her the greatest promotion you can now pray for is the "promotion to glory". The Word of God says in 1Cor.15:19, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." There are people who do not even have a job or daily food and you crave for luxury. Ask the Lord for forgiveness and mercy.

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Heb.13:5-6

If we have money, we usually tend to do senseless things with the money. Sometimes you may see people praying for a job, promotion or any material thing but they never get it. This is because they have an attachment to money. What is the use if we have so much money and yet our souls are dead?

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- Mt.6:33

Only when we are in a crisis will we look up and depend upon the Lord.

Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learnt to be content with whatever I have.

- Phil.4:11

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Learning from the Bible whenever I pray, I pray like this, “Lord, give me a crisis, so that I can fully and totally depend upon you.” If I had all the money I needed, I would never look up to God. Whenever I need something I would just go pick money and buy it, even unnecessary things - simply because the money would be there.

Do not wonder at the works of a sinner, but trust in the Lord and keep at your job; for it is easy in the sight of the Lord to make the poor rich suddenly, in an instant.

- Sir.11:21

It’s a sin to give too much importance to money. Even robbers want to be rich, that is why they steal.

ARE YOU POOR? PRAY TO JESUS

When we have riches, it is very hard for us to depend on God. One of our team members, a very hard working young man, after finishing his form four, could not get his school leaving certificate. The school headmaster told him that he had to pay Kshs. 40,000 to get the certificate. Many times he would come to me and ask me to pray for him to get the certificate for without it, getting a job or even continuing with his studies was impossible. Often the thought crossed my mind that I should help him, but the Lord never permitted me. I however reassured him that the Lord would give him the certificate. ‘In this Nairobi, how?’ was his reply. After two years he made the familiar trip to his school to try the power of God and prayer. And miraculously this time, he was given the certificate free of charge without any questions.



Sometimes you may see people praying for a job, promotion or any material thing but they never get it. This is because they have an attachment to money.

Sometimes we become so blinded by money. A lawyer once came to me for prayer. He had a lot of money and riches but had lost all of it. He even had to sell his piece of land; he literally lost everything. I asked him if at any time he collected unjust money or fees. This lawyer had actually represented a

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widow in a case where all her husband's property after his death had been taken by the husband's family, leaving her with nothing. So the widow took the case to court and was represented by this lawyer. Fortunately the lawyer won the case for the widow, but as remuneration for the work he did for her, he took 60 percent of her land, leaving her with only 40 percent. He said to her, "Actually it was a lost case; you have to be happy that I won it and you got 40 percent. If I was not working so hard to defend you, you would have been left with nothing." He thought there was no problem in taking the 60 percent commission for his wonderful job. It was since then, he remembered, that he started struggling in the business.

You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry.

- Ex.22:22-23

Even if your profession is provision of essential services to the community, as in the case of doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers etc, the Lord needs you to do justice to the poor. In a retreat, the Lord once told a particular lawyer in attendance, "Who told you that money making/lying is your profession?" The prophet Micah says,

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

- Mi.6:8

Nurses and doctors have to learn to treat people, especially the poor, without necessarily charging them. Jesus will question us like he did in Matthew 25, I was sick, poor and in need of medicine, but you denied me because I did not have the money. I was sick with malaria in Africa but you left me here and instead flew to Europe where better salaries, dollars, euros, sterling pounds etc were being offered to treat the rich people there.



He thought there was no problem in taking the 60 percent commission for his wonderful job. It was since then, he remembered, that he started struggling in the business.

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CARE FOR THE POOR FIRST

One day a doctor came to me to pray for her to get a work permit or a green card to be able to live and work in the USA. I told her, “The Lord wants you to stay here and serve your fellow Kenyans, many of whom are suffering in poverty.”

Another day a teacher came for prayers when she lost her job soon after joining a new school. She wanted to know why the Lord was not merciful to her. For so many years she had taught many different children, given them hope and transferred knowledge. But because she was not getting a promotion, she thought of changing to a school that offered a better salary. “Why does the Lord not want me to be promoted? I lost my job in the new school without any sufficient reason. Now I am nowhere, I undergo tough times, including lack of school fees for my own children.” “Why have you left my children



In a retreat, the Lord once told a particular lawyer in attendance, “Who told you that money making/ lying is your profession?”

halfway for more money,” was the question asked by the Lord as an answer to her questions. This particular teacher left the school where she had been teaching for another school where she was offered a higher salary. She had been the only mathematics teacher in her former school; so when she left, her students and the school were in crisis. Her departure left the future of the children in limbo. The teacher forgot that these students had a super-teacher who answers all their prayers.

This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble.

- Ps.34:6

For the day of the LORD is near against all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

- Ob.1:15

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WILL YOU DISAPPEAR AS SOON AS YOU ARE BLESSED?

One man used to come for prayers. He was jobless. God blessed him with a very good job. The moment he got the job he disappeared as he always had a “very heavy schedule”. Then after some time he came to me and told me that he had lost the job. When I asked him what happened, he told me that for the first two months at the job, he faithfully paid his time and tithes to the Lord. But in the third month something urgent cropped up so he postponed the tithe payment for that month. Then in the fourth month, he had urgent debts to pay, so again he postponed tithe payment for that month. It went on like this and never again did he pay his tithe. He lost protection as he left the Lord by being very busy.

My child, do not busy yourself with many matters; if you multiply activities, you will not be held blameless. If you pursue, you will not overtake, and by fleeing you will not escape.

- Sir.11:10

Tithing is an expression of an inner attitude of utter dependence on God, an expression of one’s faith in God. It is recognition of God as Lord and the Master of all of one’s income and the Provider of all source of income.

For the Lord is the one who repays and he will repay you sevenfold.

- Sir.35:13

A young lady once came to me and said, “Father, pray for my promotion.” She was already working in a bank and was in a stable position. I gave her scriptures to read and claim for one month. She however continued reading them for two months. She came back to me after the two months. I told her to continue reading the scriptures for one more month. She soon lost patience and came back saying, “Father, nothing is coming from my reading these scriptures. I usually do not have time to pray and when I do, nothing happens.” The Lord spoke this word to her:

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its

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full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Jam.1:2-4



***Tithing is recognition of God as
Lord and the Master of all of
one's income and the Provider of
all source of income.***

I asked her if at any point in her life she had lost faith in God. She told me that when she was at the university, she was influenced by her friends from other religions. For about eight years, she neglected God and her faith. She even went for prayers in a mosque. I told her, “The Lord is allowing you to go through these trials. Will you stand up for Him in your trials and defeat the devil, considering all that time that you left the faith?”

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

- 1Pt.5:6-7

PRIORITY TO MATERIAL THINGS AND WEALTH

When we give importance to earthly things we let them take the place of God in our lives and they become our god. We have to search our hearts in order to see whether they are pure and holy and have no inordinate attachment to material things.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

- 1 Jn.3:21-22

A man once told me, “Father, you have to come and bless my car.” I looked around and asked him, “Where is the car?” “Father it is not here with me, I will have to take you to the garage where it is.” This man had bought the car

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of his dreams. However, it was always involved in accidents. “On the very first day I got the car, as I was driving it home from the dealers shop, I had an accident with a truck. I have been having accidents ever since. Now the car was involved in an accident again and I am actually scared to drive it out of this garage, unless it is blessed.” I asked him if he ever desired in his life to own a car like the way he now did. He said, “Actually Father, even when I was in school, I dreamt of owning a car of that particular make. I would think that with my first job, I would save up and buy that car. It has been my life long dream to own a car like this.” I told him, “There are only two things to do so as to get out of the accidents. Sell the car of your heart’s desire and give first place to the Lord.” He looked at me as if I had just dropped right in front of him from outer space. “Sell this car?” he barely whispered, not even having the energy to talk. “The only one who can protect you is the Lord, so give him the brand new space in your heart. I said to him pray Psalms 86:11,

Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

THE DEVIL’S BOX?

While at the retreat centre in Mumbai, a woman was brought in. She had personality disorder and had a lot of anger. Whenever we conduct retreats, we ask all the participants to switch off their cell phones and not watch any television for the duration of the retreat. They are to keep absolute silence. This woman came to the retreat centre accompanied by her mother. After she got married she had a lot of discomfort with her husband because she was addicted to watching television. At night she would not sleep with her husband, but instead had a separate room where she would spend the entire night watching television. When she was still staying with her parents, her mother used to wash her clothes and dishes. When she got married, her mother-in-law took up this responsibility. Her behaviour became too much for her husband to handle and so he divorced her. Then her mother brought her for prayers at the retreat centre.

While at the centre, she could not concentrate. During the sessions in the auditorium she could not sit still but kept wandering here and there. In the auditorium nuns were assigned the duty to make sure no one wanders during the sessions. One nun happened to notice this woman. She approached her and asked her if she was looking for something. The woman asked the nun,

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‘Where is the television?’ The nun was taken aback by this question and told her that being a retreat centre, no watching of television was allowed and that if she wanted to watch television she had to go elsewhere. This reply in a way angered the woman. She got hold of the religious sister’s veil and pulled it off. The woman then became hysterical and started beating up the sister. She scratched the sister’s face on the forehead who started to bleed. The sister began to scream for help. As she was screaming, the woman ordered her



***After she got married
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to be quiet. Seeing that the sister was still screaming, she picked up a chair to hit her. Meanwhile, people heard the screams and came out to find out what was going on. They were just in time to rescue the religious sister from being clobbered with the chair. Immediately the security men were called in. Our retreat centre in Mumbai employs security men from Nepal, a country neighbouring India. People from Nepal are very big. They came to try and control the situation, but this woman of twenty-six years overpowered four big Nepalese men. They managed to hold her legs, tied them and bound her hands. They carried her into a car and sent her home with the mother. We could not even do deliverance for her. That was the day I learnt that the devil that comes out from the television is very powerful. What you see is what you become. If you keep on watching filthy, immoral programmes, your life becomes defiled and spoilt, filthy and immoral. Once addicted to television, it becomes very difficult to rid oneself or someone else from this addiction. Parents therefore have to take great care of what their children are watching on television.

While conducting a youth retreat, we asked the youth to stop watching television. One of them asked how they were not supposed to watch television and yet God had given them eyes. “True”, I said “God has given you eyes but he has also given you eyelids to shut out unwanted objects and pictures.”

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***What you see is what you become.
If you keep on watching filthy,
immoral programmes, your life
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immoral.***

PRIORITY TO BEAUTY

Giving unnecessary importance to beauty can become an obsession that can take the place of God in our lives. Looking neat and beautiful is not a sin, but this should not be done at the expense of our souls. We should instead cultivate the culture of decorating that which will last and will lead us to eternal life – our souls. One day I took a stroll in our neighbourhood on my way to meet someone. In the neighbourhood there is a shopping centre with different kinds of shops all around. Among the shops are many beauty parlours. Outside one beauty parlour was a woman sitting on a stool having her hair fixed. My meeting ended three hours later and I was on my way back to the residence. I passed the same beauty parlour and was surprised to find the same woman still sitting on the stool patiently having her hair fixed. I wondered how women could sit on a stool for hours without any complaint. We can do this willingly but when it comes to spending time with the Lord or just two minutes in church, we really complain of how the preaching is going on for too long or how tired we are feeling. How much more earnest we should be on keeping our hearts clean with the same prayer of King David,

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

- Ps.51:10-12

A girl once came to a priest and said, “Father, whenever I look into the mirror, I think that I am the most beautiful woman in the world! I feel proud of myself always, and I think that I should confess it.” The priest looked at her seriously and replied, “Don’t worry my dear, misunderstanding is not a sin.”

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WITCHCRAFT AND OTHER OCCULT PRACTICES

A paper presented at the symposium on Spirituality and Healing, “The Christian Response to Witchcraft by Clement Majawa (witchcraft and healing in Africa: a theological analysis for deeper evangelization and integral development)” at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi reveals that witchcraft and sorcery are a daily reality in African society.

Majawa found different manifestations of witchcraft. He exposes certain ideas and principles in African witchcraft:

1. All evil is personalized: nothing happens by accident. Someone causes evil to happen.
2. Evil thoughts have power outside the person thinking them. They have a certain independence that can continue to harm and destroy another’s health and life, unless they are confronted and eliminated.
3. Evil is stopped and eliminated through appropriate rituals, charms and medicines provided by herbalists and diviners.
4. Witchcraft activities always involve people known to each other. Based on these ideas, evil is brought to others through rituals, rites of passage, charms, medicines and incantations.
5. Witchcraft is mostly a result of manipulation of the human senses and nature by using psychosomatic evils so as to create fear, tension, suffering and death on a person or community.
6. Evil is psychosomatic tension or struggle between good values and bad practices where the malicious practices work to destroy the good in society.

CONSEQUENCES OF WITCHCRAFT

Witches are perceived to be incarnates of the devil as they carry out their duties through his evil powers. Witches are believed to be the cause of many deaths and destruction in the community.

The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy.

- Jn.10:10

Witches often cause harm to other people. Once a person believes he is bewitched, even if he is treated professionally he will always be sick until he gets treatment from a traditional medicine man. When things are going

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wrong in a person's life, he begins to wonder who may be the cause behind it as he suspects witchcraft. It can therefore be said of witchcraft that:

1. It causes confusion, suspicion and hatred among relatives and the community as a whole.
2. It limits people from doing progressive things such as initiation of development projects as they fear to be bewitched.
3. It causes disharmony in the community.
4. Powers of witchcraft are considered bad and wicked.
5. People blame their failure on witchcraft.
6. It is a threat to life.
7. It is a barrier to spiritual growth and social development.

Many people who turn to witchcraft and witchdoctors as a solution to their problems find it to be less expensive and fast. But they don't realize that this option is really harmful and deadly.

In one of our retreats a mother brought her daughter. The girl had been suspended from school because she had suicidal tendencies and was causing disturbance among the other students. I looked at her finger and asked her what had happened to it. There was a black spot on her finger. She explained that some years back her uncle took her and her younger brother for devil worship. He was a business man and his business happened to be failing. So he went to see a devil worshipper who told him that for his business to get back on track, he had to sacrifice the blood of his relatives. He chose this girl and her brother. He took her regularly for devil worship where they would draw blood from her finger and that of her brother and sacrifice it. This went on for sometime. Her uncle's business did not get any better. So in one session after drawing blood from her finger and that of her brother, she heard one of them tell her uncle that the blood was not enough and that they needed to slaughter her and her brother. On hearing this she ran away from that place. Later she started vomiting every now and then out of fear. She could not even hold a pen - her hand shivered so much because of the fear she had. She later developed breathing problems and several other complications. Since she had offered her blood in sacrifice to the devil, she had also given her life into his hands.

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For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement.

- Lev.17:11

The devil, the thief, comes to steal, destroy and kill. The devil will never come into our lives uninvited. If he gets in, it is because we opened the door for him. Devil worship, superstitious beliefs and practices are dominant in Africa and yet in many African countries more than 75 percent of the total population is Christian.

Even if anyone in the family or family tree somewhere visited a witch doctor, the evil one is invited into the entire family, the children and future generations. Strange happenings in that family like mysterious sicknesses, mysterious deaths, children in the family never getting married, a lot of joblessness in the family, strange incurable diseases, repeated and continuous misfortunes of which no solution is found etc. can be indications of the evil one having been invited into a family through these evil practices.

For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, they have dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that hold no water.

- Jer.2:13

The same goes for the occult practice of devil worship. People who go for devil worship do so for material and immediate benefits. These benefits are short lived and they come with a lot of destruction later on.

Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows.

- Ps.16:4

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that all forms of witchcraft, sorcery, black magic and divination are to be rejected and avoided.

All practice of magic or sorcery by which one attempts to tame occult powers so as to place them at ones' service and have a supernatural power over others - even if this were for the sake of restoring their health, are gravely contrary to the virtue

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of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons.



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In 1994 in the African Synod, the bishops said, “For our societies witchcraft is a constant danger to peace, harmony and development among our people.”

NO OTHER NAME SECOND COMMANDMENT You Shall Not Take the Name of Your Lord God in Vain. (Dt.5:11)

You Shall Not Take **the Name** of Your Lord God in Vain.

- Dt.5:11

In the second Commandment we are commanded to speak with reverence of God and all holy persons and things, and to keep our lawful oaths and vows.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

- Ex.20:7

The second Commandment forbids all false, rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths; as well as blaspheming, cursing and profane words. It is permitted to swear, or take an oath, only when God’s honour, or our own, or our neighbour’s good, requires it.

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A son honours his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honour due me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD of Hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, "How have we despised your name?"

- Mal.1:6

God's name is the greatest and the most important name of all other names. We should never use his name in anger or for personal gain without respect. The prayer Jesus taught us "hallowed be thy name", shows that the name of God is to be honoured always.

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.

- Acts 4:1

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

- Rom.10:13

Swearing or taking an oath in his name is a sin against this commandment.

Do not accustom your mouth to oaths, nor habitually utter the name of the Holy One; for as a servant who is constantly under scrutiny will not lack bruises, so also the person who always swears and utters the Name will never be cleansed from sin.

- Sir.23:9-10

Using the name of the Lord irreverently as a joke or cursing using His name, lying in His name, are all transgression under this commandment.

A false witness will not go unpunished, and the liar will perish.

- Prov.19:9

The same goes for the name of our Lord Jesus for the name of Jesus is the name of salvation. The name Jesus means Saviour. It is important to always speak and listen to God with respect and honour. When we make a promise to the Lord which we fail to keep, when we insult or talk ill about his holy servants i.e. the priests and religious or even his ministry by for example spreading false rumours about them, we also sin against this commandment.

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Lack of respect to the servants of Christ, the priests and religious, is also sinful because these people bear Christ's name and represent Him in the world today.

Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm.

- Ps.105:15

A priest is a special person - chosen, committed and consecrated by the Lord. Never ever offend a priest or any religious or consecrated person, or say anything inappropriate about them.



Lack of respect to the servants of Christ, the priests and religious, is also sinful because these people bear Christ's name and represent Him in the world today.

VOWS ARE TO BE FULFILLED

One mother came and said, "Father forgive me because I made a promise to the Lord but did not fulfil it. When my son was younger, he was sick with a wound on his head. I told the Lord that if he healed my son I would carry him to the top of the mountain where Saint Thomas walked. The Lord healed my son and I never got to fulfil the promise I made to him. Now he is twenty eight years old, what should I do?"

All promises made should be fulfilled, if not, be substituted by the help of a confessor. A confessor can give a practical restitution for the same. It is important that we don't take any vow, promise or oath on behalf of another, even our children.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

- Rom.13:8

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All promises made should be fulfilled, if not, be substituted by the help of a confessor.

A SISTER HEALED OF A LUMP

During a Saturday service people were praising and worshipping God and calling out the name of Jesus. At the end of the service during the testimony-giving, a sister came forward to give her testimony. She said she had a lump in her stomach. Doctors could not operate on the lump because it was too big and would cause other complications. So she had to live with it. The lump made her feel very uncomfortable. She could not eat much because any food she ate made her stomach swell. As people were praising and worshipping and loudly calling out the name of Jesus, she too called out the name of Jesus with a lot of faith. Then she felt a kind of power, like a hand, enter her stomach and remove the lump. When she touched her stomach, the lump had vanished. She suddenly felt very hungry and went to the dining hall where she ate eight slices of bread! Before, she could never eat that much. "I never thought such a miracle could ever happen to me, I thank the people near me who were shamelessly calling out the name of Jesus. I am a sister absolutely belonging to Jesus, why would I keep silent? I cried and He heard me. I give Him all the glory and honour."

If the world today is dominated by the devil it is because we do not acknowledge the name of Jesus. "We know that we are God's children and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one" (1Jn.5:19). That is why we see evils like abortion, gay and lesbian 'marriages' being legalised. To acknowledge the name of Jesus is equal to acknowledging His power. Our most loving Jesus saved the world from the clutches of the devil, so it is right and fitting that we should acknowledge His name even in the midst of so many who are rejecting his Lordship in their lives. When we call on the name of Jesus, He will come down and set us free for "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn.8:36).

During retreats, people are not allowed to carry alcohol with them. We also do not allow drunkards to attend retreats in their drunken state unless they

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are accompanied by someone sober. While conducting a retreat in Mumbai, there was one man who managed to sneak his bottle of alcohol into the centre. He had hidden it in a pocket somewhere in his trousers and continued drinking the liquor. As we were preaching, the Holy Spirit revealed that there was a drunkard in the gathering but we could not point him out. During one session, the priests conducting the retreat told the people to repeatedly call on the name of Jesus. As the people were calling out the name of Jesus, this man fell to the floor. Later on when he came to his senses he gave a testimony on how he sneaked the liquor into the retreat centre unnoticed and how the Lord had seen and healed him. The word of God says,



***If the world today is dominated by
the devil it is because we do not
acknowledge the name of Jesus.***

He searches out the abyss and the human heart; he understands their innermost secrets. For the Most High knows all that may be known; he sees from of old the things that are to come. He discloses what has been and what is to be, and he reveals the traces of hidden things. No thought escapes him, and nothing is hidden from him.

- Sir.42:18-20

The name of Jesus is very powerful and should never be used in vain. And in the sight of His name nothing is hidden. “Before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account” (Heb.4:13).

UNWANTED PRIVILEGES BRING FORTH UNEXPECTED CALAMITIES

One day we visited an MP who was seriously sick and admitted in hospital. He had been in a terrible accident and broken both his legs. To add to his agony, he had diabetes, that slowed down his healing process. He fell into depression and lost all hope. Prior to the accident, he had been very active and outgoing; but now he was helpless. He asked us to pray for healing.

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The Lord told him to ask for forgiveness from a consecrated person hurt by him. Then he remembered that he once falsely accused a religious sister. He repeatedly failed to pay school fees for his daughter who was studying in a convent school. The sister-in-charge of his daughter's school told him that unless he paid the fees, his daughter would not be permitted to sit for her exams. He went to the school to ask the sister to allow his daughter to sit for the exam, but in vain; the fees had to be paid. He insisted saying he was an area MP and did a lot of charitable work therefore he deserved to get free education for his daughter. But the sister told him, "This school has a policy to treat all children equally. We know that you have the money to pay school fees for your daughter, so I will not permit your daughter to learn free of charge." He was left speechless. Later, he called the sister-in-charge and insulted her over the phone for not allowing his daughter to sit for her exams. He went to the parish priest and made up false rumours about this sister. As a result, this sister was transferred from the school. He forgot the word of God, "do not judge and you may not be judged" (Mt.7:1). This man suffered from the poor healing of wounds sustained from the car accident. After he got out of hospital and came to our retreat centre for prayers, we told him that he first had to go and ask for forgiveness from that sister, touching her feet.



He insisted saying he was an area MP and did a lot of charitable work therefore he deserved to get free education for his daughter.

DON'T COLLECT MONEY FROM PRIESTS

A woman came to see me. She had been very wealthy but was now penniless. She had invested in different banks but had lost everything. She asked me why she suffered such misfortune. I asked her if she had ever collected money from a priest. She told me that she had a friend in Dubai who used to get things from there. Her parish priest wanted to buy a keyboard for the church. She approached him and told him that she could get for him a quality keyboard from Dubai at a low price. She told the priest to give her twenty thousand shillings and the rest she would add from her own money. The priest gave her 20,000 shillings. However, at the time he gave her the money,

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she was in dire need of 20,000 shillings. So she used the money meant for the keyboard. After a while, the priest asked her for the keyboard. She kept on giving excuses saying that there were problems bringing it from Dubai to Kenya, that the keyboard got misplaced on the way etc. She kept on giving false excuses. The priest then told her that if she could not get the keyboard, she should at least return the money, “because it belonged to the people; the church”. But she told him that would be impossible because the order had already been made and the money already given to the supplier, so it would be hard to get it back. I gave her the verse,

For the day of the LORD is near against all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

Ob.1:15

DON'T MAKE FRIENDSHIPS WITH PRIESTS

To be inordinately attached to a priest is equal to destroying his precious time that should be spent before the Lord. You are detaching the priest from the Lord and attaching him to you. A priest absolutely and exclusively belongs to the Master. Ours is a jealous God. He is deeply in love with the priest and He needs him always.

He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him.

- Mk.3:13

Making inordinate friendships with the anointed one of the Lord can bring blocks in a person's life. Having any type of exclusive relationship with a priest or any religious person for that matter is wrong. Priesthood is a sacrament. Being a sacrament, the grace of the Lord flows through the priest and Jesus Himself lives in him. Having Jesus in him then, it is sinful for a woman to fall in love with a priest, get attracted to a priest or make friendships with a priest. A woman who does this is destroying her life.

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***Having Jesus in him then, it is sinful
for a woman to fall in love with a
priest, get attracted to a priest or
make friendships with
a priest.***

DON'T JUDGE THE MINISTRIES OF THE LORD

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

- 1Cor.12:4-7

There are different types of ministries. In a particular retreat, as we started praising in tongues, a woman started to make strange and uneasy noises. When she was asked she said those voices were coming out forcefully from her mouth. She felt like her throat was being choked. Through prayer the Holy Spirit asked her to repent of laughing at the gift of tongues. She painfully remembered that, while she was in a prayer group, she laughed at the leader who was praising in tongues. She accused her of pretending and even imitated the gift of tongues in a funny way.

Talking ill about the ministries of God is also a sin against the second commandment. Many a time, people come to the centre drawn out of curiosity just to see and evaluate what is going on. Going to such places is not a problem, but we have to be careful about what we speak to others about the place and its goings-on. We are not supposed to judge what we see, especially with regard to the works of the Holy Spirit.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.

-Is.11:3-4

There are many things which we do not understand about the Lord, the spiritual things are greater than material things. When St. Paul and the

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apostles started the ministry, Gamaliel said that if the works that they did were not from the Lord, by themselves they would just die. We have to pray for the gift of wisdom to know the mind of the Lord. Jesus said, “Those who believe in me will do much greater things than I have done” (Jn.14:12-14). The wisdom of the Lord is revealed to the foolish people. Unless we become the people of the heart we will never see or hear the voice of the Lord, since He never speaks to the mind but to the heart. Unless we are like little children, we will never inherit the Kingdom of heaven.

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

- Mt.11:25.

About one third of Jesus’ ministry was about healing. The only time we see Jesus rejoicing was when His apostles were casting out demons and doing His ministry. So we should be happy whenever or wherever we see the ministry of Jesus being done.



There are many things which we do not understand about the Lord, the spiritual world or things that are greater than material things.

THIS IS THE DAY THIRD COMMANDMENT Keep the Lord’s Day Holy (Dt.5:12-14)

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work - you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you.

- Dt.5:12-14

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In the third Commandment we are commanded to keep the Sabbath holy. For us Christians we take Sunday, the day of the Lord, the day of Jesus' resurrection as our 'Sabbath', our day of worship. Sunday for us is the holy day. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us

Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- Heb.10:25

We keep Sunday holy by resting from heavy work, participating in Holy Mass and doing acts of charity.

For six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your home-born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.

Ex.23:12

The aim of setting aside Sunday as a day dedicated to God is in order to worship the Lord the creator of all things and the one who maintains every living thing. As we rest on Sundays in order to worship the Lord, we proclaim that our works do not depend on our human effort but on God who cares for us. We realize that we can't succeed just because we work hard. The Lord Jesus reminds: "I am the vine, you are the branches...apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn.15:5). Setting aside our everyday engagements in order to honour the day of the Lord is the expression of an inner disposition of absolute dependence on God who is our provider (Cf. Gen 22:14).

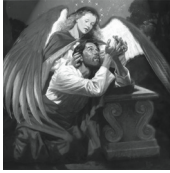
Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Mt.6:31-33

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, missing Sunday Mass is a mortal sin, since Sunday is a day set apart to worship the Lord. One of the ways we miss out on the protection of the Lord is when we miss Sunday Mass. Life is a struggle right from the day we are born till our death. In order

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to survive in this world, we have to spend time with the Lord; go for Sunday Mass, read the Word of God, and pray.



The aim of setting aside Sunday as a day dedicated to God is in order to worship the Lord the creator of all things and the one who maintains every living thing.

THE CRUEL SOLDIERS MADE SIMON OF CYRENE A BLESSED MAN

A young man asked a question “Father is there any good if I go for Sunday Mass because of my mother? I don’t have any faith, so father, please tell my mother not to push me too much to be involved in church affairs.” I said to him, “Since you are young, it may be difficult for you to understand why you have to go for Holy Mass. Look at Simon of Cyrene (who helped Jesus to carry the cross). He is now such a blessed man; we remember him because he helped Jesus carry His cross. But when the soldiers asked him to carry the cross, he said he could not carry the cross of a criminal. The soldiers had to force him to help Jesus. Today if you were to ask Simon of Cyrene he would even give a seminar about the things that happened at that great moment of carrying the cross with Jesus. He would boast saying, even though there were many people I became the privileged one. I was the only one chosen to help the King of Kings. But the truth is that, he even abused Jesus, calling him a condemned man. He pretended to be holy. He should thank those soldiers who forced him to carry the cross, to carry the blessings for his future.” We may have been forced to go to church or attend a retreat or even go for Sunday Mass but one day we will look back and feel so blessed for having done so. Sir.30:11 teaches that children are to be forced to pray, to be disciplined – “Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors.”



He should thank those soldiers who forced him to carry the cross, to carry the blessings for his future.”

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FAMILY PRAYER IS THE REAL WALL OF PROTECTION

In my family, the young ones were the ones who would guide and lead the prayers during family prayer. Family prayer was strictly from 7.30pm to 8.30pm. You could be late for anything else but not for this programme. At four years of age, I would kneel in front of the prayer room and lead the prayers. All through family prayer, I would kneel and if I happened to doze off in between prayers, my father would get hold of my ear and twist it. When I looked behind at the rest, my mother would be sleeping and even snoring, my elder brothers would be leaning comfortably against the wall, but they did not get their ears turned round. I wished I could grow up soon enough so that I too, could pray leaning my back against the wall. I had no interest whatsoever in prayer. But now, looking back, I lovingly remember the way my father taught me to love Jesus and I appreciate the ear pinching and the painful kneeling. I always wondered how my parents came to know the word of God that says,

Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors.
Bow down his neck in his youth, and beat his sides while he is young, or else he will become stubborn and disobey you, and you will have sorrow of soul from him. Discipline your son and make his yoke heavy, so that you may not be offended by his shamelessness.

- Sir.30:11-13

An Italian doctor once came to see me, he had many problems. I asked him, "Do you pray?" "Oh yes father," came the quick reply, "everyday I pray." "Do you pray the Rosary daily to Mother Mary?" I asked again. "No, I do not pray one full Rosary to Mother Mary, but I pray one Hail Mary everyday." This doctor thought this one Hail Mary was more than enough for all kinds of protection. It is unfortunate that we have time for everything else other than for Jesus. How is our Lord supposed to come down to us and to our problems with just one Hail Mary as our daily prayer?

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***This doctor thought this one Hail
Mary was more than enough for all
kinds of protection.***

THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS FOR HOLY PEOPLE

When we attend Mass, we should receive Holy Communion, but in a worthy manner.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

- Cor.11:27

Many people do not get anything and feel bored in the Eucharist because they receive our Lord unworthily. During Mass, we make a general confession, but the church teaches us that all our sins should be confessed. If possible, we have to go for confession regularly at the earliest opportunity. The sacrament of reconciliation is a pre-requisite for receiving Holy Communion.

A religious sister came so that we could pray with her. She was in a deep crisis. She had been suspended from her religious congregation as she had a case to answer. As we were praying to find how and when she lost the protection of the Lord, we found that she was receiving the Eucharist in sin, without proper repentance. She said that she thought her sins were automatically forgiven in the Holy Mass and that was why she did not go for confession. So we gave her a few verses to pray over for a month and asked her in that time, that she should prepare to make a good confession. We told her that during the time she was reading the Word of God, the Lord would reveal to her all the sins she had committed. Meanwhile she was not to receive Holy Communion. After one month, she would come and make her confession. After one week she came back, very angry saying that she could not stand not receiving Holy Communion because the people were looking at her. We told her, “You cannot take it when people are looking at you? What about our most loving Jesus, who time after time had to watch you receive Him in a state of sin? How much pain, hurt and insult have you caused Him all this time?” As St Paul says,

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Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

- Gal.1:10

Receiving our Lord in an unworthy manner is equal to insulting the holy presence of Jesus Christ. Two weeks later the nun made her confession in tears. She came to give a testimony saying, "I understood the importance of the Holy Eucharist for the first time after the one month when I received Him in holiness. For many years I prayed for a real encounter with God in the Mass and I even doubted His presence. When I received Him in holiness I got the most tremendous God-experience in my life. The moment I received the body of Jesus, I felt a fire touching my tongue and it burned my whole body for a moment. I was literally shaking as His presence burned me." For indeed our God is a consuming fire (Heb.12:29). The Lord's presence is a burning fire. Another miracle after receiving the Holy Communion in holiness was that she was taken back into the congregation which overlooked all her past mistakes. She said, "Never again will I receive the Lord in an unworthy manner!"

When then should we not receive Holy Communion? The Holy Eucharist in the Catholic Church is only for practising Catholics since we believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. A Catholic woman came to me and asked me if her non-Catholic husband could receive Holy Communion since she was a Catholic. I told her he couldn't as this would just bring blocks and bondages in her life and that of her family.

Those not married in church are not permitted to receive the Eucharist as they continue they live in a relationship which the Church sees as concubinage. Neither can they go to the sacrament of confession as they have lost the sacramental communion. Those in a polygamous relationship and married as a second wife also cannot receive Holy Communion as they are in a sin of presumption.

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The moment I received the body of Jesus, I felt a fire touching my tongue and it burned my whole body for a moment. I was literally shaking as His presence burned me.

FORGET THEM NOT FOURTH COMMANDMENT Honour Your Father and Mother (Dt.5:16)

Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

- Dt.5:16

Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

- Ex.20:12

Honour your father and mother - this is the first commandment with a promise: "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.

- Eph.6:2-3

This commandment demands that we obey, respect and love our parents and all superiors, teachers, elders, grandparents, stepparents, uncles, aunts and leaders. The letter to the Hebrews, reminds us to "remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb.13:7). This commandment also teaches us to contribute to the support of our priests and ministers of the Church. St. Paul says, "*In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel*" (1Cor 9:14). At the same time parents should also respect, honour and provide for their children; priests should in turn care for their flock. They have to instruct and correct them, and give them a good Catholic education.

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Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you. For children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children.

- 2Cor.12:14

And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- Eph.6:4

Mistresses, masters and other superiors are to take proper care of those under their charge, and to empower them to practice their religious duties. All kinds of contempt, stubbornness, and disobedience to our parents and lawful superiors are sin against the fourth commandment.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.

- Col.3:20

Who is more important, a parent or his or her child? According to the Word of God, God gives more importance to the parents; mother and father than to their child. The Lord honours parents over their children. For the Lord honours a father above his children, and he confirms a mother's right over her children (Sir.3:2). If a child offends his parents, it is a big block to the life of that child. The parent can go wrong, but the child can never go wrong when it comes to the relationship between them and their parents.

In Genesis 49:26, Jacob the patriarch reminds Joseph his son about the importance of the blessings of parents:

The blessings of your father are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.

The interpretation of this Word of God should be this way, "the blessings of your parents are greater than the blessings of your (patriarchs) forefathers". The forefathers here are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are holy and living. The parents are our parents irrespective of how they treat us; whether they neglected, rejected and abandoned us when we were children; or they

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constantly beat and abused us, never took care of us and never sent us to school. To whom should I bow for blessings; the great holy patriarchs or to my old and weak parents?

I should first bow to my parents, because the Lord has given them power over me, their child. We may have many complaints against our parents, but the Lord will always defend them over us, the children.



The Lord honours parents over their children.

MY MOTHER LOVED MY BROTHER MORE THAN ME

During a retreat on debtors, jobless and unmarried, a young woman came forward and said, “I hated my mother very much. I did not want anything to do with her for she had hurt and wronged me so much. But through this retreat I have forgiven her and will go to her and ask for her forgiveness for the way I treated her. Because I now realize that the nine months she carried me in her womb is enough for me to love her.” The word of God from Sirach7:27-28 reads:

Do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that it was of your parents you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you?



I now realize that the nine months she carried me in her womb is enough for me to love her.”

YAHWEH HAS A MOTHERLY HEART (Is. 49:15)

A prayer group leader came to our prayer house so that we could pray with her. She had many problems in her life contrary to what the other group members thought. She never told anyone about her problems for fear of

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what they may think of her. I asked her, “How is the relationship with your mother?” “I love my mother,” she replied, “but not so much. She loved my brother more and gave him more property than me. She said that I would go and get married and leave her alone while my brother would stay behind and look after her. For that reason he deserved a bigger portion of the family property.” She could never accept it as she found her mother being so partial and unjust. We asked her, “Did you lack anything because your mother was partial?” She said, “No I did not. My Jesus has blessed me so much because I got a wonderful husband and three beautiful children. I can’t complain about my God.” We asked her to read from Sirach 18:2 which says, “The Lord alone is just.” The Lord blessed you to bless your mother. Forgive her and receive Jesus as your real mother.

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.

- Is.49:15-16

Again Yahweh says it is He who gave birth to us.

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, even when you turn grey I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

Is.46:3-4

So if we hurt our parents we hurt ourselves before the Lord. We can never hurt our parents and say nothing has happened.

A MOTHER’S CURSE BLOCKED THE LIFE OF A MAN

I know of a man who attended a retreat in Mumbai. His problem was that he could not get a permanent job. He worked for more than twenty different companies, but the longest he ever stayed on a job was six months. He was a very learned person, holding three different degrees and PhDs. He was also a linguist and knew different languages. A friend advised him to come to the

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retreat centre in Mumbai, be a team member for one year and God would bless him with a good job. Heeding his friend's advice he attended one of the retreats at the centre.

After the retreat he came and told me that he wanted to be a team member. He said he had been observing how the team members were working, had learned many things and felt confident enough to be one of them for about one year. I told him that was fine and that he could be a team member. But first, he had to start in the ministry as an intercessor. He agreed and joined the other intercessors. In the intercessory chapel, all the intercessors sat on the floor. However, one day as I was passing by the intercessory chapel, I noticed that this man was sitting on a chair. I was not sure where he got it from. As the others were praying, he kept on looking here and there not participating at all. I called him out and he quickly stood up and came out. I asked him why he was not praying with the rest. He told me, "Actually Father I have been waiting for a chance to speak to you. What are you doing here wandering about? You should be in the chapel with the other intercessors praying with them, instead of leaving them to pray alone while you are wandering here and there! Prayer is not only screaming and shouting, like the way these intercessors are doing. Father you did not even ask me if I could pray here. I cannot pray the way these intercessors are praying, my ear drums are breaking. For me I am the silent, meditative and contemplative prayer-type kind of person. I cannot stand this loud noise; you have to get me out of here." He pulled out three long sheets of paper, details which showed his academic qualifications. "Here, take this. Study it and see what suitable job you can give me in this centre following these qualifications. I hear that you run a magazine in this centre, maybe I could help there. Anyway I leave the decision to you." He thrust the sheets of paper into my hands.

I told him, "You know, you cannot move from one ministry to another just like that. For you to be an effective instrument of the Lord, you first have to be healed of your inner wounds." I asked him if he had any unforgiveness towards anyone in his heart. "Why do you ask Father? It seems that you also suffer from unforgiveness that is why you mention it to me," he replied. I told him, "Anyway we have to know the truth because the truth alone will set you free and I am here to help you with that. What about your mother, where is she?" "I do not know," was the quick reply. This learned, self righteous, fifty year-old man did not know where his mother was! I asked him, "How is it that you do not know the whereabouts of your mother?"

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED



I asked him, “How is it that you do not know the whereabouts of your mother?”

He told me that he was the only son of his parents. When he was thirteen years old, he had a special love for football. One day, his dad was sick in hospital so his mother sent him to go and buy medicine and take it to his father in hospital. That day there was a football match which he did not want to miss. He went to the hospital, bought the medicine, gave it to his father, and then rushed off to the match. Unfortunately, that same day, his father passed away. This deeply upset his mother, especially when she came to find out that her son was not at the hospital when her husband passed on. In her anguish she told her son in public that he was the one who killed his father and that he was a curse on the family. She even told him that she never wanted to see him again and that he should pack up and get out of her house. This shocked the boy so much. He packed his belongings and left the house, never to return. This made him hate women so much that even at the age of fifty he was still unmarried.

I told him “*a mother’s curse uproots the foundations of the children*” (Sir.3:9). It is because of the curses of your mother that you are not prospering. You have to go and ask the forgiveness of your mother? The man asked me, “Am I the one to ask for forgiveness or is it my mother? How can a mother curse her son in front of other people? It is she who destroyed my life and my future. I am not even married because of her. I did not do anything wrong intentionally. I was just a thirteen year old boy. What did I know then? My mother being more mature than me surely should have understood it.”



In her anguish she told her son in public that he was the one who killed his father and that he was a curse on the family.

Forgiveness is something that is beyond reason. For example, when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, it should have been the other way round with the disciples washing Jesus’ feet. But He knelt down and washed the feet

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of all his twelve apostles, including Judas Iscariot's who was to betray him. Forgiveness has no human reason or worldly justification. This poor man was trying to prove that he was a blessing in order to refute the statement of his mother that he was a curse. That is why he studied hard and got all those degrees and diplomas. But he could not prove that he was a blessing for he failed to get a permanent job despite his high qualifications. He could not understand that his blocks were coming from keeping a grudge against his mother. He asked me, "How can you say that I have to ask the forgiveness of my mother?"

I told him to read Sir.7:27-28: "With all your heart honour your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that it was of your parents you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you?" Mothers carry their children in their wombs, but the children can never carry them in their wombs. However, the Lord wants children to carry their parents in their hearts. Therefore children should respect, honour and love their parents. Therefore, before doing anything or even going anywhere, children should get the blessings of their mother and father.

We told this man that unless he sought the forgiveness of his mother, he would forever be a failure in life. The man humbled himself and went and asked for forgiveness from his mother and together they rectified their relationship. Then he later got a good job.



***"Am I the one to ask for forgiveness
or is it my mother?"***

I NEVER PHONED MY FATHER

At the end of a retreat a sister stood up to give her testimony. She said, "Many a time, we say that our parents neglect us in one way or another. However, I never thought that it could be the other way round. That it is a sin for a child to neglect their parents. I neglected my father for so many years. I hated him because he neglected me, did not send me to school or take care of my mother, my brothers and sisters as he spent all his money

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

taking alcohol. I saw him abuse my mother repeatedly, and I really hated him. During the holidays when I went home, I only cared for my mother and would never mind my father. At the convent, whenever I called home, I would only talk to my mother and never ask for my father. After attending this retreat I realised it was a sin against the fourth commandment. Even if my dad rejected me, my God has never rejected me. I had never experienced the warm presence of God even after many hours of prayers. He spoke to me through Is.63:16 “For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name.” I also found another answer to why I could never feel the love of my father through prophet Jeremiah “*I thought* how I would set you among my children, and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of all the nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me (Jer.3:19).” Actually I found my real, living Heavenly Father. So I will go to my father and ask for his forgiveness.”

YOUR HUSBAND IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR CHILDREN

All wives should respect their husbands. Many wives are struggling in life because they give more importance to their children than their husbands. Giving priority to the children over the husband is neither mature nor healthy.

For the Lord honours a father above his children and he confirms a mother’s right over her children. Those who honour their father atone for sins, those who honour their father will have joy in their own children, and when they pray they will be heard.

- Sir.3:2-5

It is the duty of all wives to respect their husbands and to give them priority over their children.

SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM

HONOUR YOUR NATION AND FULLFIL CIVIL OBLIGATIONS

The government of the earth is in the hand of the Lord, and over it he will raise up the right leader for the time.

- Sir.10:4

Our Lord wanted us to give to God what belonged to God and to Caesar what was his. Christ wept over Jerusalem. Subjected to unjust law, he said “you would have no power over me, unless it was given from above.” “My kingdom is not of this world.” But St. Peter enjoins obedience even to unworthy rulers.

Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh.

- 1Pt.2:18

And St. Paul adds:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! Pay to all what is due them - taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due”

- Rom.13:1-7.

THE CHURCH AND CIVIL AUTHORITY

From the time of the persecutions to the present, respect for civil authority has been a constant tradition of the Church. St. Augustine warns,

“Lest one be elated by pride and think that, just because he has become a Christian, he does not have to pay taxes. If one thinks so, he is in great error.”

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And St. Bernard adds:

The Creator of Caesar did not disdain to pay taxes. He has given you an example that you may do like wise.

The angelic doctor, Thomas Aquinas reiterates that “In those things which pertain to the civil welfare one should obey more the secular authority, than the spiritual... “Divine law which is according to grace does not take away human law, which is according to nature.”

Pope John Paul II taught that:

Obedience to public authority is not subjection of man to man, but an act of homage to God, Provident Creator, who has regulated that the relations of common life should be regulated by rules established by himself.

In the document, *The Church in the World*, Vatican II explains that “Citizens should develop a generous and loyal devotion to their country but without narrowing of the mind.” Liturgical honours for civil authorities and remembrance in ‘Prayer of the faithful’ is prescribed. Bishops are to collaborate actively with public officials and advocate obedience to just laws and reverence for legitimately constituted authorities. Even in communist countries and dictatorships, civil obligations that are needed for the common good have to be fulfilled.

Morality is the very soul of citizenship. Nothing that is morally wrong is politically right. What is legally right need not be morally right. We contribute as priests and religious as advocates and doctors do in their roles, even during wartime. We can uphold and bear witness to the importance of prayer, asceticism, detachment, hospitality, politeness, appreciation of spiritual values, sense of the sacred, and be counter witnesses to.



Nothing that is morally wrong is politically right. What is legally right need not be morally right.

SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM

PUT DOWN THE SWORD FIFTH COMMANDMENT You Shall Not Kill (Dt.5:17)

The moment we hear of this commandment, what immediately comes to mind is someone taking a gun and shooting another or one stabbing another with a knife. While that is true, killing does not just involve causing the physical death of another human being but also that of the soul. It is for this reason that sins such as gossiping, slander, unforgiveness, hatred, revengeful feelings, anger are all equal to killing another's soul. Abortion, taking drugs and other harmful substances, addiction to bad habits like watching filthy immoral programmes, being involved in cults and satanic sects progressively kill one's soul. Scandals and bad examples are forbidden because they lead to the injury and spiritual death of our neighbour's soul.

If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks!

- Mt.18:6-7

ABORTION

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

- Ps.139:13-16

Norman St. John-Stevas once told this story: A doctor asked his colleague for his opinion about the following case. The father was syphilitic and the mother tubercular. Four children had already been born. The first was blind; the second died; the third was deaf and dumb; the fourth had TB. The doctor

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held out little hope of a healthy fifth child. “What would you have done?” His colleague replied, “I would have terminated the pregnancy.” “Then, you would have killed Beethoven.” Children may be the most insignificant and totally dependant beings in the world, but every child is a sign of unlimited hope for the future. Blessed Mother Theresa said, “We must not be surprised when we hear of murders, killings, wars or hatred. If a mother can kill her own child, what is left for us to kill each other? For me, life is the most beautiful gift of God to mankind. Therefore, people and nations who destroy life by abortion and euthanasia are the poorest. I do not say legal or illegal, but I think that no human hand should be raised to kill life. Life is God’s life in us, even in an unborn child.”

The decision should be made before conception not after. Abortion is a problem because parents are not planning for children. Every child should be born first in the heart of the parents then it will be accepted at the very moment of conception. Blessed Mother Theresa aptly said, “Every child has been created for greater things, to love and be loved, in the image of God. That is why people must decide beforehand if they really want to have a child. Once a child is conceived, there is life- God’s life. That child has a right to live and be cared for. Abortion destroys two lives: the life of the child and the conscience of the mother. It is a child of God, created for greater things, just like you or me.”

As Mother Theresa says, “Many people are deeply concerned with the children of Africa where they die of hunger. These concerns are very good. But often these same people are not concerned with the millions who are being killed by the deliberate decision of their own mothers. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today - abortion, which brings people to such blindness.”

The Dangerous Law of Pro-Abortion

Any nation that does not protect human life from the very moment of its conception is definitely heading to destruction. By abortion, the mother kills her own child to solve her problems. By abortion, the father is told that he does not have to take any responsibility for the child he has brought into the world. That father is likely to put other women into the same condition. So abortion leads to more abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love but to use violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion.

SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM

This is an incident I read in the book “My Journey to a Mental Hospital”:

Although I was ambivalent about my pregnancy (it was unplanned), I did want to keep my baby. My husband, however, was very hostile to the idea. I had severe hyperemesis, and because I was so ill I could not cope with my husband’s anger towards my children and myself. At the time, to agree to his demands for an abortion seemed the only solution to the problem.

For the first four months after the abortion, I cried more or less all day and all night. I would wake myself up sobbing in my sleep fitfully and have terrible nightmares about dying children.

During the day I would do things like going around the house rocking an imaginary baby in my arms, or scattering rose petals over the garden. I was haunted by the fact that my baby had had no funeral, and I would play the same piece of sad music over and over again obsessively, each time mentally burying my baby. It was spring; and the sight and scent of flowers seemed to mingle with, and heighten, my grief. I had no one to share my grief with, and nothing to focus it on. I felt physically exhausted all the time.

Within a month of the abortion, my hair started turning grey. I almost lost my part-time job because I cried so often at work. When I drove the car I was frequently blinded by tears and had several minor accidents, any one of which could have been serious. I often had thoughts of killing myself and my children. Then came the terrible anger which ate away at me for months, and finally the time of deep depression when I just lay on the bed all day. I was absent-minded, lethargic and withdrawn.

Today seventeen months after the abortion, the grief, the anger and depression, although diminished is still there. I still find it difficult to cope with the sight of babies or pregnant women. I have several sexual and identity problems, my relationship with my surviving children has been damaged, my marriage is in ruins, and I am under the care of a psychiatrist.

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Late Pope John Paul II had this to say about abortion:

Not everything that is technically possible is morally acceptable. Scientific work aimed at securing a quality of life more in keeping with human dignity is admirable, but it must never be forgotten that human life is a gift, and that it remains precious even when marked by suffering and limitations. A gift to be accepted and to be loved at all times: received without pay and to be placed without pay at the service of others. In setting before us that example of Christ offering himself for us on Calvary, Lent helps us in a unique way to understand that life is redeemed in him.

- Return to the Lord the gift of Life: Lent 2002 – Pope John Paul II

I know of a woman who committed five abortions consecutively. This was because every time she discovered that she was pregnant and told her husband, he would insist she get rid of the child in its early stages. The fifth time round, her husband did the same thing, forcing her to get an abortion. However this child had stayed longer than the others in her womb - up to six months - and she had even seen her child through a scan. After this abortion, she started seeing visions of this dead child coming to her and pouring blood over her. This caused the woman to lose her mind and was admitted to a mental hospital. She said she couldn't forget the child. The Lord himself said, "Can a mother forget their nursing child, even if she forgets I will not forget you." A mother can reject or abandon a child but can never forget the fruit of her womb. If a child is born, it is to be protected by all means. As the scripture says,

If you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death, those who go staggering to the slaughter; if you say, "Look, we did not know this"- does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay all according to their deeds?

- Pro. 24:11-12

Abortion is murder. It is a grave sin to be repented, confessed, rectified and even restituted for.

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A husband and wife came to me for prayer, so that they could be blessed with a child. They had been married for five years but had no child. They said to me, “For the first five years of our marriage, we thought of not having children because we were both working and were too busy with our careers to raise children.” By this time they had tried everything but in vain. We explained to them that the plan of God in any marriage is:

- The conjugal relationship between the husband and wife,
- The children that come as a result of the conjugal relationship, and
- The upbringing and the education of the children in the fear of the Lord.

So when you refuse to have children in your marriage, you block the plan of God in your life.

HIV and AIDS

Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress; he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.

- Ps.107:17-20



***“For the first five years
of our marriage, we thought of not
having children because we were
both working and were too busy with
our careers to raise children.”***

Don't drink poison because you are thirsty

A seminar was once held for youth to sensitize them on the spread of HIV/AIDS. The facilitator gave them an example. He brought out three bottles of soda, placed them on the table in front of him and asked who wanted to drink soda. Everyone lifted their hands. So the facilitator said, “You have all lifted

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your hands, but there are only three sodas. I only need three of you.” Three youth then came forward. He asked the first one, “Why do you want the soda?” He replied, “Because I am thirsty.” The facilitator asked him, “If you are really thirsty, why don’t you just drink water? Why do you have to drink soda?” “No, I want the soda,” he sternly replied. The second youth replied, “Because I love soda.” The third youth said, “Since it is being offered for free, why not!” The facilitator said, “Fair enough. I will give you the soda but with one condition - you are to go out for two minutes then I will call you back in.” When the three went out, he opened the sodas in front of all the participants, drunk but did not swallow then spat back into the bottle. He did this for each of the three sodas. When he finished his business he replaced the caps nicely on the sodas and called in the three youths. So he told them, “If you are thirsty, that does not mean that you can drink anything. Would you drink poison because you were so thirsty? What is the guarantee that this soda is good and healthy?” “It is not the first time we drink soda, we have faith in it,” they replied. “Okay here you are.” He handed each one a bottle. As they were about to drink the audience screamed, “stop!” Because they had seen what the facilitator had done. But by that time those smart youth had already sipped some and they felt great. The audience screamed and the facilitator then stopped them from drinking and explained to them why. “When you have a physical relationship with a man/woman, you do not know if they have HIV. You cannot just have such a relationship because you need love or have lust. If you do, you bring sicknesses and bondages into your life and family.”

ALCOHOLISM

Drunkenness brings poverty and slavery

Ah, you who rise early in the morning in pursuit of strong drink, who linger in the evening to be inflamed by wine, whose feasts consist of lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine, but who do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands! Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge; their nobles are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

-Is.5:11-13

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For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them with rags.

-Pro.23:21

Do you need the Holy Spirit and wisdom?

For the many who want to be possessed by the Holy Spirit, read about a great prophet anointed mightily by the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist. We read about him that “he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Lk.1:15). Again, in Ephesians 5:18 St. Paul instructs:

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit.

Drinking wine is actually a block to receiving the power of the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

There are people praying for wisdom and understanding. The word of God says about Prophet Daniel who was full of God’s wisdom and knowledge that



Drinking wine is actually a block to receiving the power of the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

“Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. Now God allowed Daniel to receive favour and compassion from the palace master”

(Dan.1:8).

To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams

- Dan.1:17.

In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

- Dan.1:20

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers - none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.

- 1Cor.6:9-10

One day a wife brought her husband to a retreat. He had a problem with drinking. "You have to watch him; every morning he has to begin his day with a drink. If not he will start shivering and will escape from attending the sessions and go to sleep," she said. I asked him, "Why do you drink?" He replied, "I do not want to drink. When my friends are drinking, the smell attracts me then I also start drinking. When I ignore the urge to drink, I shiver so much." In his family there were nine children. He was the youngest. His father was a drunkard. Being the youngest, his father would always call him and send him to bring him his alcohol. From time to time, he would take a sip of his father's alcohol and then fill the glass or bottle with water. His father and the rest of his family members never knew what he did. This became a habit every time his father sent him. He slowly began drinking until it became an addiction. As the word of God says "one who despises small things will fail little by little" (Sir.19:1).

Alcoholism is both a sickness and sinful behaviour which needs healing and deliverance. It is a fast-spreading catastrophe that destroys men, women, youth and children. Alcohol makes one lose his conscience, common sense and then behave like an animal.

Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink"

-Pro.23:31-35

Many families have been destroyed because of alcohol. A seminarian came to me saying that he had been asked to leave the seminary by the superiors.

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He had the problem of drinking, and according to him it was not a serious issue. The devil is so cunning; he will blind us into saying that it is okay to take alcohol. This seminarian kept bottles of liquor in his room and supplied alcohol to his fellow seminarians. A person with an addiction can never guide others. It is our Christian duty to help all those who are falling away.

But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

Jude 20-23



***Many families have been
destroyed because
of alcohol.***

Sins after drunkenness

They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply; because they have forsaken the LORD to devote themselves to whoredom. Wine and new wine take away the understanding.

- Hos.4:10-11

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

- Pro.20:1

Whoever loves pleasure will suffer want; whoever loves wine and oil will not be rich.

- Pro.21:17

Drunkards will be involved in all kinds of sin especially of adultery and idolatry as Daniel 5:4 teaches, “They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.”

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

Alcohol affects the brain and nerves of a person and a drunkard can never co-ordinate his mind. Alcohol contributes nothing to growth but brings forth financial constraints and leads to physical, spiritual, mental and moral deterioration. It injures the liver, heart, kidneys etc. Drunken drivers are dangerous and they can even kill passengers.

Alcoholism in kenya

Drinking has become a status symbol for some people. If you don't drink, society looks at you as if there is something wrong. If you ask people why they consume alcohol or take drugs, they give you a host of reasons such as to celebrate, have fun, forget problems, relax, experiment, impress, be fashionable, mingle, be sociable or for business purposes.

Deadly business

A mother of four had a well paying job, but all the money disappeared in paying off debts. Often she took her children to hospital. No sooner would this child be out of hospital than another would fall sick. This became the cycle in her family. She disclosed to me that she used to brew alcohol and sell it. Her business spoiled many young people because it was close to a secondary school. Since she got a good income out of it she continued doing this business neglecting the advice of the parish priest to change her line of business. She was wasting all her money in the hospitals for her children's health. Those who sell liquor sell destruction, death, disunity and division. Families, children, relations, homes and health are destroyed due to alcoholism.

Since this lady was involved in the sale of liquor, she also was indirectly involved in the breaking up of many families. Our children today are not afraid of anything. A boy was one day involved in a fatal road accident for he was driving under the influence of alcohol. As usual crowds surrounded the scene of the accident within no time. This boy said, "No one cares for me: neither my father, nor my mother. So I too care for none."

When we fail to give proper love and attention to our children, they lose direction and instead look for something to hang on to. They get addicted to evil things like drugs and alcohol. These days, parents and even teachers are afraid of correcting children mainly because they themselves are involved in drinking and in unhealthy relations. We therefore cannot point a finger, accuse or blame our youth. How can they correct the youth when they themselves are bad examples? They need proper love and care from their parents. Parents should take them to church, pray with them at home and give them Jesus.

SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM



This boy said, "No one cares for me: neither my father, nor my mother. So I too care for none."

Prayer can change a drunkard

One mother came to me with a problem: her son was a drunkard. He had left his wife and had so many extramarital relationships. He would bring witchdoctors home. He no longer went to church and had even lost faith. He was a big worry to his mother. I gave her the Word of God to read for a month. I told her to seek the repentance and mercy of God for the sins she committed against Him. After one month of prayer, her son stopped drinking. He came back to the Catholic faith. He took his wife back and his life changed for the better. He shared with me, "I never knew that Jesus is such a loving God!"

Tobacco & smoking

Tobacco use and cigarette-smoking are dangerous. Cigarettes contain nicotine which is poisonous and injurious to the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Some people say that smoking gives three benefits - no dogs will ever follow you, you will never be attacked by robbers and you will never suffer from grey hair. However, it is said that people who smoke heavily carry a stick for support so when dogs see them they will never come near them. At night, they cough continuously, making the robbers think they are awake; and the hair will never turn grey because they will be long dead before the hair can turn grey!

There are some people who think that the Word of God says nothing regarding smoking. The Lord says through prophet Isaiah,

But all of you are kindlers of fire, lighters of firebrands. Walk in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that you have kindled! This is what you shall have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.

- Is.50:11

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

Smoking affects the heart and lungs and even memory. It causes high blood pressure, nervousness, giddiness, depression. It creates self pity and disrespect to others' feelings. Smoking seriously and dangerously affects the unborn. It is a waste of money at the expense of our health.

TATTOOS HAVE AN EVIL EFFECT

Wearing satanic-pictorial tattoos invites the satanic powers of the devil into our lives.

You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD.

-Lev.19:28

St. Paul further teaches that

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ"

- Col. 2:8

Again, in 1Cor.4:16-18 he adds:

I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus.

YOUR BODY IS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery (Dt.5:18)

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

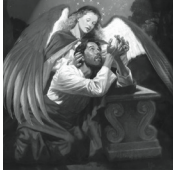
- 1Cor.6:15-20

SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM

The sixth Commandment teaches against all sins of impurity with another's wife or husband, in looks, words, or actions. Immodest plays, dances, songs, dress, sexy jokes, books and pictures are also forbidden by this commandment.

Do not look intently at a virgin, or you may stumble and incur penalties for her.

- Sir 9:5



Immodest plays, dances, songs, dress, sexy jokes, books and pictures are also forbidden by this commandment.

Sins of impurity are among the most dangerous to the soul, and they lead to mortal sin. The sixth commandment obliges that we respect ourselves and others and be pure by avoiding sexual fantasies, observe chastity and by being modest in our actions (guard our senses to avoid temptations; behave and dress in an acceptable way), words, looks, thinking, touching, reading and feeling whether alone or with others.

Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

- Eph.5:5

The chief purpose of human sexuality is to produce human life, to become the co-creator with God. It also helps married partners to express their conjugal love.

It is sinful:

1. To touch our own private parts or that of other people without reason or merely to satisfy our curiosity and sexual urge.
2. To have impure and suggestive conversation.
3. To participate in cracking dirty jokes, reading or spreading pornography, looking at naked pictures.

Adultery: Is the sexual relationship between married and either other married or unmarried persons who are not husband and wife.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

Fornication (Pre-marital Sex): Is the sexual relationship between persons who are unmarried.

Homosexuality/ Lesbianism: Sexual relationship with a member of the same sex. It is a grave sin because proper sexual intercourse is possible only with a person of the opposite sex. As Jesus explained, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female’ (Mt.19:4).

Prostitution: Having a sexual relationship to make money. It is equal to selling the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Masturbation: Is the stimulation of one’s own sexual organs intentionally for pleasure. It is a sin as we abuse the gift of God with selfish motives.

Sodomy: a collection of abuses of sex such as having sex with an animal, having sexual relationships with many people at the same time, unnatural relationships etc.

The scriptures provide us with other teachings regarding the sixth commandment:

You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall any woman give herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it: it is perversion.

- Lev.18:23

If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the animal.

- Lev.20:15

Idleness, curiosity, lack of self-control, keeping bad company, alcoholism, immodest dressing, reading indecent books, viewing immoral TV programs, video taped films, posters, photographs, magazines or pornographic literature can guide a person to violate the sixth commandment of the Lord. Other sins in this category include giving bad examples to others by for example sending filthy texts to others, making filthy jokes, comments or words and even using abusive language.

Sexual feelings or temptations are not a sin in themselves, but they become sin if we entertain them.

SIN: THE GREATEST PROBLEM

Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

- 1 Cor.6:13

I know of a girl who was totally possessed by the devil because of having sexual relations with a married man, who was also an unbeliever. There is also a case of a man who never got promoted in his I.T. job after working for 15 years had a habit of watching pornography on the internet. He thought to himself, 'why enjoy all this alone', and then started distributing all the filthy, immoral things to his friends. The Lord spoke to him through the Word of God.

As long as they did not sin against their God they prospered.
For the God who hates iniquity was with them.

- Jdt.5:17

SEXUALITY IS A FRAGILE GIFT

Human beings are sexual beings. Right from the time we are born until our death, we remain sexual beings. We can never think of a life without sexual desires. However, despite our sexual nature, we are not just supposed to look at and do everything our emotions push us to do. We have to control and most of all crucify our passions and desires.

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

- Gal.5:24

The Lord will never allow a sexual relationship between a boy and girl, male or female, boyfriend and girlfriend but only between a husband and his wife bound by the sacrament of marriage and who are both living a holy sacramental life.

Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

Heb.13:4

A HIDDEN HANDICAPPED CHILD

In India, priests usually visit homes from time to time to bless the homes and to pray with the family members. I happened to visit one home and I was

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welcomed by the head of the household. He shared his pains saying even though he was rich he had so many mysterious sicknesses and his employees often cheated him. They hid the truth from him. He said, "I may be rich but I am unhappy. I feel people reject me and avoid me. I feel deep loneliness. I feel my enemies want to kill me." This man was blessed with a lot of wealth. Before I began the blessing I asked him to bring out all the family members. He called out all of them. As we began to pray, I heard a cry. I opened my eyes, but no one among the assembled family members was crying. I asked the man who was crying, to which he replied that I did not need to worry about that. I then told him that before praying, I had to bless the entire house including all the rooms. I went around blessing the rooms, but one room was locked. I forced him to open it, and found that there was a mentally and physically handicapped sick child. This man had gotten this child through one of his servants, and was hiding him. Since he always rejected this child he also felt rejected. The Word of God spoke to him,

Children of adulterers will not come to maturity, and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish.

- Wis.3:16



I forced him to open it, and found that there was a mentally and physically handicapped child.

FORGET NOT YOUR FORSAKEN SON

A man came to me very troubled; so many were the problems in his life. He was married in church and yet was so unfortunate. He went for many job interviews but none ever called him back. Through prayer he remembered that he had another child with another woman whom he had neglected. Even though he had always promised them that he would provide for their livelihood he just had not cared. I told him, "Even if you may have forgotten about that child you bore, the Lord has not forgotten about him. You are his father and you have to take care of him and his needs otherwise his cry goes out to the Lord against you. You now have to go and look for him wherever he is and provide for him." This man was very good hearted. He went searching for his son and found him. He was not going to school for

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lack of fees, did not have enough to eat and many other problems. Despite his joblessness, the man put his son in a school and started caring for him. Within no time God blessed him with a job.

HEAR THE CRY OF THE NEGLECTED CHILDREN

An old gentleman had six children, none of whom was married despite their being ripe for marriage. “Father,” he said, “I am suffering so much. I never see any breakthrough in my life. My children’s marriages are not taking place. One of my children who is abroad is struggling to stay there because his visa expired. The others are jobless. I pray everyday, but it seems my prayers go unheard. My conscience is clear; what sin have I committed against the Lord to warrant all these sufferings?” he lamented. As we were praying we opened the Bible and the Lord revealed this word of God from Mal.2:13-16.

And this you do as well: You cover the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour at your hand. You ask, “Why does he not?” Because the LORD was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one’s garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless.

I asked him whether he had another wife somewhere. He told me that before his present wife, he had another wife with whom he had five children. However there were some misunderstandings between the two of them so they separated and each went their own way. He completely forgot about her. I told him, “As long as you had children with your first wife, you cannot just close your eyes, heart and mind to them. The Lord is a witness to you. You have to provide for all your eleven children equally and not just the six you are currently caring for. When the five cry out to God because they lack fees or food to eat or because they have been abandoned by their father, their cry goes straight to the Lord against you.”

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Another young man came to me. He had been jobless for a long time and there seemed no hope of getting a job no matter how hard he tried. This young man had earlier on had a physical relationship with a girl whom he impregnated. He left her upcountry and forgot about her. This girl was hurt by him. Years later this young man was planning to get married to someone else. His previous act however proved such a big block in his life. We can never just hurt or insult anyone and behave like nothing happened. What we do to others usually comes back to us.

Sharing of body includes sharing of sins

A woman who was a second wife spoke of her many problems. Her children could not go to school for lack of school fees. Her husband was married before and he had seven children with the first wife. She bore all the burden of the seven children from the first marriage. If you have relations with a devil worshipper you are also sharing each other's sins and burdens too. That is why the Word of God tells us that, "no one pities a person who associates with a sinner and becomes involved in the other's sins" (Sir.12:14).

A 69 year old man who wanted to marry came to me and said, "Father, I have two women that I would like to marry. I am unable to make up my mind which one to choose. They are both good. I love them both and they love me too. What should I do?" I asked him, "How old are these women?" "One is twenty-three years old and the other is twenty-six years old," he replied. This man was actually a very wealthy man. He was divorced from his wife but had a son who was twenty-seven years of age. I asked him, "How old are you?" "I am 69 years. My wife is not with me anymore, neither is my son and I am very lonely. I need someone to take care of me." I told him, "What you need is a house help, not a wife." I gave him some scriptures to read and meditate on for one month. "As you pray for this one month, you are to ask the Lord what the intention of these women marrying you is. Is it really to be a wife to you or just for the sake of your money? You are sixty-nine years old. Now is the time to prepare your soul for heaven and not to collect more burdens."



I told him, "What you need is a house help, not a wife."

SINGLE MOTHERS WITH GROWNUP CHILDREN

As we pray we find that some single mothers with grown up children are called to keep away from another marriage or relationship. They should not marry or re-marry, but should instead dedicate their lives to the service of the Lord in whatever capacity they can, of course not neglecting their children. I have seen so many examples of stepfathers who sexually abused their stepchildren especially the step daughters by turning the girl child into a small 'third wife'. This is because these children mean nothing to them and so they treat them as objects for their sinful gratification. There is no need to subject your child to such torture. If they are ages 12 and above, it is best to avoid re-marrying for the sake of the welfare of the child.

INCEST

Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them.

- Wis.2:21

A young woman came to see me. She was an orphan, had a lot of sorrows and suffered sleeplessness. I asked her if she was married. She said that she was not married and that she could not live a family life. She revealed to me that she had a sexual relationship with her own brother. Another young girl, 13 years of age, was misused by her uncle. Later on she developed uncontrollable bad sexual habits which ruined her life.

Sexual relationships with our blood relatives, or incest, is a grave sin. Sexual abuse of one family member by another invites handicaps and blocks into the family. Yet incidences of incest are on the increase in our nation. I know of one family where all the children were born with strange behavioural disorders. The psychiatrists advised that these disorders could not be solved through ordinary counselling or medicine but were of a permanent nature. As we were praying for the family, we found that there were many cases of sexual relationships among the blood relatives in that family, hence this strange abnormality. Why are these perversions on the increase? Television, internet, pornographic addictions, and filthy music are all playing a major part. Family members who enjoy filthy TV programs together start practicing it among themselves. If TV is a stumbling block we should have the courage to dispose of it. If the internet causes you to sin you should have the courage to disconnect it. If pornographic

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CDs and materials are causing you to have immoral thoughts and relations you should have the spirit of sacrifice to burn them. We are told in Sir.15:15, “If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.”



***Family members who enjoy filthy
TV programs together start
practicing it among themselves.***

IMMODEST DRESSING

Our actions in one way or another contribute a great deal to these perversions. People should be attracted to our personality and not the way we dress.

A prayerful young woman once came for prayer because her marriage was not taking place. As we were praying for her, the Holy Spirit asked her whether she gave any bad example to others. She replied, “No, not that I know of.” We further explained to her, “For example the way that you dress, are you fond of wearing fashionable dresses?” She said that from her childhood her mother used to dress her in fashionable clothes which caused a lot of scandal to others and made them fall into sin. This was a big block in her life. The way we dress, speak or behave should not lead another to commit sin. Some women dress so as to get appreciation from others and even human love. In actual fact they invite lustful desires of men that put them into deep sorrow.

FAMILY NEEDS FIDELITY

A girl who had many boyfriends came to see me. I asked her, “Are you not afraid of getting AIDS?” She replied, “One day, anyway, I will have to die. I was left alone by my mother when I was one month old. I never got love that is why I am so weak in this area. As no one cares for me, I too care for none.” I told her, “You are inviting the devil and destruction into your life and at the same time spreading this devil to others.” For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom.6:23); for we are never rejected by God. We are not supposed to let ourselves be dominated by every emotion. Just because our spouse is unfaithful does not mean that we too have to follow suit and be unfaithful. We should not be guided by sinners; instead we should run away from them.

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Flee from sin as from a snake; for if you approach sin, it will bite you. Its teeth are lion's teeth, and can destroy human lives.
- Sir.21:2

PARENTS AND PORNOGRAPHY

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of God dwells in our bodies. When we watch pornography, we suffocate the one who is in us (Jesus). A slave is never free. When you watch pornography you become a slave to what you are watching.

A forty-nine year old prayer group leader once said, "Father I feel so ashamed of myself. I keep on getting filthy sexual thoughts and imaginations, even when praying or participating in the Holy Mass." I asked her if she had ever been sexually abused. She said at the age of thirteen, her uncle continually abused her sexually. Later on she got married, but her husband died. I told her the reason why she was having these evil thoughts was because she had never surrendered those terrible events to the Lord and therefore had never forgiven her uncle. She carried a lot of hatred and bitterness towards her uncle. Having not forgiven her uncle, the devil used this as a means to attack her through evil thoughts.

Jesus our Lord and Saviour carried all the sins we commit in flesh with our bodies in His scars. Many young people come saying, "Father, I commit sexual sins because my friend told me if I do not, I will not have a good marriage." Our young people are given many bad ideas in this area. Jesus says that unless and until you are born of the spirit, you will not inherit the kingdom of God. Sexuality is a beautiful gift from God that should not be abused. We therefore have to purify ourselves and our sexuality on a daily basis.

PEER PRESSURE AND IMMORALITY

A couple brought their only daughter for counselling. She was a very bright student. All through her school years she got first rank and in her fourth form as well. However, when she got to form five, she failed miserably in all the subjects. Her parents and teachers were so concerned about this drop in performance that they brought her for prayers. I asked the parents if I could speak to the girl alone. As I spoke to her she could not even look at me

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in the face. “Father, I am a sinner. I had many boyfriends and one day one of them took me to his room together with a batch of his other friends and they showed me filthy pornographic CDs. Later on I became promiscuous, practicing what I saw.” As a result her memory got defiled and she lost it since she kept on imagining all the evil she saw.



I had many boyfriends and one day one of them took me to his room together with a batch of his other friends and they showed me filthy pornographic CDs. Later on I became promiscuous, practicing what I saw.

A small boy was brought by his mother so we could pray with him. “Father, please pray for my son. Whenever I am bathing or changing my clothes, he just looks on and does not turn aside. When I am doing other household chores he is nowhere to be seen, but whenever I change my clothes, I do not know where he comes from, but I find him there looking at me intently.” I asked her whether she had the habit of watching pornography. “Before I got married, my husband had the habit of watching pornographic movies. When we got married he encouraged me to watch. So we used to watch together - even when I was pregnant with my son I used to watch. I did not know it was a sin, since my husband encouraged me to watch.” I told her, “Your son got affected and that is why he behaves like that.” Pornography is such an evil in society today.

VALUE THE PROPERTY OF OTHERS SEVENTH COMMANDMENT You Shall Not Steal (Dt.5:19)

The seventh Commandment forbids all unjust taking away, or keeping what belongs to another. All manner of cheating in buying and selling is forbidden by the seventh Commandment, and also every other way of doing wrong to our neighbor.

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You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

-Lev 19:36

We are also bound to restore all goods if we are able, or else sin will not be forgiven and we must also pay our debts

Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’

-Lk. 19:8

Under this commandment also fall our use of time, our free time and time at work. It is dishonest for employees to waste their employer’s time or property, because it is wasting what is not their own. It is important to use fruitfully every bit of time we have both to ourselves and at work “making the most of time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). This commandment further demands honesty in business and paying just wages to the employees. You shall not steal means you have to do the work properly, in time and up to the schedule. It also implies we should keep our contracts and agreements. The seventh commandment also teaches that we return borrowed things or found things. You shall not steal refers to taking what is rightfully not yours without the knowledge and consent of the owner. It also means to stop damaging the property of others, to stop looting, wasting one’s own property, to stop using false weights and measures, paying unjust salaries, to stop forging documents and certificates, to stop pirating. We are not to cheat the insurance companies by burning houses, properties, cars etc. We should not issue false bills, charge high prices and rates, adulterate foods, add water in milk or preservatives.

The sixth commandment demands us that we stop misappropriating the property or the land of others, collecting or giving bribes.

Diverse weights and diverse measures are both alike an abomination to the LORD

- Pro.20:10.

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Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, "When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the Sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat" I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day

- Amos.8:4-10



***We should not issue false bills,
charge high prices and rates,
adulterate foods, add water in milk
or preservatives.***

LEARN TO BE TRUTHFUL

Lying, cheating or copying in exams also falls in this category. A Form Four student was finding it hard to study and pass her exams. During exams she always had her head down. Her teacher regularly asked her if she was sick or if she had headache but said she was okay. The following day she again had her head down. The invigilator found out that she was copying from notes written on her thighs and that she had been doing this throughout the exams. "Good things and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, come from the Lord". Success comes from the Lord (Sir. 11:14-16). You may cheat and pass in one exam, but what about the next one? Copying and cheating in the exam is wrong. Making fake certificates so as to get a job or any advantage is also wrong. Even without a certificate, the Lord can bless us with success. There are some who develop self pity because they are not properly educated. But the Lord has special love for them. He speaks through Sirach 51:23-25:

Draw near to me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction. Why do you say you are lacking in these things, and why do you endure such great thirst? I opened my mouth and said, acquire wisdom for yourselves without money".

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A girl who schooled only up to standard eight came with deep hopelessness saying, “I am a failure in my life. I could not study. I don’t have any qualifications and I can’t get a job.” She thought she would be blessed only through her qualifications, but after claiming this promise of the Lord in Sirach 51:23-25 she now works for a very good company.

A medical student kept on failing in a certain subject. It was crucial that he pass this subject otherwise he would not be able to graduate from medical school. For four years he was continually failing this subject. We asked him whether he had stolen anything at any time. He remembered that way back when he was in high school, he had stolen a very expensive and crucial laboratory apparatus and hidden it. The teacher noticed it was missing and asked all the students if they had any knowledge of where it was. All the students including this boy denied having taken the apparatus or knowing where it was. The teacher repeatedly pleaded with whoever had taken it to please return it, but this boy refused to own up. Later on he destroyed the apparatus. The school principal on hearing that the apparatus was lost and could not be found anywhere suspended the chemistry teacher from the school. Later he thought it would be shameful to admit the mistake. Now he reached a point in life that he was bound with guilt. He went and accepted the mistake before the principal, the chemistry teacher and before all the students in his high school. Immediately after this, he passed his exam and he is one of the most respected doctors in one of the medical institutions. He said “Life taught me to respect teachers and never to cheat anyone or hide the truth”.

ARE YOU SORRY FOR THE MISTAKE OR THAT YOU WERE CAUGHT

One day a father brought his son to me because the son had started stealing. When his father was not looking, he would go to the pocket of his father’s shirt or trouser and take money from there. One day as he put his hand into his father’s trouser pocket, his father caught him. This boy apologised to his father, but he continued stealing. “Father, I caught him stealing and I corrected him but I don’t see any repentance or change in his life. I am afraid that he may even become a notorious thief?” After hearing the comments of the father about the child we told the father, “He is sorry not because he was stealing, but only because he was caught”. We have to have real repentance for the sins we commit.

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I remember a poor wife came to me and asked “Father is it wrong if I take money from my husband’s pocket while he is asleep without his knowing it?” “Why?” I asked. She said her husband was a drunkard and did not care for her and the children. He spent all the money he earned on alcohol. When he came home, she would wait until he fell asleep then would take money from his pocket and the next day go and buy food for the family. I told her, “Your husband is more culpable than you since he is not caring for your family. Your husband’s money is your money too but you have to get it with his permission.” There are husbands who never care for their wives and children. There are husbands who love money more than their family members. There are also wives who give more importance to their job and careers than family. These are all indirectly promoting stealing.



***“Father is it wrong if I take
money from my husband’s pocket
while he is asleep without his
knowing it?”***

BRIBERY

You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

- Ex.23:8)

The root cause of bribery is selfishness, greed and extreme self centredness. Bribery can be defined as consideration given for obtaining favourable decisions. It is a form of corruption.

Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households, but those who hate bribes will live.

- Pro.15:27

In you, they take bribes to shed blood; you take both advance interest and accrued interest, and make gain of your neighbours by extortion; and you have forgotten me, says the Lord GOD.

- Ezekiel 22:12

Over the years there have been some tangible bribery cases in the history of the world. The Great Wall of China is reputedly the only man-made structure

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that is visible from the moon. The cost of building the wall was staggering. When it was finished, the people relaxed. They thought it was impregnable, but their enemies breached it easily. How? They simply bribed one of the gatekeepers. Bribery is a sin and a social evil. It is a big problem and a major threat facing our society today. Students have topped the merit list because they bribed the authorities. Bribery has ignored justice and honest work. Its consequences are deplorable in the long run as it gives rise to corrupt and inefficient administrators and teachers, ignorant doctors and an ill-governed state.

NO MORE LIES OR FALSE TESTIMONY EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not bear false witness (Dt.5:20)

A false witness will not go unpunished, and the liar will perish.

- Pro.19:9

The eighth Commandment forbids all false testimony, rash judgment and lies. Calumny and detraction are forbidden by the eighth commandment. Calumny means to mention evil that one has not done. Detraction means to speak, without sufficient reason, about the evil one has done. Both are sinful: we do not only have to speak the truth but to speak the truth in charity; “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15). Everybody has a right to his or her good name for “a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold” (Pro 22:1). And if I have injured my neighbour by speaking ill of them, I am bound to make them satisfied by restoring their good name as far as I can. As Sir 41:13 teaches “The days of good life are numbered, but a good name lasts forever”.

This commandment demands us to be truthful in all things, to be respectful and to honour the good name of others. We are obliged to say the truth alone and to keep our promises. Telling lies is a sin, an act of injustice and disobedience to the Lords’ Law and to others. Lies hurt the self-esteem of the other. When some people open their mouths, only lies come out. The root cause of lying is self righteousness. No one is righteous.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED



***The root cause of lying
is self righteousness.***

GOSSIPING

Gossip has no respect for justice. It breaks hearts, and ruins lives. It is cunning and malicious. It victimises the helpless. Gossip is hard to track down because it has no face or name. It tarnishes reputations, topples governments, wrecks marriages, ruins careers, makes the innocent cry, and causes heartaches and sleepless nights. The next time you indulge in gossip, ask yourself.

- Is it the truth?
- Is it kind or gentle?
- Is it necessary? Am I spreading rumours?
- Do I say positive things about others?
- Do I enjoy and encourage others to spread rumours?
- Does my conversation begin with, “Don’t tell anyone?”
- Can I maintain confidentiality?

Gossip is found everywhere: in the office, in the shop, in the party, in your church, in your telephone. It makes headlines and headaches.

DON’T DESTROY THE FAMILY OF OTHERS NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife (Dt.5:21)

The sins that commonly lead to the breaking of the ninth commandment are gluttony, drunkenness, intemperance, idleness, bad company, and the neglect of prayer (1Cor 6:9-10).

It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

-1Cor.7:1-2.

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From the Old Testament onwards the teaching on infidelity was strong. Yahweh was teaching about faithfulness in the marital life: “One commits abomination with his neighbour’s wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you defiles his sister, his father’s daughter” (Eze.22.11).

The ninth commandment urges to keep one’s family life sacred. According to the interpretation of Jesus, we are urged not to covet another’s home or spouse even in our thoughts. Looking lustfully at another is and can lead to adultery and other sexual sins.

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart

- Mt. 5:28

AVOID ALL DISHONEST WEALTH TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet thy neighbour’s things (Dt.5:21)

The tenth Commandment forbids all envious and covetous thoughts and unjust desires of our neighbour’s goods and profits (Ex 20:17).

You are breaking the tenth commandment if you are:

- Taking possession of other people’s property (1Kgs.21:1-29)
- Moving an ancient boundary stone or encroaching on the fields of others (Prov. 23:10)
- Ignoring the fact that we are answerable to God
- Gaining wealth in dishonest ways and accepting or giving bribes and perverting justice. (1Sam. 8:3; Ps. 16:10)

YOU SHALL NOT POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT

Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

-Gen.1:11-13.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

Cutting trees for charcoal, destroying forests, making rivers and lakes as sewage, sock pits and dumping grounds, use of very old vehicles, overloading in our public transport system, uninhabitable housing and noise pollution are sins against God's plan. Many a time, we take the environment for granted. It has become one of the most abused of God's creations. Some countries with certain environmental features such as trees, rivers, natural landscapes, fresh air etc seem not to appreciate these as a gift. They abuse the environment and assume that it was created only for their benefit. When some people look at a tree, all they can see is money. Greed for money has led people to cause total environmental degradation. Through logging, mining of quarry stones, sand harvesting, pollution of water, air and soil by industries. In the name of business, people are trying to turn every stone into bread. Unfortunately they forget it is the devil's trick who even challenged Jesus "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into loaf." Jesus' answer should make us think again: "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone'" (Lk.4:4).



When some people look at a tree, all they can see is money.

THE SIN OF OMISSION

Sins of omission are in a way more than sins of commissions. The good neglected by Simon the Pharisee was done by Mary Magdalene. We understand it as Jesus explains to him his failure to do the needful. The criterion of the last judgement will be that which people did or neglected to do. Our Lord cursed the fig tree for not producing fruit even out of season, as a lesson for us to keep doing good and producing fruit. During the agony in the garden, our Lord blamed the disciples for not keeping awake with Him. In the parable of the talents, the one who hid the talents was thrown into the exterior darkness. The foolish virgins slept while they should have been vigilant and awake. Pilate knew our Lord was innocent, but did not act due to his desire to please the Jews.

It is a crime to neglect to do the good you can do, because that good can be done only by you. In Eph.2:10 we read "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be

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our way of life.” Henry Newman said, “Not to do good is really to do evil”. Pro.31:8-9 says, “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”



It is a crime to neglect to do the good you can do, because that good can be done only by you.

SOME COMMON SINFUL PRACTICES IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

- Gen.17:10

This is an Old Testament covenant. We belong to the New Testament which insists on the circumcision of the heart (a spiritual circumcision). St. Paul says, “In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ” (Col.2:11). In the New Testament, circumcision is all about a spiritual renewal. It is important to note that the Bible does not speak about FGM. This is an illegal, immoral and serious offence to women.

The human body is a beautiful creation of the Lord. The plan of the Lord is for the human person to be fully alive with all human and spiritual aspects. No one has the right to remove or cut off any part of the human body without good reason. Such action destroys the original plan of God. FGM can cause chronic pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. St. Paul says, “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1Thes.5:19-22). The Lord commands us to keep away from every kind of evil.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED



No one has the right to remove or cut off any part of the human body without good reason. Such action destroys the original plan of God.

WIFE INHERITANCE

The real widow, left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives”

-1Tim.5:3-6.

Jesus had great love for widows much as he had concern for all.

Then he called his disciples and said to them, ‘truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury

-Mk.12:43

It was an Old Testament teaching that “when brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband’s brother to her” (Dt. 25:5). The Sadducees knew this teaching and wanted to get an answer from Jesus, the Son of God and the provider of the new way of life.

They asked Jesus about seven brothers who died after inheriting their deceased brother’s wife (Mt.22:23-28). For Jesus what is important is the ultimate goal of life – our final union with God in the risen life where marriage will not be an issue. We read in the word of God, “thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband (Rom.7:2).

Wife inheritance brings about a lot of disunity in the family and untold sufferings among family members. A man came to me saying he had no peace in his home. He was always arguing with his wife. They hardly agreed on anything and his life had become miserable. His first wife with whom he had 3 children had died. His relatives had encouraged and urged him to

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marry his deceased wife's sister. This woman felt she had been forced into the marriage, so she did not love the man; when there is no love in the family, life becomes a burden.

POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES

These marriages bring about social disputes, because of the competition therein. The women in such marriages are very insecure and feel trapped because they do not know whether there is another wife or family elsewhere. Those married in the church always enjoy God's protection.

A young woman came to me for counselling. 'Father, I would like to get married in the Church but my husband will not allow it. For twenty years, she had been staying with the father of her children but they were not married in the church. I asked her 'when did you think of having a church wedding?' 'Five years ago', she replied. I told her, you should have thought of that before you even had children'

USING CHARMS

One day I was conducting a prayer session, for a number of days. During prayers one girl would spit and vomit throughout. It was such a horrible sight. I came to find out that this girl visited a witchdoctor who gave her some medicinal concoction. As we prayed this medicine would come out through the spitting and vomiting. Using charms of all kinds can give you 'benefits' that do not last; sooner or later you will discover you will have just brought yourself misery. Even if people think charms can protect them or bring them success, many have come to discover sooner or later that no created thing can bring protection and success. Charms will bring you to the world of darkness and through using them you open a door to the evil one. Mysterious sicknesses among the family members can have a direct relation to involvement in witchcraft or black magic.



Mysterious sicknesses among the family members can have a direct relation to involvement in witchcraft or black magic.

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FORCED MARRIAGES

A certain father forced his daughter to marry a boy so that he could get some money out of the dowry that was to be given by the boy's parents. Children born in such relationships are born out of hatred and bitterness bringing a lot of problems into the family and future generations.

A girl told me that her father failed to raise the money for dowry and so she eloped. I usually tell couples planning to get married, that the greatest wealth each of them can get is one another and not the money or the many gifts they will receive on their wedding day. Even when there is not enough money for a wedding function, they should go to the parish priest, set a date and get married.

CHAPTER THREE



FORGIVENESS: LOVE YOUR ENEMY



Forgiveness is the greatest healing. Forgiveness is not a failure but a real powerful instrument invoking the intervention of God. Forgiveness is the real revenge. The Word of God says,

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.

-Rom.12:19-20

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Keeping unforgiveness in our hearts is tantamount to killing. Forgiveness has three aspects to it:

- Forgiveness towards God
- Forgiveness towards others
- Forgiveness towards oneself

When we have unforgiveness to God and to ourselves we kill both our bodies and our souls. When we have unforgiveness to others, we silently kill others and ourselves. Many of us are able to forgive others the wrongs they do to us. However forgiveness towards God and forgiveness towards oneself are usually not given sufficient consideration.

ARE YOU LIKE JOB'S WIFE?

People who for example do not forgive God basically hold a grudge against God. Job went through a very difficult period in his life. He lost all his wealth, property and even family members. He became so sick and lost most of his friends, he became 'potent to many'. He became an outcast in society. His own wife urged him to curse God. The only three friends he had remaining also urged him to do the same. Out of all that pain and anguish he cursed the day he was born. Although he cursed his own life, he did not altogether lose his faith in God. God on the other hand allowed all these misfortunes to befall his servant Job. At the end Job himself declares that, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (Job.42:2).

Blaming God for misfortunes that come our way is equal to cursing God. When we curse God, we fail to see His goodness; we fail to understand the message He has for us in these misfortunes, so we retaliate. We lose faith, stop believing in Him, stop praying and going to church and basically do not want anything to do with Him. Unforgiveness towards God is lack of submission to the plans of God.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future
with hope"

- Jer.29:11



Blaming God for misfortunes that come our way is equal to cursing God.

FORGIVENESS TOWARDS OTHERS

A man came to ask for prayers to get a job since he had been jobless for 15 years. He said he was a practicing Christian who went to church regularly but no job was coming his way. He wanted to know why the Lord was not merciful to him. He asked me to pray and help him. He also faced a deep faith crisis saying, ‘despite being a practicing christian, I am a father who has failed my children, a debtor of 30 million and jobless. I lost my own house and I’m completely broke.’

As we were praying, we saw a vision of Jesus standing in front of Pontius Pilate. We also got a word of God from 1Cor.6:7: “In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you.” We explained to him about the vision saying to him: “it seems that you yourself bound Jesus and made him helpless”. He did not understand, “I want Jesus to intervene in my life, I never bound him”.

“Where have you applied for a job?” we asked him. “In the same company from which I had my job terminated”. “Why do you want to get the same job?”, “Because I was unjustly laid off so that they could appoint an under-qualified family member of the company manager.” “Do you have any court case?”, “Yes, for fifteen years I have been running a court case. Actually, that is what brought me such huge debts.” Even though he got many offers for other jobs, he was so particular to get that same job at least for six months to prove them wrong. So for fifteen years, he was fighting to get the same job. He had now lost his house and got into a 30 million debt.

When one of his lawyers failed, he would go for another lawyer. He forgot the teaching of Jesus Christ. “I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny” (Lk.12:59). He was advised to forgive his former manager who had unjustly terminated his job and withdraw the case. He said “If I withdraw the case it means I am failing again and I too permit the unjust

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to prevail. I don't think this is the plan of the Lord, to withdraw the case at this moment." He resisted the withdrawal saying it was irrational. The Lord spoke to him, "I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name" (Is.45:2-3). Believing in the power of this word of God he withdrew the case and in one week he got a job in an airline as a manager. His former unjust company manager visited him asking for forgiveness and reinstatement. The moment he forgave and withdrew the case, he unbound the Lord, who immediately acted on his personal life.

The courts declare judgments on the basis of evidence and may not be necessarily on the basis of truth. Those with more money can produce any amount of evidence and can even overturn the truth. The first court a poor person should approach must be the court of the Lord. He does justice to the poor, orphans and widows. We read in Psalms, "To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame (Ps.22:5). We have a God who never puts us to shame.

EVIL THOUGHTS AND SEXUAL MISUSE

A 13 year old girl who was continually sexually abused by her uncle, always had evil sexual thoughts and imaginations even in the midst of prayer. This was because she had never surrendered those painful events and incidences to the Lord and therefore held unforgiveness in her heart towards her uncle.

It is human nature to find it difficult to forgive such a person. But the Lord wants and expects us to forgive all who hurt us. Forgiveness is beyond human understanding, for it is divine. This is the reason why we have to pray for the gift of forgiveness everyday until we can face the person who hurt us without any bitter feelings.

A banker came to me because he was unable to enjoy the salary he received. All of it seemed to disappear through payment of debts. I asked him if he had any enemies. He told me that he had enemies but that he had forgiven them all. I then told him 'you have to pray for all your enemies until they forgive you'. We should do this for God's sake remembering St. Paul's words,

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Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ” And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan.”

- 2Cor. 2:10-11

We cannot receive the grace of God until we forgive our enemies and unbind our Lord. Jesus said,

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

- Mt.5:44-45



‘You have to pray for all your enemies until they forgive you’.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

On the first day of a residential retreat in Bombay, there was a drunken man who wanted to attend the retreat. We usually do not allow drunken people to attend because they would not be able to grasp what was being preached. Also when they begin to exhibit withdrawal symptoms they can be a disturbance to the rest of the participants. If a drunken man or woman wants to attend the retreat, she or he has to be accompanied by someone to take care of them. I asked this man to go home and come back later when he was sober.

He replied, ‘Father, do you conduct retreats for holy people or for sinners and drunkards like me?’ I told him that it is true we conduct retreats for those most in need of Jesus. However if he was to attend the retreat, he had to be sober. Since he was not, then he should have someone to take care of him. It was impossible for me to look after him. ‘If you get violent I cannot come after you to calm you down’. He replied, ‘Father, you do not have to look after me, Jesus will look after me!’ I said, ‘Jesus looks after you through us’. He told me he was a single man and had no one to look after him.

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‘If you reject me where will I go?’ he lamented. ‘Alright I will allow you to attend the retreat on one condition’ I asked him to stretch out his hand, place it in mine and promise me that he would not drink again. He stretched out his hand and as he was just about to place it on my outstretched palm, he stopped and said, ‘First you go to my father; he is a very heavy drinker. He was cruel, abusive and destroyed my life. I developed this drinking habit from him. Go to him and speak to him and tell him how my life is destroyed because of him. If he stops drinking then I too will stop drinking’. I told him, “I will go to your father, but what good will it do? He will probably tell me the same story. Eventually we’ll have to say that it is because of Adam. Since nobody wants to take up the responsibility of their own sins, it was said of Jesus that, “for he will save his people from their sins”(Mt.1:21). Jesus took away our sins, so now on we have no right to accuse any one but Him. When we find it very hard to forgive our enemies it is good to repeat these scriptures, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil.4:13) because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1Jn.4:4).

You, the repairer

Whenever you find stumbling blocks in your life no matter how much prayer and supplication you make, God maybe calling you to be a repairer, restorer, a mender of the wrongs in the family. The promise of the Lord is this:

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

- Is.58:12

Jesus can change our lives personally and those of others including our family members. There is no need to blame others, take up responsibility and work out the your own healing and that of your loved ones. When a snake bites you, who should be taken to the hospital for treatment? Definitely it is you and not the snake. So if you are suffering, it is you who needs the remedy and not the one that may have caused the suffering. The Book of Sirach says, “Have you sinned, my child? Do so no more, but ask forgiveness for your past sins. Flee from sin as from a snake; for if you approach sin, it will bite you. Its teeth are lion’s teeth, and can destroy human lives.” (Sir.21:1-2).

FORGIVENESS: LOVE YOUR ENEMY



When a snake bites you, who should be taken to the hospital for treatment?

WHO IS YOUR FATHER?

A girl attending one of our retreats found it very difficult to forgive her father because he had rejected her. She had to stop her studies in form one because her father refused to pay the school fees because he had fought with her mother. When she approached her father for school fees the father abused her saying, “Who are you? I don’t know you, ask that lady to help you. I have nothing to do with you.” She was shocked. There were many other filthy comments he made to her. Her own father disowned her, rejected her and verbally abused her. She never thought she could suddenly become fatherless, lonely and abandoned. For a moment she was speechless. From that time on she had been struggling to forgive her father, and the Lord spoke to her through Isaiah.63:16:

For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name.

The Lord spoke to her “I know you and I love you, I am your Father.” And through Jesus God revealed His will for her father that, “it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost” (Mt.18:14). She understood that she had not only to forgive her father but also to pray for his soul so that he may not be lost. Now she is a new born Christian.

FORGIVE FAMILY MEMBERS

Joseph the patriarch was handed over into slavery by his own brothers because of the jealousy that they had of him. But we understand that Joseph had the heart to know the mind of God and he said to his brothers, “*Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today*” (Gen.50:20). Joseph never complained or took revenge for all the pains he had gone through. He knew that the Lord could turn everything for his good. The problem is that

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our faith is little and that is why we cannot forgive. Yet our Lord allows our enemies to be there, because they too are made in His image and likeness. They too are friends of Jesus.

When we do not forgive, we bind the hands of the Lord and he cannot do the good that He would otherwise have done for us. When we are able to forgive our enemies, God sets us free and pours His blessings on us.



When we do not forgive, we bind the hands of the Lord and he cannot do the good that He would otherwise have done for us.

FORGIVING ONESELF

Sometimes we may commit grave sins. By the grace of God, we realize we have sinned and approach the sacrament of confession. Having confessed our sins, God has already forgiven us. Sometimes we find ourselves pondering about the sin we confessed and feeling a lot of shame and guilt. We find it hard to believe that God has actually forgiven us. Many of the sexual sins like fornication, incest, abortion etc are just among the sins about which the victims find it hard to accept the forgiveness of the Lord, even after confession. This is mainly because the victims feel the sin is too heavy, too big to warrant forgiveness with just the words, “Go in peace your sins are forgiven”. It is important to know that there is no sin that is too big for the Lord to forgive. It is also helpful to prayerfully repeat the Word of God from the book of Isaiah 43:25:

I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

The repetition of this Word of God gives us confidence in the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord which wipes away our guilt feelings.

“I HAVE BROKEN ALL THE TEN COMMANDMENTS!”

A certain woman had a lot of joint pains and sicknesses in her body. I told her that she could get rid of all the sicknesses by making a good confession. She

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told me that she had not gone for confession for many years. ‘Father I do not know if the Lord will ever forgive me. I have committed adultery, abortion, given HIV to so many men and have broken all the Ten Commandments! Father where will I go with my sins? Who will forgive me?’ I told her, ‘Why are you carrying your sicknesses in your own body? There was an adulterous woman brought before Jesus. Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again” (Jn.8:11). I don’t know how many men she had slept with or how many abortions she had committed. One thing I know however is that Jesus forgave her and told her not to commit sin again. We also read about a prostitute in the book of Hebrews, “*By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace*” (Heb.11: 31).

The Prodigal son committed all kinds of sins that he even lost his human dignity as he shared the food given to the most abominable animal, the pig. But his most loving father embraced him without any accusations. This heavenly father gave him a superior place to the one he had before because the father saw the broken, contrite heart of his son. Jesus that lived then lives now and is here present with us now. He is the one who will forgive you, for He says, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more” (Heb.10:17).

ARE YOU A WOMAN OF SORROWS?

A young lady came over so that we could pray with her. She said, “Father I am a woman of sorrows. I am just twenty three years old but I have a child, I am jobless, unmarried and completely broken. All are rejecting me and I don’t know why? I try not to disturb anyone but I don’t have an easy life.” I asked her if there was anyone she needed to forgive. She said, “I think I have forgiven them other wise, I could have killed them long time ago.” “But still you keep unforgiveness” I told her, “To whom?” “You haven’t forgiven yourself” I told her. She said, “That may be true”. She never got the love of a father as her father died when she was one year old. She did not even see the face of her father. Her mother could not get married again even though she made many attempts to do so. Thus her mother transferred all her frustration upon this daughter. This woman grew up without getting the love of her mother and father. She heard from her elder siblings that their father was very loving. She started to search for the love of a father. As she searched

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for this love, she always made friends with elderly people. When she got a job she was very happy to work with a boss who was sixty eight years of age. She found her father in him. He was so gentle and caring. Suddenly the relationship changed and this old man raped her. She got a child. Though through prayer and time she forgave him, she could not forgive herself. Since then she thought of herself as a failure, a used person and living a worthless life. She was asked to forgive herself through the word of God from Is.38:17:

Surely it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but you have held back my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

Further, the Lord spoke to her personally,

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Is.43:2-3). Finally she was set free as she meditated on the promise of the Lord, “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

-Is.43:18-19

HAVE YOU KNOWINGLY COMMITTED SIN?

Don't be very sad even if you have willfully committed sin and deeply offended the Lord. He is more merciful than you ever imagined. “For he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (Lk.6:35). We read about Him in the Book of Hebrews,

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Heb.4:15-16

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The highest form of penance the King of Kings gives to the most serious sinner is to confess that “you love him”

He knows our human pride and weaknesses. Peter knowingly denied him thrice, but the reparation Jesus asked of him was to repeat three times “Jesus I love you”. The highest form of penance the King of Kings gives to the most serious sinner is to confess that “you love him” that is all.

WHY CAN'T WE FORGET ABOUT THOSE WOUNDS?

Many people say that they have forgiven several times but the thoughts remain. They find it very hard to let it go from their memory. They find it hard to forget those sorrows. Whenever they recall the incidences, deep bitter feelings fill their hearts. If we are unable to give up the past hurtful feelings it means our forgiveness is incomplete. Forgiveness is complete only when we are able to accept our enemies as our friends. The teaching of Jesus is so clear,

Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”

- Lk.6:34-3

Jesus taught us not just to forgive our enemies but to love our enemies. This means until we are able to love those enemies from the bottom of our hearts our forgiveness is incomplete. It does not matter how we feel but what matters is our decision to love even against our feelings. Even after one says that they have forgiven, but they still want to avoid that person, keep a distance from that person, are unable to smile at or greet the person, it means one has to sincerely pray for that person. Prayer is the only medicine to accept our enemies as friends. The teachings of St. Paul regarding the virtue of Love help us to understand whether we really have forgiven our enemies and started to love them again.

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***Until we are able to love those enemies
from the bottom of our hearts our
forgiveness is incomplete.***

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- 1Cor.13:5-7.

If we are still impatient, unkind, and rude to those who have hurt us, it is an indication we have to pray for the gift of love. Once we are filled with the Love of God we can then be set free from the bondage of unforgiveness.

The spiritual fathers say whenever somebody is beating you or disturbing you or continually blocking your life they are actually begging for your prayers. In essence what they are saying is “I am disturbing you because I need your prayers. I lack the grace of God. How can I hurt you if you pray for me and grant me the grace of the Lord.” The more you are insulted the more he/she needs the grace of God. The worse your husband is the more you have to pray for him and give him to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity Prayer; “Abba Father purify my husband in the holy blood of Jesus and fill him with your Holy Spirit”, when said regularly will change your husband permanently.

MY DIARY OF MISTAKES

When I was in the seminary I considered my superior as my enemy. I did not think that he cared much for me. Earlier, I had left the seminary but Jesus brought and took me back. So my rector would watch me like a hawk just to see if I was going to make a mistake; and that would be a good reason to send me home. My rector had footsteps like those of a cat. You would never hear him approaching, but you would suddenly turn around and find him behind you. I had the habit of writing down the mistakes of my superior in a diary. I had recorded more than twenty incidents of wrongs committed against me, in the same manner with the exact date and time, along with the witnesses present when the incident had occurred.

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Before becoming priests, a farewell party was always held for the brothers who were about to leave the seminary. One of the brothers had to give a farewell speech on behalf of all the brothers, I had planned that on that day if I got the chance I would say all those incidences I had recorded in my diary. I even had a dream regarding this; in the dream, I stood up to give my speech. All were gathered, our superiors and all the brothers in my batch that were graduating from the seminary. I took my place at the podium and began, “Dear reverend superiors and my beloved brothers. We are all gathered here to celebrate our last time together in this seminary. I deeply thank our superior, procurator and the spiritual father who have made this day a reality for us. I especially thank the superior for all the things he has done for us and especially me. I stand here to speak the truth, nothing but the whole truth.” At this all my fellow seminarians clapped and cheered me on, as they too had many things to say. I continued with my speech, “Dear reverend fathers, in the year 2002, on such and such a day at 2pm, I was found watching T.V during study time along with some of my fellow brothers. Fr. Superior walked in his cat steps and shouted at me and told me to get out of the room. However, as I walked out, I looked behind and noticed that he did not say anything to the other brothers. Well I don’t know if he remembers this incident, but even if he doesn’t, it happened anyway. If I was the superior, I would never do that. I hope you will never repeat it. I find it my obligation as truth alone can set you free. You thought all was fine but I remind you that even when all seems fine, I find you to be really partial. We offer our prayers that either you may change or be changed.” Today I really thank God that was just but a dream.

Later my retreat master approached me and told me, ‘Brother you have a very big block in your life. You carry a record of all the mistakes committed against you by your superior’. I told him, “But father what I wrote was nothing but the truth”. He told me, “If you desire to become a good priest of Jesus Christ, you have to immediately destroy that diary”. On hearing this I really cried. I did not want to let these painful incidents just go untouched and unpunished. I also felt that the superior was out to destroy my life and it was not fair to just let him go scot-free. He explained to me the word of God from the Book of Revelations, “for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God” (Rev.12:10). The name of the devil is accuser. Our God can never speak lies. And the devil can never lie to God. So even when the devil is accusing us in front of God,

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he is speaking nothing but the truth, because in front of God, the devil cannot speak lies. So when we accuse others we become partners with the devil. The retreat Director read, “Beware then of useless grumbling, and keep your tongue from slander; because no secret word is without result, and a lying mouth destroys the soul” (Wis.1:11). I burned that diary soon after that.

I learned one thing in my life that I am called not to establish human justice or values. Because, “By a perversion of justice he was taken away” (Is.53:8). Instead my call is to follow Jesus, exactly in His footsteps.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

- 1Pt.2:21-23



***when the devil is accusing us in front of God,
he is speaking nothing but the truth, because
in front of God, the devil cannot speak lies.
So when we accuse others we become partners
with the devil.***

The Lord does not favour our recording the mistakes of others. Jesus does not keep a record of our sins and mistakes. If he were to do so who would be able to stand before Him? “Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults” (Sir.28:7). The Lord has hidden our mistakes; we are here to live for Jesus, like Jesus. Many a time I have told Jesus, “if I were you, after I resurrected, I would go to Pontius Pilate pick him up and slap him three times in the face.” Jesus however did not do this. He is so good. He just kept silent, because Jesus died on the cross also to save Pontius Pilate. We should all borrow a leaf from this nature of our Lord and master Jesus Christ.

I PRAY AGAINST HIM

One day a very sick man came to see me for prayers. As I was praying over him, the Lord revealed to me that his wife was praying against him.

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I asked him to bring his wife along so that I may speak to her. When the wife came I asked her if she was praying against her husband. She admitted that indeed she was praying that her husband would not get better so that he would learn a lesson. I asked her why she was doing so. She replied that her husband mistreated her so much. He was a very rich man, but would never give her money to spend for the daily household needs. He was adulterous and would even bring his mistresses in their home while she was watching. He treated her so disrespectfully, like a slave and this greatly distressed her. Then he got sick. In her heart she said to herself, ‘Lord let him feel the pain of rejection and humiliation that I have been feeling’. When he got sick, his mistresses left him. Of course this delighted his wife as she put it, ‘now that his mistresses have gone, he will know my worth as his wife. Actually I am happy that he is sick; he now cares for me and the needs of my children and he does not shout at me’.

Consider the possibility that your enemy is also the friend of Jesus because he or she is made in the image of the Lord. Therefore when we pray against our enemies, we receive no blessings from the Lord.



She admitted that indeed she was praying that her husband would not get better so that he would learn a lesson.

MY OWN SON DID THIS TO ME

Blessed Mother Theresa recalled how she picked a woman from a dump site who was dying. “I took her out and took her to the convent. She kept repeating the same words, “My son did this to me”. Not even once did she utter the words, “I’m hungry, I’m dying, I’m suffering. Just, “My son did this to me”. It took her a long time to help the woman to say: “I forgive my son”, before she died in her arms.

IF I DON’T DIE THIS FORGIVENESS WILL NOT EXIST!

Thomas and Mathew were childhood friends and business partners but they were not talking to each other for Thomas had cheated Mathew in the

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business. Fifteen years after, Mathew was involved in a terrible accident and was on his deathbed, but he didn't want to enter eternity with a heavy heart. He called Thomas, apologized and said, "Let's forgive each other and forget the past." Thomas thought it was a good idea and decided to visit Mathew at the hospital.

They caught up with each other after 15 years, patched up their differences and spent a couple of hours together. As Thomas was leaving, Mathew shouted from behind, "Thomas, just in case I don't die, remember, this forgiveness doesn't count, those millions you stole from me have to be paid back..." Forgiveness is an unconditional declaration that should bury all past hurt feelings forever.

When a person refuses to forgive, he locks doors that some day might need to be opened. When we hold grudges and harbour resentment, the persons we hurt the most are ourselves.

FORGIVE THEM BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW

My brother, Rev. Dr. PD. Johny SDB, told a story of a merchant in a small town who had identical twin sons. The boys worked for their father in the department store he owned and, when he died, they took over the store. Everything went well until the day a dollar bill disappeared. One of the brothers had left the bill on the cash register and walked outside with a customer. When he returned, the money was missing. He asked his brother, "Did you see a dollar bill on the cash register?" His brother replied that he had not. But the young man kept probing and questioning. He would not let it alone. "Dollar bills just don't get up and walk away! Surely you must have seen it!" There was subtle accusation in his voice. Tempers began to rise. Resentment set in. Before long, a deep and bitter chasm divided the young men. They would not speak to each other. They finally decided they would no longer work together and a dividing wall was built down the centre of the store. For twenty years hostility and bitterness grew, spreading to their families and to the community.

Then one day a man in an automobile licensed in another state stopped in front of the store. He walked in and asked the clerk, "How long have you been here?" The clerk replied that he'd been there all his life. The customer

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said, “I must share something with you. Twenty years ago I was “riding the rails” and came into this town in a boxcar. I hadn’t eaten for three days. I came into this store from the back door and saw a dollar bill on the cash register. I put it in my pocket and walked out. All these years I haven’t been able to forget that. I know it wasn’t much money, but I had to come back and ask your forgiveness.”

The stranger was amazed to see tears well up in the eyes of this middle-aged man. “Would you please go next door and tell that same story to the man in the store?” he said. Then the man was even more amazed to see two middle-aged men, who looked very much alike, embracing each other and weeping together in the front of the store.

The wall of resentment that divided them came down. It is often the little things that divide people - words spoken in haste, criticisms, accusations, resentments. And once divided, they may never come together again. Many times unforgiveness is the result of ignorance of the root cause.



“Dollar bills just don’t get up and walk away! Surely you must have seen it!”

There is a saying that goes: “He that cannot forgive others - breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.” For every man is in need of God’s forgiveness. We are all imperfect and we continually make mistakes. Continually we are doing what is wrong - sinning. And therefore in need of forgiveness from God and our fellow human beings.

YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH JUDAS

After I became a priest, there was a crisis in the community where I was stationed. I felt sad, frustrated and rejected, betrayed and misunderstood because false rumors were being spread about me. I went to the chapel, but I was too angry to pray. I told Jesus that the rage burning in me was too strong and I did not want to pray so I was just going to sit there and stare at

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Him. I told Jesus that I wanted to go immediately and question those who spread the rumors. As I was sitting there in the chapel on ‘prayer strike’, Jesus questioned me, “You say you have been rejected by your community, how many times have you rejected me? Then suddenly these words flashed before me, “You have to learn to live with Judas! I lived with Judas knowing that he would betray me; you too have to learn to live with him”. Look at Judas, the apostle who betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver, this is an insult to the King of Kings- thirty pieces of silver? (Mt. 27:3) All through the three years Jesus spent with Judas, not once do we see Jesus treating him with any contempt or malice. He treated him the same way as the other apostles. On the night Jesus was betrayed, He even washed his betrayer’s feet the same way He did to the rest of the other apostles. His apostles never had a clue on who was going to betray Jesus and yet they were always with Judas Iscariot. Jesus being my master, and I am trying to follow Him in every way, compelled me to abide by these words. Jesus’ love for us is conditional. He loves each and every one of us as we are.



***I lived with Judas knowing that he would
betray me; you too have to learn to live
with him”.***

CHAPTER FOUR



CONFESSION: A DOOR TO HEAVEN



If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- 1 Jn.1:9

Confession is a sacrament in which the priest in the name of God and the Church forgives our sins, whether mortal or venial, which we have committed after baptism.

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ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SINS

A French prince once visited a prison, in which the prison warden offered to release any prisoner the prince might designate. To pick out the prisoner the prince began interviewing the men privately, asking each one “Why are you here?”

“I’m innocent, my Lord!” cried one. “I’ve been framed!” pleaded another. Perjury, prejudice, injustice and oppression were reasons given by the convicts for their being in prison. Only one man told a different story: “Your highness, I deserve to be here and I have no complaint. In my time I have been a wicked, desperate murderer. It is great mercy, both to society and to me, that I am here.”

“You wicked wretch!” the prince said, “What a pity you should be confined among so many honest citizens. You yourself admit that you are evil enough to corrupt them all. I can’t allow you to remain in their company another day. Guard, this is the man I wish to be released.” The first step to receive the forgiveness of God through confession is to acknowledge our sins and failures. A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes.

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION/ PENANCE/ RECONCILIATION

The sacrament of reconciliation, commonly known as confession is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church that were instituted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace. Therefore confession is one of the ways in which we receive grace from God. It is through this sacrament that Jesus forgives our sins using His Holy and anointed servants, the priests and bishops, through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Forgiveness of sins is only given by the Lord. However Jesus Himself passed on this power to forgive sins to His apostles, saying, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:23). After the resurrection Jesus handed this authority to the disciples, specifically to the church. This is a sacrament of humility; the devil is humiliated and God accepts us as His sons and daughters once again. When we do not go for confession, we choose to refuse the grace of forgiveness from God.

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One person came to see me, he was unmarried, jobless and had a load of problems. As I was praying for him I saw a vision. I saw Jesus standing so close to this man. Jesus' hands were crossed and bound at the wrists and His body was bleeding terribly. "When was the last time you did your confession?" I asked him. He told me that it had been many years since he made his last confession. I told him, "Why do you bind Jesus? He is standing so close to you but cannot help you; you have bound His hands and He is unable to do anything for you. By neglecting the sacrament of confession, you were telling Jesus, 'no' to His grace!" I have seen so many people healed and delivered through the sacrament of confession. So "before falling ill, humble yourself; and when you have sinned, repent" (Sir.18:21).

HEALING THROUGH CONFESSION

One woman came all the way from Nyeri, a town in Central Kenya for confession. As soon as the absolution was given, she started screaming in a loud voice saying she felt fire on her back. For thirty five years she had been suffering from back pain. But through confession, the Lord granted her physical healing from her pain. Confession is indeed a sacrament of physical and spiritual healing. That is why King David prayed:

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and
you forgave the guilt of my sin.

- Ps.32:5

And the book of Sirach instructs:

My child, when you are ill, do not delay, but pray to the Lord,
and he will heal you. Give up your faults and direct your
hands rightly, and cleanse your heart from all sin.

- Sir.38:9-10



***As soon as the absolution was given, she
started screaming in a loud voice saying
she felt fire on her back.***

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DOUBTS RAISED BY PEOPLE REGARDING THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

Many people ask why Catholics have to tell their sins to another human being. Why can't they just confess directly to God? Jesus Christ is the only one who has the power to forgive sins. When the paralytic man was brought in front of Jesus by his friends through the roof, the first words that Jesus told him were, 'Son, your sins are forgiven' (Mk.2:1-10). The scribes sitting there did not understand how Jesus could forgive someone's sins. Jesus told them that He had the power to forgive sins. Jesus handed down this same power to forgive sins over to the disciples saying, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn.20:23). The disciples in turn passed it to the Church. According to St. Paul, the bishops and the priests are the ambassadors of Christ, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2Cor.5:20). If Jesus wanted us to confess directly to Him, He would not have given his disciples the power to forgive sins. He promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt.28:20). As the Lord has already handed over this authority to the disciples it is his plan that we should seek forgiveness through his anointed appointed servants, the priests.

All the people of Jerusalem, Judea, and Jordan flocked to John the Baptist, "confessing their sins," and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mt.3:6). It is God's will that we confess our sins to an ordained priest and receive forgiveness.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained).

- Jn.20:23



If Jesus wanted us to confess directly to Him, He would not have given his disciples the power to forgive sins.

Sin breaks our relationship with God, with other fellow human beings and with oneself. It is only through a mediator that this broken relationship can be rebuilt. Since our sin also has a social nature the priest helps us reconcile

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at all these three levels through the sacrament of reconciliation and through the suggestion of practical penances and reparations. In a dispute among the members the direction the Lord gives is, “If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Mt.18:17).

‘Be reconciled to God’ (2Cor. 5:20) and ‘Go first, be reconciled with your brother’ (Mt.5:24) are the basis of our confession to a priest, the ambassador of Christ. Jesus taught us to pray to God to ‘forgive us our sins’ and called for a continuous reconciliation, through the Church. St. Paul says, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2Cor. 5:18). Sin has a community dimension. That is why the Lord said to Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt.16:19).

To receive forgiveness of sins the penitent has to fulfill three conditions: contrition, confession and reparation. Contrition is a heartfelt sorrow for our sins: “I confess my iniquity, and I am sorry for my sin” (Ps.38:18). Confession is telling of our sins to the priests. Reparation is the resolution to avoid, by the grace of God, the dangerous occasions of sin. “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell’ (Mt. 5:29).

All human beings have sensory organs. Unless we touch or see something it is difficult for us to believe its presence especially when it comes to things we cannot comprehend or understand. Very few people would believe without seeing or touching. This is just typical human nature. The sacramental symbols of a visible mediator of the grace of reconciliation, the priest, make it easier for us as human beings to be in touch with the divine. Through the sacrament of reconciliation, the priest, the representative of Christ makes the prayer of absolution and says a prayer to which he ends with the words, ‘Your sins are forgiven, go in peace’ - a sure assurance that our sins have been forgiven. Jesus through the priest also speaks to us, advises us and guides us in the right path about issues we cannot even discuss with those so close to us, something we can never get when we directly confess to God.

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A priest will never reveal confessional secrets; so there is no need to judge or evaluate them. All the sins confessed during confession are forgiven by the merits of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. So when approaching the sacrament, we ought to approach it to receive the forgiveness and deliverance of Jesus. Our Lord instituted the sacrament of penance when He breathed His spirit upon His apostles and gave them power to forgive sins, saying, “*whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven*” (Jn. 20:23).

WHY DON'T WE PROGRESS IN HOLINESS AFTER CONFESSION?

One day a boy came to me saying that he often goes for confession, but he does not progress in holiness. He had attended six retreats, but made no progress. Whenever he was in the prayer hall for the duration of the retreat, he would be fine. As soon as the retreat ended and he left, he got attacks from the same sin. This boy was under the evil sin of masturbation and was always being attacked by it. Seeing no change, he told me that he even stopped going for confession because even when he went he was tired of confessing the same sin. I told him, ‘we commit sin when we lack the grace of God’. According to St. Paul, “Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me” (2Cor.12:8). The Lord however told him, ‘My grace is sufficient for you’. He tells all those who are struggling to progress in holiness after confession. “My grace (sacrament of confession) is sufficient for you to get out of this bad habit’. From then on every time this boy fell into that same sin of masturbation, he would run for confession without being ashamed. This enabled him to progress in holiness and he received graces and blessings of the Lord. Now he is a seminarian. He said, “Now I am ashamed to commit a sin and not confess it.” The Lord has promised that, “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it” (1Cor.10:13).

The habitual sins are the greatest blocks to progress in holiness. Certain sins are part and parcel of us. We commit sin because we lack the grace of God. This grace is obtained through the sacraments, confession being one of them. Therefore even as we confess, it is important to mention or include even those sinful tendencies that we are always falling by; anger, pride,

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jealousy, laziness, hatred, holding grudges and many others that may be our sinful bad habits. We need habitual grace to overcome habitual sins and to grow in holiness. Another reason why we do not progress in holiness after confession could be that we do not do a proper examination of conscience and therefore fail to see sins which we commit. As a result we make an incomplete confession.



***We need habitual grace to
overcome habitual sins and to
grow in holiness.***

REGARDING FREQUENT CONFESSION

Regarding frequent confessions Pius XII says, “Those among the clergy who are diminishing esteem for frequent confession are to know that it is alien to the spirit of Christ and most detrimental to the Mystical Body of our Saviour.” The saintly Pope continues:

As you well know venerable brethren, it is true that venial sins may be expiated in many ways which are to be highly commended. But to ensure more rapid progress day by day in the path of virtue, we will that the pious practice of frequent confession, which was introduced into the Church by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, should be earnestly advocated. By it genuine self-knowledge is increased, Christian humility grows, bad habits are corrected, spiritual neglect and tepidity are resisted, the conscience is purified, the will is strengthened, a salutary self-control is attained, and the grace is increased in virtue of the sacrament itself. Let those therefore among the younger clergy, who make light or lessen esteem for frequent confession realize that what they are doing is alien to the spirit of Christ and disastrous for the Mystical Body of our Saviour.

- Pius XII in *Mystical Body of Christ*, 1943

Furthermore, John Paul II taught:

For confession is an irreplaceable school of spirituality and highly positive process of regeneration of souls... In this sense,

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confession is already in itself a very high form of spiritual direction. The sacrament of reconciliation is not reserved only for those who commit serious sins. It was instituted for the remission of all sins, and the grace that flows from it has special efficacy of purification and support, in the effort of amendment and progress, it is an irreplaceable sacrament in Christian life, it cannot be disregarded or neglected, if one wants the seed of divine life to mature...and produce all the desired effects.

General Audience, 1983.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN PRIESTS SO I DON'T CONFESS!

One, who abandons confession, if left to him, will sink deep in sin; like a fresh plant exposed to the fury of the winds, he will fall into the most deplorable excesses. Confession and communion are the first steps to a sound education

- Don Bosco

A man who had been jobless for 10 years came for prayers. I asked him when was the last time he had gone for confession and he said it had been a long time. 'I don't believe in priests and I will never go for confession again', he said. I asked, "Why don't you believe in priests, and no priest died for your sins? It is Jesus who died for you, priests are only instruments." Then he narrated to me this incident. He was regularly going for confession. Whenever he went to confess, he would continue for half an hour making his confession. One day when he had finished he did not find the priest in the confessional and he got worried that maybe the priest was not there on the other side. He stood up to go and check if the priest was still there, but to his surprise he found the priest had come out of the confessional box and was looking at him. It really angered the penitent, 'How can a priest look at me while confessing and judge me?' he asked. He continued, 'that is an insult. How could I ever make a confession again seeing how this priest behaved?' I told him, 'You say that the priest insulted you? A priest is a sinner, an instrument in the hands of Jesus and yet no priest died for you, only Jesus did. But before judging the priest I have a simple question to ask you. How many times have you prayed for the priest listening or going to listen to your confession? The priests can only manage if we pray for them!' The priest forgives sins by the power of God, when he pronounces the words of absolution. Jesus' forgiving and healing ministry continues in the church.

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CONFESSION IS NOT A LICENSE TO REPEAT SINS!

We need to remember that we are all frail in nature and the tendency to fall will be great. Confession however is not a license to commit sin. We read “*Do not commit a sin twice; not even for one will you go unpunished* (Sir.7:8). Again the Lord gives a warning to those who are not serious about strengthening their resolve to stay away from sin.

Do not be so confident of forgiveness that you add sin to sin. Do not say, “His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins,” for both mercy and wrath are with him, and his anger will rest on sinners. Do not delay to turn back to the Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day; for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will come upon you, and at the time of punishment you will perish.

- Sir.5:4-7

When we knowingly repeat the same sin, we re-crucify the Lord.

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt.

- Heb.6:4-6

I BECAME AN ANGEL AFTER MY CONFESSION

While conducting a retreat for some religious sisters, I asked the sisters to write down all the sins they had committed on a piece of paper and carry the same paper to the confessional. On the last day of the retreat, one of the sisters came forward to give her testimony. This is what she said, “When I came for this retreat, I never thought I would go for confession, because last week I had made my confession and I did not see any sin in me that I should confess. And also I never felt any different from confessions so I was praying for a special miracle to happen to increase my faith in confession. So when the priest was conducting the penitential service (reading out sins for examination of conscience), I just took a piece of paper and my pen as instructed. To my surprise, I found that almost every sin that was

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mentioned, I had committed and I filled four pages with my sins! I then went for confession. After the confession, as I was walking through the hallway back to the chapel, to my surprise, I noticed that I was no longer walking on the ground, but was floating. Yes! I practically floated through the hallway. I believe that Jesus took all my weight and sinfulness away making me feel very light. It was my most sincere confession and I came to know that I became an angel as I prayed for a special miracle.”



***It was my most sincere confession
and I came to know that I became
an angel as I prayed for a special
miracle.”***

THANKSGIVING IS IMPORTANT FOR PERSEVERANCE

It is important that we thank the Lord for the gift of forgiveness. I remember the past and thank God for all that He has done for me.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits-
who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.

- Ps.103:2-3

We should trust in the God of love and forgiveness. His name is compassion.

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD,
the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and
abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Ex. 34:6

I believe in the forgiving words of Jesus: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mk.2:5). Jesus loves me not because I am good, but His unconditional love makes me good and in Him I become “a new creation” (2Cor 5:17) I ask God’s pardon and He forgives me because He loves me. I share with others the pardon of Jesus, “then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you” (Ps.51:13).

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GIFT OF REPENTANCE

As we confess we need a deep sense of repentance. By our sins, we offend an infinitely good and loving God.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil
in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and
blameless when you pass judgment.

- Ps.51:4

Repentance and perfect contrition are the most important aspects to receive the forgiveness of God through confession. Repentance is the sorrow for our sins as we go to confession. “Godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation” (2Cor.7:10). Perfect contrition is sorrow for our sins arising purely from the love of God. By perfect contrition our sins are forgiven immediately, even before we confess them; nevertheless, we still need to go to confession and encounter the forgiving Lord and experience his healing grace through the means that He has made available to us. In addition, if our sins are mortal, we are strictly bound to confess.

Contrition is called imperfect when we are confessing only because we are afraid of God’s punishment. “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love” (1Jn.4:18). Imperfect contrition is insufficient for confession.

WHAT IS MEANT BY CONFESSING OUR SINS?

Confessing our sins means we speak out our sins before a priest. We must confess all mortal sins committed after baptism. The Word of God says, “No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Pro.28:13).

To make a good confession I should not:

- a) Be ashamed to confess my sins: “Do not be ashamed to confess your sins, and do not try to stop the current of a river” (Sir.4:26).
- b) conceal any of my sins for (“No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Pro.28:13).
- c) postpone the day of my confession: “Do not delay to turn back to the

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Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day; for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will come upon you, and at the time of punishment you will perish” (Sir.5:7).

- d) Be self-complacent of my sins: “Do not say, “I sinned, yet what has happened to me?” for the Lord is slow to anger. Do not be so confident of forgiveness that you add sin to sin. Do not say, “His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins,” for both mercy and wrath are with him, and his anger will rest on sinners” (Sir.5:4-6).
- e) Accuse or blame God for my sins: He has not commanded anyone to be wicked, and he has not given anyone permission to sin” (Sir. 15:20).

All your sins are forgiven as the priest says the words of absolution, “God, the father of mercies through the Death and Resurrection of His son, has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace. I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

DON'T MAKE A FALSE CONFESSION!

Making a false confession brings more harm than good. To lie to God is a disastrous thing. We have a tendency to make incomplete confessions when we have not really repented or prayed for the confessor. If a person willfully conceals a mortal sin in confession, he is guilty of a great sacrilege, by telling a lie to the Holy Spirit. This is similar to the behaviour of Ananias and Saphira in Acts.5:3:

“Ananias,” Peter asked, “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?”



We have a tendency to make incomplete confessions when we have not really repented or prayed for the confessor.

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Some years back, in the beautiful cathedral in Paris, a priest was giving instruction to the people on the new rite of penance when the Archbishop of Paris entered through the rear of the Cathedral. The Archbishop came toward the front and was asked to say a few words to the people. He said that he had heard of the new rite and came to see how the people enjoyed the more personal form. The Archbishop then said that he would like to tell them a true story that had happened in that very cathedral many years back. There was a priest in the confessional not far from the rear of the church whose queue was finished. The priest sat reading his breviary when he overheard a group of boys outside the confessional talking in profanities and betting each other that no one would have the guts to go into the confessional and make a false confession. One of the guys said that he would give twenty francs (\$5.00) to the guy who would do it. One of the boys said he would and went over to the confessional where the priest was sitting. He went through the regular list of sins and threw in some different ones for variety and stopped. The priest asked if that was all. He responded that that was all he could remember. For penance, the priest gave the boy instruction to go to the front of the cathedral to the standing crucifix, to walk up to it and say, “Jesus you have done all of this for me and this is what I will do to heal your wounds.” The priest then told him to spit in the face of Jesus.

The boy left the confessional and joined the boys standing at the rear. He asked for the twenty francs. One of them said to him, “Wait, what about the penance? That’s part of the confession.” The boy walked to the front of the cathedral to the standing crucifix, then said, “Jesus, you have done all of this to heal me, and this is what I am going to do for you.” He looked into the eyes of the figure of Jesus, turned away and left the cathedral. The Archbishop then told the crowd, “I know that this is a true story because I was the boy who went to the confessional that night.”

CHAPTER FIVE



HEALING OF PAST PAINFUL MEMORIES



Experts say about 65 percent of our physical sicknesses are psychosomatic or are due to our inner wounds. Our behaviour and personalities are not developed suddenly; they are formed over the years. These behaviours may be positive therefore complementing our personality, or negative and destroying our nature. When our behaviours are negative, they are usually a manifestation of a hurt or wound in our hearts or mind, which we may or may not be aware of. How do these hurts or wounds come about? Is it possible that our heart can be hurt to the extent that the same hurt shows

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itself outwardly in our behaviour? How will I know that the behaviour I am exhibiting is as a result of a hurt in my mind or heart? What can I do to correct this situation? These are some of the questions we are going to try and answer in this topic. The greatest point to note is “our past is present to Jesus” and “He is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb.13:8). We can’t hide our inner wounds rather we need healing. Healing is possible as we belong to Jesus.

WHAT ARE INNER WOUNDS?

Inner wounds are related to our hearts and minds. When I was a child, for three years I was the last born and was lavished upon with all the care and love by my parents and siblings. When my uncles and aunts came to visit us, they would bring along sweets, chocolates and goodies and I would be given the responsibility to share and distribute them among my brothers and sisters. Being the one distributing, I always had the privilege of getting the extra share. Along came my sister, and she took all these privileges away. I was forgotten and all attention was turned to this new ‘queen’ of the family. I hated that and often I would beat her, scratch her and even pull her hair. When my uncles and aunts came to visit, they would give the goodies to my younger sister to distribute them. Since I used to torture her she would not share the goodies with me and this made me angry. Of course, when I beat her, she would scream and cry and my mother would come racing to see what the matter was. On finding out that I was torturing my little sister, my mother would send me for a stick, and then to go to the prayer room and pray. In the prayer room I would kneel down, facing the picture of our Lord, join my hands in prayer and she would come and beat me thoroughly with the stick I fetched. I would scream and cry loudly in pain, and then she would say, “Keep quiet, the neighbours might hear”. My pain was not an issue to her, but the neighbours hearing my cry was her major concern. Many times I felt like getting hold of the same stick and beating her up with it, but I couldn’t, she was way too big for me. After the beating, being a very busy mother with ten children to take care of she would go to the kitchen. I would go to my room, sit at a corner with my head in between my legs then cry. When the food was ready, my mother would call out, ‘Antony!’ Quickly I would stop my crying stand up and go to eat. Being a child with a good appetite, I would immediately forget about the beatings then go to eat. But later, I came to realise that food could never give me innerhealing because I was suppressing all my unexpressed anger.

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Every time I made a mistake, this was the punishment I received, sometimes even when I was not in the wrong. This made me store up a lot of anger in my heart (suppressed anger). We cannot be hurt and simply ignore the feeling or incident. Even to me food would not take away the hurtful feelings; they would still be there buried somewhere deep in my mind or heart. This was evident from the way I behaved when I got angry. Usually I do not get angry but when I do, no one would dare come near me. I remember when I was in school, I liked playing football. During regular school games, there would be no referees so there used to be a lot of unfairness and cheating in the games. Whenever I saw a team being unfair, I would take the ball and go away with it, paralysing the whole game. No one would dare question me, because they all knew of my bad temper. So when a team played unfairly against another, and they saw me marching into the field, they would quickly take the ball and move away from me.

Anything that is suppressed is hidden in our minds or hearts. Emotions can also be suppressed. They will not show evidently but when provoked, can hurt others or even oneself. For example someone suffering from suppressed anger will not always show anger but when he or she gets angry you cannot stand to be near that person; they shout, scream and can even beat you up. Suppressed anger is an example of an inner wound. Other examples of inner wounds include rejection, shame, guilt feelings, inferiority complexes and many others.

Examples of behaviours that are a manifestation of inner wounds include;

1. Love of loneliness, you find such people alone, even when in a big community
2. Others live a life of indifference, they are not attached to anyone or anything
3. When you talk to others they don't look at you in the face; they will look in every other direction except your face
4. Singing in the bathroom
5. Cracking jokes and laughing in a loud voice
6. Some people don't laugh or smile even when the funniest joke is cracked
7. Crying easily even over small things
8. Fear of darkness
9. Stubbornness

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10. Hating everyone
11. Always criticizing
12. Getting angry easily
13. Excessive sexual desires
14. Excessive shame
15. Lack of concentration in studies
16. Always insisting on one's own way
17. Always arguing
18. Excessive talking
19. Fear of germs
20. Fear of public speaking
21. Fear of losing friends
22. Suppressed feelings
23. Disappointments and hopelessness
24. Addiction to drinking or smoking
25. Drug addiction
26. Over eating
27. Always feeling sleepy
28. People who physically or sexually abuse others
30. Inactivity
31. Inferiority complex
32. Hating all forms of authority
33. Not believing in anyone
34. Rebelliousness

These are some of the different manifestations of inner wounds.

Our behavioural patterns are directly or indirectly a result of inner wounds. All human beings have been hurt, wounded or rejected. Inner wounds come to us uninvited, through our ancestors, parents, childhood, adolescence, middle and old ages. Since they come to us without our control, they are likened to an evil attack. That is why it is very important to deal with them as quickly as possible, no matter how minor they may seem. Inner wounds manifest themselves slowly over a period of time.

Life is in itself a struggle and as we go through various experiences of life we can get wounded.

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Our behavioural patterns are directly or indirectly a result of inner wounds. All human beings have been hurt, wounded or rejected.

Hard work was created for everyone, and a heavy yoke is laid on the children of Adam, from the day they come forth from their mother's womb until the day they return to the mother of all the living. Perplexities and fear of heart are theirs, and anxious thought of the day of their death. From the one who sits on a splendid throne to the one who grovels in dust and ashes, from the one who wears purple and a crown to the one who is clothed in burlap, there is anger and envy and trouble and unrest, and fear of death, and fury and strife. And when one rests upon his bed, his sleep at night confuses his mind. He gets little or no rest; he struggles in his sleep as he did by day. He is troubled by the visions of his mind like one who has escaped from the battlefield

-Sir.40:1-5.

But our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came down and went through the same struggle so He knows and understands exactly what we go through when we are suffering. Jesus not only went through the same struggles that we go through, but also suffered so much for us so that He could set us free.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

- Heb.4:15

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews also reminds us that though He did not sin Jesus struggled like ourselves but even went beyond to shedding his blood on the cross for our sins. As we face various struggles and get wounded on the way it is encouraging to know that "In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (Heb.12:4). Through his suffering, death and resurrection Jesus conquered the world: "In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" (Jn.16:33).

MY MOTHER'S MAID

During a healing retreat, a young woman came to give her testimony. She said, "When you see me I look like a small girl, but actually, I am thirty four years of age. I really hated myself that I could not even think of marriage. I was born while my mother was a student at university. Since she could not take care of me while studying, she took me to her mother, my grandmother, who raised me. My grandmother constantly abused me and kept telling me to go back to my mother who had rejected me. I did not receive any motherly love. I never got a chance to breastfeed. Later on, my mother met a man with whom she fell in love and wanted to marry. However the man asked my mother if she had any children, 'I am not going to marry you if you already have a child' he said to her. Since my mother did not want to lose him, she told him that she did not have a child but had a house girl and that was me. The man agreed to marry her and he became my step father, although to him I was the house girl. My mother had four children with my stepfather. My duties were to cook, clean, feed and wash the clothes of my step brothers and sisters. I only ate the leftovers of any food that they had eaten. My stepfather started to sexually abuse me, but when I told my mother, she ordered me to keep quiet and not raise those accusations against her husband. She said 'He is now your dad and you have to respect that. I had no life because of you and now you want to stand in the way and spoil things for me. For the sake of your own good, keep quiet! I do not ever want to hear any complaints against him ever. If you do not want to live here, you are free to go.' I became her house girl: I washed, cooked, cleaned for my mother, her children (my step brothers and sisters) and her husband. I did not get a chance to go to school and sometimes I did not have food to eat. All this proved too much for me and on three occasions I tried to commit suicide. One day I packed my bags and ran away from home. Now after having attended this retreat, listening to Is.46:3-4:

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

"I encountered Jesus in my life, I am filled with the love of God and I know He will take care of me from now on. I will go back to my mother and

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ask her for forgiveness for having run away from home. I now know that I have a real mother and father who loves me as I am whether small, thin and unattractive and who will never abandon me; and that is Jesus Christ! I will never complain that my marriage may not take place because Jesus is there for me,” she narrated.

The only one who loves each and everyone as they are, despite the weaknesses is Jesus Christ. We should therefore never fear to approach Him because of the enormity of our sins or transgressions because Jesus promised He will never reject anyone who comes to Him (Jn.6:37).



***I became her house girl: I washed,
cooked, cleaned for my mother, her
children***

INNER WOUNDS THROUGH LACK OF BREAST FEEDING

Many women these days do not think that breast feeding is necessary. In *Lamentations 4:3*, we read that ‘my daughter has become as cruel as the ostriches of the desert.’ Even wild animals, here (jackals), give breast milk to their young but human beings deny this to their children. Human beings have become like ostriches who do not breast-feed. Breast milk has many important nutrients which are necessary for both physical and mental growth of a baby, others which boost the immune system of the baby and protect the baby from certain diseases. During breast feeding the mother bonds with the baby in a special way. A child that is not breast-fed misses a lot.

All through our lives, we have one form or another of inner wounds. This is because human beings are social beings who interact and encounter various people: As our family or community members, neighbours, colleagues, classmates etc. They may rub us the wrong way, whether knowingly or unknowingly and hurt us. We therefore have to pray and surrender to the Lord everyday the hurts that we receive so that they may not develop into inner wounds.

REJECTION

Rejection is a common inner wound because human beings in one way or another suffer from rejection. When one is not accepted as he or she is, or is regarded as useless or neglected by those close to them, the person is hurt and feels rejected. Rejection can occur between husband and wife, children and parents and vice versa, teachers and students, class or schoolmates, community members and even between a pregnant mother and the baby she is carrying in her womb. Rejection is a very painful feeling. When one suffers rejection, they are likely to inject this feeling into those around them especially those close to them. Some children are rejected by their parents from the moment they are born. These children become cruel, join antisocial sects and groups in the hope that they will get someone to love and appreciate them for who they are.

Rejection manifests itself as pride

I remember a certain team member at a retreat centre who was so hard working and did her work so wonderfully and responsibly. However, there was one problem, she would never allow anyone to work with her or help her. This angered the rest of the team members and they constantly complained saying she was proud and not fit to be a team member, that she just did not have a team spirit! They persistently urged me to dismiss her. I started praying for her. One day as I watched her work, I realized that her problem was not pride. This woman had been rejected by her parents and she was trying to get appreciation from others. She was the seventh born in a family of eight, and did not receive much appreciation and love. Her parents had already seen other children and never involved her in decision making. Her marriage made her life even more miserable as her husband was a military man who only knew how to give orders. She had never gotten a chance to express herself before being appointed as a team member. Her hidden talents started showing. But the others were bothered because they also had suffered rejection. Had I dismissed her, the inner wound of rejection would have gotten deeper and this would hurt her even more. The best thing was to give her proper guidance of the Holy Spirit and reassure her that with time all would be well. Her behaviour was meant to prove to people that she was worthy to be appreciated and loved. All people suffering from rejection need to be filled with the love of God.

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This woman had been rejected by her parents and she was trying to get appreciation from others.

Rejection causes anger and cruelty

One of the most cruel man that ever lived was Hitler. Hitler lost his mother at a very young age and was brought up by his father's sister who treated him so cruelly. She constantly pulled his hair, beat him and called him names. His father on the other hand often called him 'dog' and frequently beat him. When he became president of Germany, the first thing he did was to destroy his father's tomb using a big tanker. We have heard of the abominable things he did during his reign.

While praying for a boy who often felt sad and angry, we discovered that his mother deserted him when he was very young and was brought up by a mean and angry stepmother. He always used to ask why Jesus allowed him to be separated from his mother. Our parents can never give back the love that we lost when we were infants (2-3 years old). It is only Jesus who can replace the lost love and that is why we really need Him in our lives.

In 1960, a religious persecution was carried out in the territory of Sudan in Africa. A black Christian student named Paride Taban fled to Uganda. In Uganda, he studied at a seminary and was ordained as a priest. When things settled down in Sudan, young Fr. Taban returned to his homeland. He was assigned to a parish in Palotaka. But his congregation found it hard to believe that he was really a priest. Fr. Taban says "The people looked hard at me and asked, 'Do you mean to say, black man, that you are a priest? We can't believe it.'" The people had never had a black priest before. They had always had white priests who gave them clothing and medicine. Young Fr. Taban was from the Madi tribe and had nothing to give them. He was poor just like them. To make matters worse, Fr. Taban was meant to introduce them to the changes of the second Vatican Council. These changes bothered the people greatly. They said to one another, "This young black man turns our altar around and celebrates Mass in our own language. He cannot be a real priest." It was only with a lot of difficulty that the people of Palotaka finally accepted Fr. Taban.

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***It is only Jesus who can replace the
lost love and that is why we really
need Him in our lives.***

JESUS WAS REJECTED BY HIS OWN

What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. “Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.

- Mk.6:2-4

The preconceived notion in the minds of the people about Jesus prevented them from accepting Him as the Messiah or the one sent by God. According to them, He was not successful enough, influential enough or prestigious enough to merit a surrender or belief in Him. So they rejected Him. The hardest place for a preacher to preach is the church where he grew up. Since people rejected Jesus in His life time, His followers will also be rejected time and again. But what happens to most of us when we are rejected... we lose heart, we get discouraged, we easily give up.... Our job is to love, and keep on loving even when we are rejected.

A sorrowful looking distressed mother came to see me and said, “My children are not going to school for lack of school fees. I am jobless, cannot afford to buy food or take care of their other needs or even pay my house rent”. I asked her where her husband was. She told me that she had been married for thirteen years but one day she discovered that he had another wife and child. She had three children with this man. Her husband had left her with the three children for this other woman and refused to support them in any way.

In Africa many people who come for counseling suffer from rejection. Husbands reject their wives, boyfriends reject the girlfriends they impregnate them, mothers reject their children etc, and it is a never ending cycle.

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IS IT THE FIRST TIME YOU ARE APPRECIATED?

One day a young woman came for counseling. She said she had found someone to marry. He was a man unlike others she had met before for he was so good and kind to her. I asked her what made him so good and she said that he treated her so well and told her all those sweet words that made her feel very special. She had never heard any appreciation from her parents since she was born. And here was somebody who appreciated her looks, smartness, words and each and everything. There was one problem however, every time they tried to arrange their wedding, they would face a lot of blocks. They had tried for four months but in vain. I asked her if she was sure that this was the man the Lord wanted her to marry. She said, “Father, I am thirty two years of age and finally I have found someone who loves me and is willing to marry me. If I leave him now how and where will I get another suitor at this age? Besides I think this man is the one God predestined for me from eternity”.

I appreciate that looking for a life partner is a very grueling and sometimes a lifelong task. Marriage however is not just looking for the right partner, here and now, but also looking for one you can live with for the rest of your life. So finding out as much as possible about your future spouse is also important. I told her to enquire more about him and gave her scriptures to read for a month

Take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.

-Ps. 31:4

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.

- Ps. 143:10

After one month of praying, she came back to me saying that his sweetness was just in the mouth. As she was praying over the issue, she came to discover that he was married not only to one woman but to two!! One was abroad and one was here and they both had children. So she called off the relationship.

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Marriage however is not just looking for the right partner, here and now, but also looking for one you can live with for the rest of your life.

SINGLE MOTHERS AND FEELINGS OF REJECTION

There are many men both young and old, who have relationships with young girls, impregnate them and leave them. They are not ready to accept the responsibility of fathering the children they created. The girls are left to bear the burden of bringing up the children on their own. Even married men leave their wives and children for other women and go start families elsewhere.

While conducting a retreat in Tanzania, a 36 year old man came to see me about his lack of marriage. I asked him if he had sexually abused anyone. He said that when he was at the university, he had many girlfriends some of whom he impregnated and abandoned. I told him that when he behaved that way he blocked the lives of so many girls and that this in turn, was a big block to the prosperity of his life. Scripture says,

Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob anyone who does this.

-Mal.2:11-12).

There are many single mothers out there who suffer from feelings of rejection. When one feels rejected, they pass that feeling onto others they come into contact with, especially those close to them. In the case of single mothers, they pass their feelings of rejection to their children. This is seen mostly in the way they relate to the children. They may constantly quarrel or beat their children even for the smallest mistake; they may always shout at their children and call them foul names. Sometimes they totally neglect themselves (as usually there is that feeling of worthlessness in them) and their children and turn to habits such as drinking and taking drugs as a form of consolation. When a child is frequently not shown the love that he or she deserves, when they are not treated the way they should be treated, they too start having feelings of being unwanted; feelings of having been born to

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the wrong parents at the wrong time. These feelings are very destructive to the child's life. If a child cannot find love at home, they will go look for it elsewhere and in other dangerous activities such that include alcohol abuse and sex.



If a child cannot find love at home, they will go look for it elsewhere and in other dangerous activities such that include alcohol abuse and sex.

A PRIEST'S STORY

There is a priest who got annoyed, even angry if anyone congratulated or appreciated him. He never accepted complements from others. His fellow priests tried to tell him that when people came to congratulate him it was out of the goodness of their hearts that they did so, but he became angry with them and even hurt them. So he was asked to go for an inner healing retreat so as to get rid of this behaviour. We told him to pray personally and ask the Holy Spirit to show him the root cause of his behaviour so that he could get rid of it. As he was praying the Lord revealed this incident that took place in his life when he was a young boy.

While he was in form three, he scored 100 percent in English language. All his classmates were stunned because it was very difficult to score 100 percent in a language. All his teachers and friends congratulated him. When he reached home he found his parents arguing. His father was a drunkard and his mother talked too much. That afternoon, his father had come home drunk. His mother said something which annoyed him and they began to argue. As the boy got into the house, he held up his 100 percent mark sheet, "Dad! Mum! I got 100 percent in my English exam". His parents were too busy arguing to hear him. So he shouted louder, his father, in his anger turned to him, snatched the mark sheet from the boy and tore it into pieces. His mother who was also angry, shouted, "You go and boil the mark sheet and eat it." For him, he valued the appreciation of his parents more than that of anyone else. For him, this answer sheet was a lifetime testament. All his teachers and classmates appreciated him, but none of his parents congratulated him. The reaction and words of his parents deeply hurt him. From that day if anyone

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congratulated or appreciated him, he got angry because he thought the people were just mocking him and not being sincere. But the Lord spoke to him,

Listen to me, you who know righteousness, you people who have my teaching in your hearts; do not fear the reproach of others, and do not be dismayed when they revile you.

- Is. 51:7

Consider the generations of old and see: has anyone trusted in the Lord and been disappointed? Or has anyone persevered in the fear of the Lord and been forsaken? Or has anyone called upon him and been neglected?"

Sir. 2:10-11

With this direct communication of the Lord this priest was transformed. Our Saviour Jesus Christ will never reject us; even if we committed the most heinous crimes against Him, He would receive us with open arms if we turned to Him.

WEAKNESSES BECOME STRENGTH BY GRACE

One of the candidates in a certain congregation of sisters came to see me saying she did not understand herself. She said that she grew up being social and loved mingling with people. The problem she said; "I talk too much. When I keep quiet my formator looks at me thinking I am moody and when I talk she still gives me the sharp look. So I really do not know how to behave so as not to give my formator a reason to send me home". I told her, "Jesus is the most intelligent person in the world; no one spoke the way He did. When Jesus called you, He called you knowing your weaknesses and your qualities; He called you the way you were and will make use of you the way He sees fit". The Word of God says, "The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established" (Pro.19:21).

When I was younger, I also had the problem of excessive talking. I would talk non-stop for twenty-four hours. My mother always reproached me saying, the behaviour of always talking, especially for a boy was not normal, it was usually girls and women who talked like that. She was never willing to take me anywhere due to this habit of mine. So one day I prayed to Jesus, "Jesus, why do I talk so much? Take away my gift of speech so that I may not be rejected by my mother?" However, the Lord did not answer my prayer

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as He called me to become a preacher of His word and to speak for Him continuously. The Lord made me remember and to “know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom.8:28).



***The Lord did not answer my prayer as
He called me to become a preacher of His
word and to speak for Him continuously.***

THE STUBBORN ST. THOMAS

Saint Thomas the apostle used to make rash decisions and was very stubborn. Thomas said, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe” (Jn.20:25). We see that Jesus, the Master had no problem to appear just for St. Thomas. The Master turned this weakness of Thomas into a great strength. St. Thomas is believed to have become a great missionary going as far as India, a strange country with different cultures, languages and practices, just to go and proclaim the risen Lord. The Syrian Christians in India are the Saint Thomas Christians. The Lord can use even our weaknesses for our good and that of others.

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

- Is.43:1-4

Having seen that the Lord wants us to go to Him as we are, and that He will not turn us away despite our weaknesses, we should find this piece of

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news to be very comforting to all and especially those who suffer rejection. It is an invitation to accept ourselves as we are and develop a deep love for ourselves. We have to love ourselves and pray to the Lord to grant us the gift of self love. Then we will never have reason to feel alone, rejected or abandoned.

FEAR

A mother brought her fearful daughter to our prayer house. The Lord revealed that her mother had even more fear than the child. I asked the mother how she slept at home. She said they slept in one room with her daughter. The daughter's bed was next to the window and the mother's bed next to the daughter's bed. At night, the mom would tell her daughter not to sleep very close to the window because many things come from outside which may land on her. This injected a lot of fear into the child. I gave them both the scripture in Psalms.34:4:

I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me
from all my fears.

A formator brought us a candidate saying that she frequently fell sick. She would be taken to the hospital and given medicine. As soon as she finished her medication she'd fall sick again! This time, the pain would be in some other part of her body. The formator wanted me to pray with her and discern if she really had the call to the religious life, as frequent sickness could be one of the signs that one is not called to religious life. On praying, I saw that she had unrelenting fear. She admitted to having a lot of fear because every time she got sick, her formator would doubt her calling. So she lost her appetite and sleep, would become restless and anxious for fear of being sent home. Since she was not eating and sleeping well, plus the worry and anxiety, this gave rise to sicknesses. She feared going back home as her father had put up a party with all her neighbours and relatives the day she was joining the convent declaring, "My daughter is going to be a religious sister". That was why she kept on having one sickness after another.

However, I encouraged her that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ Jesus; your formator is just an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Your formator cannot take away the plan of the Lord. He says, "You did

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED



She admitted to having a lot of fear because every time she got sick, her formator would doubt her calling.

not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name” (Jn.15:16). When I asked her if she felt she had the vocation to religious life she said, “Father I pray everyday that this is the calling of the Lord for me. Deep down in my heart I believe that the Lord has called me to be His servant. But my formator believes that the Lord is not calling me”. I asked her to read Jeremiah 1:5:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

And again *Isaiah.49:6*,

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Later, I spoke to the formator and from that day on, this candidate never suffered from fear or any kind of sicknesses.

ANGER

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

- Eph.4:26

What others say and do may arouse our anger. But, we must be careful not to react immediately and lose control. St. Paul says, “Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments” (2Cor.10:3-4). Should

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Christians ever become angry? Certainly! But we should never allow our anger to erupt into a sinful response. Two wrongs don't make a right", said Richard De Haan. An anonymous proverb says, "Two times you should keep your mouth shut - When you are swimming and when you are angry." This is because, "Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly" (Pro.14:29) and "Like a city breached, without walls, is one who lacks self-control" (Pro.25:28).



“Two times you should keep your mouth shut - When you are swimming and when you are angry.”

I CAN HONK FOR YOU SIR!

The engine of a woman's car died just as the traffic light turned green. She tried to restart it, but with no luck. Meanwhile, an impatient man behind her began honking his horn. Now the man was honking more persistently. The woman could not stand it anymore. She got out of her car, walked back to the man, and gently said, "Sir, I'd be delighted to honk your horn for you if you'd be kind enough to restart my car."

Anger blinds people. The Chinese have an admirable way of settling a quarrel. The two quarreling parties are made to face each other and argue out the matter. Scores of watchful spectators sit around and watch the contest. While arguing, the first to raise his voice or lose his temper is considered to have lost. The one who keeps calm is the winner. Temper is a strange passion- You can't get rid of it by losing it! My mother used to say, when angry, you should count to ten before you speak.



Temper is a strange passion- You can't get rid of it by losing it!

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DON'T MENTION IT

A tall gentleman was hurrying down the street when out of the doorway came another man, also in haste, and the two collided with great force. The second man was beside himself with anger, and exploded into a flurry of abusive language. The tall gentleman smiled in a friendly fashion and pleasantly remarked: "My friend, I don't know which of us is to blame for this encounter, but I am in too much of a hurry to investigate. If I ran into you, I beg your pardon, if you ran into me, don't mention it." And then, with another smile, he walked away.

There are three kinds of people in the world. The first are like letters carved in a rock- they easily give way to anger and retain their angry thoughts for a long time. The second are like letters written in the sand- they give way to anger also, but their angry thoughts quietly pass away. The third are like letters in running water- they do not retain their passing thoughts. They let abuse and uncomfortable gossips pass by unnoticed. Their minds are always pure and undisturbed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INNER HEALING

Inner healing comes from knowing the root cause of our behaviour, inviting the Lord into this behaviour and asking God for His grace to overcome the behaviour. Nothing is impossible for the Lord and once He is with us nothing will defeat us. We must invite Jesus into our inner wounds so that He will give us the power to overcome them. If we do not invite Jesus they overpower and overcome us, causing us to be unable to control ourselves. Some people find that they do not want to do anything against anyone but find themselves doing it. Some students don't want to cheat, but when the exam comes they cannot resist the urge to cheat.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So

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then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin

Rom.7:14-25

One day I took a stroll in my neighbouring village. There I met a teenage boy who was so drunk that, he could hardly stand straight for one minute. I asked him, 'Why do you drink?' He answered, 'Father, I do not know who my dad is or where my mother is, since she left me a long time ago. I am all alone with no one to love or care for me. I have no one to pay my school fees and so I cannot go to school. So I began drinking'. I told him, 'You should not say you have no one to love or care for you. Jesus is real and He cares for you'. I am an Indian priest here in Africa. My mother, father and family are far away. If I do not really love and lean on Jesus, I will never survive in this nation. The late Fr. Joseph K. Bill, would always say, "Your mother or father never died for you; Jesus died for you". When going through tough times, we should not complain or blame anyone for the mishaps in our lives. Jesus loves and cares for us. He alone will support us.

We all have inner wounds of one kind or the other but the good news is that healing is available in Jesus. As already noted some of the ways in which inner wounds express themselves are the following:

- Shame, fear, loneliness, sadness, inferiority complex; block us from doing good.
- Anger, hatred, jealousy, resentment, pride; will guide us to sin.
- Sexual pervasions, drinking, smoking, taking drugs; will form in us *habitual* sin.

Let us begin by looking at examples of how inner wounds stop us from doing good.

SHAME

Shame is a feeling of uneasiness around strangers, those in authority, persons of the opposite sex, or even peers. It is extreme self-consciousness that affects its victims in a variety of ways. Some get embarrassed: with eyes downcast and heart pounding, they find themselves unable to speak. Others lose their composure and begin to chatter continuously. Yet others find it hard to speak up and voice their opinions or preferences.

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Shame describes your behaviour, your reaction to situations, and the pattern you have learned and reinforced through experiences with others. You think others have negative judgments on you or that they don't like you. You think others are better or more normal than you. You think things will go wrong if you try to relate to other people. You expect things to turn out badly, and they often will - because you get easily tensed up and act in harmony with your beliefs.

By withdrawing, not speaking up, or being so preoccupied with yourself that you don't pay attention to others, you leave the impression that you are stuck-up, unfriendly, bored, uncaring or ignorant. When your thoughts are on yourself, it is hard to concentrate on anything at hand. You pay less attention to the information you are receiving. Then what you fear most happens and you appear foolish.

In essence, you have locked yourself behind the walls of the prison of shyness and have thrown away the key. You let opportunities pass you by. You accept items or situations you really don't want - all because you are afraid to speak up and express your opinion. You lose out on the joys of meeting people, making new friends or doing things that would enhance your life. But others lose out too. They never get to know the real you.

One formerly shy young man says: "I discovered Psalms 34:5 which says, *"Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed"*. Now I am delivered of two things. First, I was too self-centred. I was thinking too much about myself, worrying about what people would think. Second, I was assigning bad motives to the other persons - not trusting them and thinking they were going to look down on me."

SHAME LEADS TO LACK OF SELF ESTEEM

Our human nature is fragile and simple. A girl who came over for counseling would never look at me in the face. She looked everywhere except my face. It was because she had been misused by her own father and she developed guilt feelings and shame. Another girl would not receive Holy Communion because her upper teeth grew outwardly. One of her friends made fun of her saying that if she went to receive the Holy Communion on her tongue, her teeth would hurt the priest's fingers. These comments hurt her, and she could not receive the King of Kings in her life.

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Inner wounds also make us not be able to stand for the glory of the Lord or even speak for the Lord. A single mother brought her seemingly shy daughter asking me to pray over her. She could not face any visitors coming to their home, running and staying in her room not wanting to face them. I asked the mother what happened while the child was in her womb. She said that when she was at the university she fell in love with a young man who impregnated her. She was afraid and ashamed of the pregnancy. As it progressed she would try to hide it by wearing baggy clothes to cover her bulging tummy. She even changed her walking style so as not to make the pregnancy obvious. She did not acknowledge the child in her womb, and this feeling of non-acknowledgement passed on to the child. The child grew up thinking, "I am not good to be seen. I should not appear before others. I am supposed to be hidden always". Then the Lord spoke to her, "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven" (Mt.18:10). It implies that you do not despise yourself as you are so precious to your maker. This message that the angels are so eagerly looking at her face transformed her life.

Once we discover our inner wounds, we should not blame anyone for them because they afflict and hurt only us. Instead we should immediately seek the Lord's healing. Because, "Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted (Is.53:4).

THE STORY OF A SINGLE MOTHER

A 40 year old single mother told me she did not know what was wrong with her daughter. The girl was disobedient, rebellious, stubborn and never listened to her mother. "She hates me and is so rude to me", said the mother. I asked her, "do you love your daughter?" and she replied, "Of course I love my daughter. If I did not love her I would have married someone else a long time ago. But I did not because my daughter was my first priority. If I did not love her I would not have cared for her as I have done all these years. Then I asked her, "Is there a time you did not love your daughter." She replied that the problem was not with her but with the child's father. I asked her why. She told me that when she was in the university, she fell in love with a man, they became friends and in her final year, just before the final exams, she and the man decided to have a sexual relationship. Later on, she discovered

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that she was pregnant. She approached the man and told him that she was expecting his child. The man said that it could not be and he never knew that she would get pregnant. He said he was not ready to take up the responsibility of fatherhood, since he was going abroad to further his studies. He advised her to get an abortion. She was heartbroken. Her parents were devastated by this news. They could not believe that something like that could happen to their daughter. Her mother said that she could not take care of the child, so she decided to leave home and stay alone. She continued with her studies and became a lawyer. She gave birth to the child and raised the child by herself. Then she met another man; and fell in love. He even proposed marriage to her. When she told him that she had a child, he said he could not accept her. He even suggested that she take the child to an orphanage. She could not imagine abandoning her own child, so she ended the relationship.

One day her daughter brought home an exam paper that she had failed. The mother was so annoyed and in her anger shouted at the child, “I work so hard for you to make sure you have the best of everything and in return you play with your studies and can’t perform well. I have practically given up my life for you. It is because of you that I cannot even get married to anyone. It is because of you that my life is spoiled.” Then the girl replied, “It is not my fault that I was born to you. Who told you to give birth to me when you were in the university? If you love me so much then why don’t you ever show me my father? If I have spoiled your life I don’t want to stay with you anymore?” A bitter quarrel then ensued. The mother said the daughter did not love her and the daughter also said her mother did not love her because “mom thought I was a block to a married life for her.”



Then the girl replied, “It is not my fault that I was born to you. Who told you to give birth to me when you were in the university?”

SELF-PITY

A very sad girl came to me saying, someone had told her she was very dark and dull. But the Holy Spirit revealed to me a verse from the book of Song of Songs.1:5,

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I am black and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

She exclaimed saying, 'I never thought my thoughts would be reflected in the Word of God in such a beautiful way. I am happy because He really loves me.' Comments made against us can hurt us and turn out to be inner wounds. At the seminary, when there was a water shortage, we would have to take our bath in the common pond. There was a seminarian who would take the bath with his clothes on saying that because he was going to become a priest he could not show his consecrated body. Later we found out that when he was small, some of his friends made fun of him saying he was skinny like a skeleton. He was therefore afraid to show his 'skeletal frame' in public fearing that people would call him funny names.

SORROWS

Sadness and sorrow is a problem in the lives of many people. The Word of God says,

Do not give yourself over to sorrow, and do not distress yourself deliberately. A joyful heart is life itself, and rejoicing lengthens one's life span. Indulge yourself and take comfort, and remove sorrow far from you, for sorrow has destroyed many, and no advantage ever comes from it.

- Sir.30:21-23

Sorrows in people's lives have various causes and manifest in different ways. They can cripple people in many ways causing them to lose all hope and meaning in life. The God we believe in is tender hearted, and concerned about us. He always is by our side no matter what we think and believe. He is our Father and Mother and we can cry out to God as our parent:

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace! Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to aliens. We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

- Lam.5:1-3

We know and believe that, "He heals the broken-hearted, and binds up their wounds" (Ps.147:3). He consoles those who mourn:

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with weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn

- Jer.31:9

SORROW OVER THE DEATH

Some people's lives become paralysed at the death of their loved ones. Bereavement can be very painful and can continue to be so unless with the help of God we come to see things in the light faith. Even in the midst of what may seem to be disastrous, the Lord has his own reasons why He allows such things to happen. I always ask those who come feeling weighed down by death of their beloved to read the following piece of scripture from second Samuel:

The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died. Then David rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the LORD, and worshiped; he then went to his own house; and when he asked, they set food before him and he ate. Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive; but when the child died, you rose and ate food." He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me, and the child may live.' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.

- 2Sam.12:15-23

Another passage from Romans is very consoling pointing to the fact all that we are and have including our lives are the Lord's.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord;

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so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.
For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be
Lord of both the dead and the living

- Rom. 14:7-9

The wisdom from the book of Sirach presents a powerful reflection on the right dispositions to have in the face of death:

My child, let your tears fall for the dead, and as one in great pain begin the lament. Lay out the body with due ceremony, and do not neglect the burial. Let your weeping be bitter and your wailing fervent; make your mourning worthy of the departed, for one day, or two, to avoid criticism; then be comforted for your grief. For grief may result in death, and a sorrowful heart saps one's strength. When a person is taken away, sorrow is over; but the life of the poor weighs down the heart. Do not give your heart to grief; drive it away, and remember your own end. Do not forget, there is no coming back; you do the dead no good, and you injure yourself. Remember his fate, for yours is like it; yesterday it was his, and today it is yours. When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest too, and be comforted for him when his spirit has departed

- Sir.38:16-23

SUICIDE

A missionary religious sister came and shared her agony in prayer and religious life. She had received news from her home that her brother had committed suicide. She could not believe it because she knew her brother from childhood as the most gentle and devoted person. He was a very caring and sincere person. He was a man of prayer and humility. It was a shock to the sister because she was informed very late about the suicide of the brother. Her family had told her that her brother had a heart-attack. Her family was trying to hide the truth from her as she was so far away from home.

After she received this shocking news she stopped praying and started to question Jesus, "Why have you permitted my brother to commit suicide? Where were you when my brother died? Are you a living God? Being a religious sister you did not protect my brother? Why have you permitted a curse to come upon my family through the suicide? What is the use of my

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religious life? Why have you brought this great tragedy to strike my family members? I could not even block the suicide of my own brother? Is there any use in my religious life for the Lord? How can I face people at home? How can I share this with anyone? I feel like my thoughts are on fire and I am filled with agony”

She had so many questions as she could not understand why her brother had committed suicide. For her, he had been a gentleman who would never think of committing suicide or hurting the Lord. The Lord spoke to her through the book of Wisdom:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little,

-Wis.3:1-3



She had so many questions as she could not understand why her brother had committed suicide.

She was so astonished to hear this scripture saying the Lord spoke to her directly through this passage of scripture.

In the past, the church denied a burial for those who committed suicide. Now, the position of the Church is that those who commit suicide should not be denied a church burial for we don't know the last disposition of the departed, as the good thief reached heaven at the last moment. He repented while he was hanging on the cross.

A certain lady recently lost her father and she was weighed down by sorrow. When he passed on, she was away and therefore did not get the chance to speak to him before his death. This greatly distressed her. From then on her

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life changed. “There was this big gap in my life which no one would fill. I have been so sad, sorrowful and depressed. I could not get over the death of my father and my absence at the time of his departure.’ The Lord spoke to her through the words of Sirach:

Mourning for the dead lasts seven days, but for the foolish or the ungodly it lasts all the days of their lives.

- Sir.22:12

Our departed loved ones are with God. They are now closer to the Lord than when they were alive in this world and therefore more helpful to you than when they were alive. They become powerful intercessors for us with God. If we think they are not with God, the best we can do for them is not to continually mourn for them but pray for them without ceasing. When they enter the presence of God they will then be interceding for us before God.

LONELINESS

When asked, “What is life’s heaviest burden?” one lonely old man answered; “To have nothing to carry.” A cure for loneliness is to carry the burden of another; get involved with their problems and visit all those who are lonely. Listen to someone else’s troubles. Find people who need you and do something for them. Carrying another’s burden will lighten the load of your loneliness. I know a woman who gave each person in her family a golden angel lapel pin one Christmas. “Wear it on your collar or shoulder,” she said, “to remind you that your guardian angel is always looking over your shoulder.” Her brother noticed his pin had a broken wing. He held up his damaged angel and quipped, “It figures. My guardian angel is missing a wing. She can’t even take care of herself!”

Two years later he died of cancer. As I thought of the pain his family must be feeling, I was struck by how his broken angel is like each of us. We each hurt. We all experience loss. At times we are lonely. Like that angel, we are each broken in some way, even if our damage is interior and invisible to others. As it has been so beautifully said, “We are all like angels with just one wing. We can only fly by embracing each other.” We heal best by hanging on to each another. And we overcome loneliness best by putting an arm around someone else and going through the trials of life with them. This family embraced each other. And as they carried one another’s burdens, their own loads were

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lightened. It's a solution for loneliness and a formula for happiness. Blessed Mother Theresa once said, "We can cure physical diseases with medicine but the only cure for loneliness, despair and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love."



There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love".

HOW WE GET INNER WOUNDS

We get inner wounds in various ways and at different stages of our lives: through our ancestry or during our childhood, adolescence, middle age and old age.

(I) Our Ancestors/Ancestry

- If our ancestors practised or were involved in witchcraft, occult practices, devil worship and other forms of superstition
- If our ancestors were involved in sexual impurities like adultery, fornication, sexual abuse of others, polygamy, incest etc
- If our ancestors cheated or grabbed the wealth of others
- Use of uncharitable, destructive words, keeping unforgiveness
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Unworthy reception of the Holy Eucharist

However, we should not keep blaming our ancestors for the inner wounds in us that we discover were caused by them. There is a solution in Jesus.

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

- 1Pt.1:18-19

This means that Jesus Christ already paid the price of the useless way of life our ancestors lived, by His death and resurrection. All we have to do now is

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to accept Jesus as our Saviour and claim His precious blood into our family tree. Again, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:1). Where Jesus is there is no evil, and where there is light there is no darkness. The most important thing that we have to know is that we have received Him, “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (Jn.1:12). Jesus is our Saviour. We are the children of Jesus and not of our ancestors, meaning that their wrong-doings will not have an effect on us.

In the gospels of Matthew and Luke, we see the genealogy of Jesus. In that family tree, there were sinners and even adulterous women. But when Jesus was born, that family tree, became holy. If we invite Jesus on behalf of our family into our family trees, we cleanse the entire generation. Actually, in each family stock the Lord is looking for one member of that family who can stand in the gap on behalf of other members of the family.

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look around and take note! Search its squares and see if you can find one person who acts justly and seeks truth- so that I may pardon Jerusalem.

- Jer.5:1



***We are the children of Jesus
and not of our ancestors, meaning that
their wrong-doings
will not have an effect on us.***

(II) Our Parents (Desire of the Flesh)

Children should be born out of love not out lustful union. Among the most committed sins in the world are those of lust. Lust enters through various channels chief among them are, for example, reading and watching pornographic material, listening to filthy immoral music, engaging in filthy talk. When one is filled with lust he or she exhibits uncontrollable sexual urges and sexually perverse behaviour such as fornication, adultery, masturbation, homosexuality and lesbianism.

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Single Parenthood

The phenomenon of single motherhood has become very common in our nation and the situation has been exacerbated by HIV and AIDS and the creeping in of materialism and exaggerated sense of individual freedoms and rights. The Lord's will is that children be brought up by both parents. He does not want single parenting; he however is still merciful to single mothers. There are single mothers who have become so not out of their volition and there are those that become single parents out of their own free choice propelled by a diminished understanding of freedom. A theology student once wrote a paper on single women. From his research, he found that many of the single mothers who have freely chosen to be so were well to do, employed and self-sufficient at the time of separation. They find it very difficult to cope with a husband who is not working, who is drunken and even addicted to drugs. But to simply divorce a marriage partner because of certain difficulties without much regard to the holiness of matrimony is not a simple matter. It is a big decision that has serious ramifications even for the children who will grow up being raised by one parent. Then we are told of single mothers who do not have any interest in marriage but are only interested in having a child. These single mothers commit a crime to generations by denying their children a father. Some single mothers while focused on their selfish desires become blind to their children's right to have a father.

A woman came to see me saying that she was struggling so much in life. She had no job, money for rent, school fees for her children and could not even buy them food. I asked her where the father of the children was. She replied that she divorced him since he was not taking care of her and the children. I told her that she followed her own stubborn and evil will. The Lord never allows divorce between a husband and wife joined together in holy matrimony. No matter what the problem may have been she had the duty of bringing him back to the Lord. It is written in 1 Cor.7:16: "Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife." If the wife strays, it is the duty of the husband to bring back the wife to the Lord and not just divorce.

Another woman who had two children and was separated from the father of the children wanted to remarry. She had come to me for my permission and blessings. I told her that if she is to be married again it has to be to the father of her children. From the very beginning it was the plan of the Lord for her to spend the rest of her life with her husband whom she married and for her

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husband to spend the rest of his life with her. Anything contrary to this was out of the plan of the Lord.

However most single mothers take comfort in the fact that they have their own jobs and can therefore support themselves and their children without the help of their husbands. They do a great disservice not only to themselves but to their children who have to go through life without the love of a father. Look at the way a bird flies, it flies with both wings and is able to maintain perfect balance in the air. However suppose one wing is damaged, the bird can't fly at all. It will move on the ground but will not be able to fly. The same with marriage, both husband and wives are the wings of the marriage, together they make the marriage soar to heights. When one of them is missing, the marriage in a way becomes paralysed and unless fixed, the marriage will not fly to the heights destined for it by God.



The same with marriage, both husband and wives are the wings of the marriage, together they make the marriage soar to heights.

Children born of a single mother whereby the man takes off and leaves the responsibility of bearing and rearing the child to the woman, children born out of wedlock, children born while the mothers are still in school or college, children born without proper love; are children are born out of lust.

But children of adulterers will not come to maturity, and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish. Even if they live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honor. If they die young, they will have no hope and no consolation on the day of judgment. For the end of an unrighteous generation is grievous.

- Wis.3:16-19

The robbers we see today are none other than our own children, brothers, sisters etc. Some of them turn into criminals because of lack of real parental love.

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One mother asked me to pray for her husband to agree to pay school fees for her three children. I asked her what had happened. She told me that only one of the three children belonged to the man, the rest had different fathers. I asked her if she was married in the church to the man she currently stayed with. She said no. “However,” she said, “I can still provide fatherly love to all my three children, since I perform the basic duties of both”. In actual fact, she was denying fatherly love to the children. She may have been mother and father to her children, but she cannot and could never give the love of a father to them and this affects their lives.

A family with integrity should have three types of relationships:

- (i) Spiritual relationship – here the spirit of the husband and the wife become one. It happens as they pray together.
- (ii) Emotional relationship – this is also referred to as the heart to heart relationship. The heart of the husband and that of the wife become one. It happens when they share together.
- (iii) Physical relationship – the fruit of the body relationship is the child or children. The body of the husband and that of the wife become one. It happens when they stay together.

The Lord will never permit a relationship between a man and woman, boy and girl, only between a married man and a married woman. In the boyfriend-girlfriend culture, there is only the body relationship as is the case in fornication and adulterous relationships. The other two relationships (emotional and spiritual) are not there.

HOW TO RECEIVE INNER HEALING

Having talked about the nature of inner wounds, it is apparent that no doctor or psychologist can heal or treat inner wounds. This is something that can only be healed by God. God wants us to receive inner healing as we read, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this” (1Thes. 5:23-24). The process by which we try to deal and rid ourselves of our inner wounds is called *inner healing*.

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The steps to receive inner healing

1. Invite Jesus into the present crisis
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to show the root cause
3. Praise and thank the Lord for the all the blessings received at that stage
4. Forgive everyone involved in the wound
5. Ask Jesus to wash the wound in His most Holy Blood
6. Ask Abba Father to fill you with Fatherly Love
7. Ask the Holy Spirit to take complete control

HOW I RECEIVED INNER HEALING

A fellow priest revealed to me that I had suppressed anger and told me that I needed to go through inner healing for my anger otherwise, it would be a big block in my priestly life. He explained to me these steps. As I invited Jesus into my present crisis of Suppressed anger He showed me the childhood when my mother had beaten me up even for small mistakes. As I was the ninth born, always the last born gets more love and attention, So I was always angry with my sister, the tenth born. I thought she was taking away all my love. I used to beat her, punch her and disturb her but even for small insults she will cry very loud that the mother should come and beat me. Certain times even without doing anything she will scream, as my mother had no time to listen to me and to cook for twelve members she will immediately come and beat and go back to the kitchen. I was so angry to beat my mother and also my sister. I can't beat my mother as she was big. I could not beat my sister as my mother will beat me. She will not permit me to cry loud saying the "neighbours will hear", I was not even permitted to cry loud. And I was supposed to kneel down until my mother grants me the permission to get up and go. My sister will inspect me to make me angrier. This is the way I formed suppressed anger. Usually after sometimes my mother calls me from the kitchen, "come and eat, food is ready", I will immediately forget everything, jumping up to go and eat. But we know that no food can give us inner healing.

So, I invited Jesus, into my suppressed anger. I closed my eyes and journeyed back in my past searching for the root cause of this anger. The Holy Spirit then revealed all these incidents. I saw in a vision as I was crying Jesus (the same age that I was then) coming towards me. He sat in the same position I was sitting and placed his arm around my shoulder and said, "It is me who

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allowed your mother to beat you”. He too was crying like I was crying. Seeing Jesus cry made me ask Him, “Why are you crying?” Jesus replied, “How can I stop crying if you are crying. As long as you are crying I will also cry, for you are my child”. “Forgive your mother and pray for your mother, and don’t forget the goodness of your mother” Then I stopped crying.

Later, I was very sad thinking about my past- that everyone hated me, including my mother. The Lord revealed to me. That one day as she beat me, I purposefully fell on the ground and refused to get up. My mother beat me again demanding that I get up. When I refused to get up she dragged me from there saying, “There are insects which will go into your ears and will harm you”. Now as I remembered this incident, a feeble voice whispered to me “See, your mother does not let even an insect to bite you. Even when she beats you she loves and cares for you”. That day, Jesus healed me of my suppressed anger.

I am now privileged and blessed to be the son of my most beloved mother she helped shape me to be what I am today- Christ’s servant. My mother never overlooked my mistakes; she really beat me, correcting me on the spot. I have always wondered how my parents knew the word of God in Sir.30:11 that says “Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors.” Anyway I am a priest today, thanks to my wonderful mother. Forgiveness is the key to receive inner healing. The first step to receive the healing is to know that “Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life (Is.43:4).

MY PERSONAL INNER HEALING PRAYERS

I hope the following prayers may help you in your sorrows and troubles. I personally overcame sorrows and hurt feelings through the recitation of these simple prayers. I used to repeat each of these prayers a minimum 50 times daily and they sustained me in my love of God. These prayers can also help you to make your personal prayers. Not the words but the disposition of the heart is important before the Lord. As St. John teaches:

But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God (Jn.3:21).

CONFESSION A DOOR TO HEAVEN

1. My Jesus, who do I have other than you?
2. My Jesus, only you are there for me.
3. My Jesus, do not forsake me.
4. Abba Father, my real daddy, fill me with your fatherly love.
5. My Jesus, shower your grace upon me.
6. St. Anthony and all the angels and saints pray for me and support me.
7. My Jesus, let me not think, speak or do anything that does not glorify you.
8. My Jesus, let me not think, speak or do anything which is not of thy will or has not been consulted of and permitted by thee.
9. Abba Father in the name of Jesus, anoint me with the Holy Spirit, Word of God and wisdom.
10. My Jesus, kiss me on my forehead and fill me with your love.
11. My Jesus, let me adore and consult you every moment of my life.
12. My Jesus, let me live absolutely for you.
13. My Jesus, let me be faithful to you till the end of my life.
14. My Jesus, I am your servant command me to do your will.
15. Abba Father, in the name of Jesus speak to me through your Holy Spirit.
16. My Jesus, give me the gift of love and a burning zeal to serve at thy feet till my last breath.
17. My Jesus, take complete possession of my thoughts.
18. My Jesus, take complete control of my words.
19. My Jesus, take complete control of my deeds.
20. Holy Triune God, reign in my thoughts, words and actions forever
21. My Jesus, because I am fallible at any moment, chain me to thy feet always.
22. My Jesus, I love you from the bottom of my heart
23. Abba Father, my real daddy, I love you from the bottom of my heart.
24. Holy Spirit dwelling within me, I love you from the bottom of my heart.
25. My Jesus my life is totally indebted to you.
26. My Jesus, I completely trust and hope in you.
27. My Jesus, speak to me every moment.
28. Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, I thank you for the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, counsel, preaching, fortitude, tongues, piety, prudence, prayer, teaching, decision making, fear of God and the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, generosity, self control and for the charisms of word of wisdom, word of knowledge, prophecy, discernment, gifts of

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- healing, working miracles, faith, casting out demons, interpretation of tongues, vision, discerning the spirit.
29. Holy God, wash my heart, mind, body, soul, sexuality, past, present and future inner wounds in the most Holy Blood of Jesus.
 30. My Jesus take in your wounded hands the egg and sperm of my parents that conceived me and wash it in your precious blood.
 31. My Jesus by the power of the precious Blood and Holy Spirit, I bind and destroy the evil spirit of lust which entered into me through my eyes (pray separately for the five senses) for the first time.
 32. My Jesus by the merits of your passion, death and resurrection I bind the evil spirit of lust which has dominated my mind for years, through my thoughts, words, actions, imagination and memories at the foot of your cross.
 33. My Jesus, heal all the emotional hurts I gave my mother and fill her with your love.
 34. My Jesus, heal all the emotional hurts that my mother gave me and fill me with the maternal love of your Holy Mother.
 35. My Jesus, heal all the emotional hurts that I gave my father and fill him with your love.
 36. Abba Father, heal all the emotional hurts that my father gave me and fill me with the paternal love.
 37. My Jesus, heal all the wounds and rejections that I gave my brothers and sisters and fill them with your love.
 38. My Jesus, heal all the wounds and rejections that my brothers and sisters gave me in your precious Blood and fill me with the love of the Holy Spirit.
 39. My Jesus, if at anytime I have hurt or wounded anybody in anyway through my actions or inordinate affections then I apologise unconditionally, I ask you to forgive me and fill each and every one of them with your abundant love.
 40. My Jesus, I beg of you to wash and purify in your precious blood the wounds of rejection which have entered my mind through the five senses and deeply dominated me for many years.
 41. My Jesus, through the merit of your passion, death and resurrection deliver me from my inhibitions forever.
 42. My Jesus, if anyone at anytime asks of me anything give me the grace to respond to them only after seeking your consent.
 43. My Jesus, give me the grace to seek and talk to you at all times.

CONFESSION A DOOR TO HEAVEN

44. My Jesus, give me the grace that others may see you through me and glorify thy name.
45. My Jesus, with bended knees I praise, adore, worship and glorify you.
46. Abba Father in the precious blood of your Beloved Son wash my eyes and fill them with your Holy Spirit.
47. My Jesus through the merits of your life, deliver me from all kinds of inordinate human affection.
48. God of truth, deliver me from all human praises.
49. My Jesus, by the power of the Word of God, deliver me from all anxieties.
50. My Jesus, uphold me with your victorious right hand and deliver me from all fears.
51. My Jesus, give me the grace to know your mind and to live in accordance with that.
52. Most Blessed Virgin Mary grant me the same grace of humility, obedience and submission as you accepted the will of God saying, "behold I am your servant, let your will be done on me."
53. My Jesus, chain me at your feet so that I may never go astray
54. My Jesus, let no one be attached to me and let me never be attached to any one other than you.
55. My Jesus, if anyone asks me of anything at anytime; give me the grace to answer them only after consulting with you.
56. Abba Father, Jesus Saviour, Holy Spirit give me blind faith in you.
57. My Jesus, let no one influence me, other than you.
58. My Jesus, let me never find happiness in anybody other than you.
59. Lord Jesus, let no one misguide me, let me not misguide anyone.
60. My Jesus let me never hurt you.

CHAPTER SIX



FINDING AND LIVING WITH THE RIGHT PARTNER



Happy is the husband of a good wife; the number of his days will be doubled. A loyal wife brings joy to her husband, and he will complete his years in peace. A good wife is a great blessing; she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord. Whether rich or poor, his heart is content, and at all times his face is cheerful.

- Sirach 26:1-4

RATING YOUR PARTNER

There was a young man eagerly looking for a good match in a woman. He finally found one and rushed to the elderly parish priest with whom he had a good rapport. ‘Father, I found the girl of my dreams... She is from a very wealthy family’ The priest quietly marked a big zero with a felt pen on paper and spoke no word. “She is very beautiful”. Another ‘0’. She is from a very affluent family. Another ‘0’. She has a very good job and a fat salary. Another ‘0’ She is a very sociable girl. Another ‘0’. She is highly educated. Another ‘0’. There are 3 priests in the family. Another ‘0’. By now the boy was very disturbed because the priest had not spoken a word nor showed any joyful response. He never saw what the priest was silently writing either. Hoping to grab the attention of the priest he continued one last time: ‘Father, the girl is a Roman Catholic’. The priest marked yet another ‘0’. Rather disappointed, the boy got up and said, “Father, I don’t see why you are not happy that I found such a holy and God-fearing girl to be my wife.” On hearing this, the old priest quickly marks a big Number “1” before all the eight zeroes that he had written and makes it 100,000,000, springs up from the chair and shows the paper to the boy saying “God, Go, Grab her today itself and marry her.... This girls is worth Millions and even more.” With this response of the old priest, the young man realised what the old priest meant. Holiness in marriage and fear of God is above all and the most important ingredient for peace and happiness in marriage.

CHECK YOUR CHEQUE BOOKS!

My brother told me the story of young Paul and Pauline, whose wedding was headed for the rocks. Ten years of married life was enough they thought. They finally decided to get a divorce. As Paul was trying to settle all the financial accounts to have an amicable divorce, he came across the old check-books. When he opened up the first check... He couldn’t go on any further... reached for the telephone... We had invested too much on each other to throw it all away... ‘Can we join hands together to start all over again?’ In the mean time Pauline had also decided on something. She had prayed for light to know where she was wrong and for grace and strength to overcome her failings. Then she wrote the following note to her husband:

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“Dear Paul, I promise:

1. Never to embarrass you.
2. To pay attention when you speak to me.
3. To refrain from playing the radio too loudly when you are reading the newspaper
4. To keep my telephone conversations under five minutes.
5. Not to make comparisons between your friends and mine.
6. To stop harping on a subject once the discussion has been closed
7. Never to keep you waiting.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR ‘IDEAL’?

“How come you never married?” “Well, it was like this, I kept looking for an ideal woman.” What happened to the woman? She was looking “for the ideal man...” Ideal does not exist in reality. Therefore divorce your ideal wife...

Don’t marry for money, status, name, fame, power, position etc. What is needed is not a change of partners but a change in partners and definitely not divorce. Success in marriage consists not only of finding the right mate, but also in being the right mate.

Doing house work for ten dollars a week is domestic service, but doing it for nothing is matrimony. To all unmarried women: hear this voice of experience. A beautiful woman fascinates a man, a brilliant one interests him, a good one inspires him, but the sympathetic one gets him. However, if there is any one thing a woman doesn’t understand about marriage it’s the husband. Before marriage he talks and she listens. After marriage she talks and he listens. Later they both talk and the neighbours listen.



If there is any one thing a woman doesn't understand about marriage it's the husband.

THE BOOK OF TOBIT

The book of Tobit found in all Catholic Bibles offers very good material for reflection on this topic. The beginning of this book is very sad but the ending is a very happy one. The book of Tobit is actually a story of the life of a man called Tobit. Tobit himself narrates his story under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Tobit was very poor but put God first in all that he did. He was a good, upright and God fearing man. He performed many acts of charity to his own kinsmen. He got married to a woman named Anna and they gave birth to a son whom they named Tobias.

When the king persecuted his people for their belief in God and killed them, Tobit would secretly go and carry the bodies of his dead kindred and give them a decent burial. Some people were not happy about this and therefore they reported this to the king who ordered Tobit to be searched for and put to death. This frightened Tobit so he had to run away. The king in turn confiscated all his property and left him poor. The king however did not touch his wife and son. Later Tobit was able to return to his homeland Nineveh and was reunited with his wife and son. After returning from exile, Tobit still had a good heart and helped his people when he could. While he was preparing to have his dinner served for him to celebrate his homecoming, his son came in from outside and informed him that one of their tribesmen had been murdered and his body thrown into the market place. Tobit immediately sprang from the table; left the dinner before even tasting it went and removed it from the market place. He took it to one of the rooms in his house, and buried it after sunset. Even as he was burying the body his neighbours were laughing at him saying, “He has already been hunted down to be put to death for doing this, and he ran away; yet here he is again burying the dead”(Tob.2:8). After the burial he went to lie down in his courtyard. Since he did not cover his face, a sparrow came and dropped its droppings in his eyes, obscuring his eyesight. He went to seek medical help, but the ointments he was given worsened the problem until he became totally blind. Tobit was blind for four years.

During these four years, Tobit could not provide for the family, so his wife Anna had to take over the responsibility of being the bread winner. She had to take care of her husband Tobit and the son, Tobias.

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FOR RICHER FOR POORER, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH...

When a couple gets married in church, they exchange vows before God. That in good times and in bad times, in sickness and in health till death do them part, they will be together. The man is usually known as the bread winner, but when it happens that he cannot provide for the family for one reason or another, his wife is supposed to lovingly and humbly step in and help till the man gets on his feet. She should not undermine, sideline or reject her husband because he can no longer provide for the family. Many women say, "Father pray for me because I am the only breadwinner in the family". Many couples forget that whatever they have, is supposed to be generously shared.

As Anna continued providing for Tobit, her husband, one evening she came home from work with a kid, a young goat. Her husband who heard it bleating asked her where she had gotten it. He thought she had stolen it and immediately asked her to return it. Anna then said that it was given to her by her master as a gift in addition to her wages. However Tobit insisted that she return it. Anna then revealed her true colors, she told Tobit, "you are known for your acts of charity and for your good deeds, where are they now? What about your alms, your good works? Everyone knows what return you have had for them". This reply from his wife greatly saddened and brought much grief to Tobit's heart. Deep down in his heart he wept with grief and anguish and prayed earnestly to the Lord. Tobit prayed like this, "You are righteous, O Lord, and all your deeds are just; all your ways are mercy and truth; you judge the world. And now, O Lord, remember me and look favorably upon me. Do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offenses and those that my ancestors committed before you. So now deal with me as you will; release me to go to the eternal home, and do not, O Lord, turn your face away from me. For it is better for me to die than to see so much distress in my life and to listen to insults.

- Tob.3:1-6

This then brings the second very important point to consider, with regard to the above topic. Even if the wife has to step in to provide for the family, this does not water down the husband's role as head of the family. His wife has to pay him the same respect she as she did when he was the bread winner.

HOW DO YOU SPEAK TO YOUR SPOUSE?

One day in India, at the retreat centre, a couple came to me with their children. The wife said, “Father, together with my husband we have come for you to pray for us as we are going to get a divorce”. She explained that her husband was always drinking and never taking care of the family as was required of him. “I had many proposals, but of all of them, I ended up with this monkey!” The husband was deeply ashamed and humiliated. We should choose our words carefully as Saint Paul puts it, “*Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone*’(Col.4:6). The same with Anna, her true colors came out when her husband asked her to return the goat. All this time I have been providing for you and our son. When I bring a gift from work, you should not say anything. You should just keep quiet and enjoy the meal. Many wives who are breadwinners also behave like this, belittling their husbands.

YOU AND YOUR LIFE PARTNER

Getting a life partner is a life-long and it can be grueling task. Living for the rest of one’s life with the same person is another difficult task. A young man came to see me and he said, “Father, pray for me. I have met about forty women looking for a life partner, but none of these has really appealed to me. There was always something wrong with the girls I met. And even if it feels like I am the most eligible bachelor, I also came to realise that getting a life partner is not an easy thing. The first woman I met could not speak; I spoke to her but she would not answer. Later I came to realize that she was dumb. The second woman I met was standing by the wall, I called to her to come and stand by me, but she just couldn’t. She was lame. The other one I met Father, was too dark coloured for my liking. Another was so short and fat, when walking she resembled a “rolling football”. This young man had so many complaints and comments about all the different women he had met. I said, “When you go out to meet a prospective life partner, make sure you carry a mirror with you. Every time you have a complaint about the person you meet, remove your mirror and take a long look at yourself”. The problem is that we are very choosy, forgetting that there is no one on this earth who is perfect. We all have weaknesses and that is why we are struggling humans here on earth and not angels in heaven.

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INVITING AND INCLUDING THE LORD INTO YOUR MARRIAGE

Life after marriage is more important than life before marriage. One woman told me, “Father, the most sacrificial life is that of marriage to a drunken man. My husband is a twenty four hour drinking husband. He usually produces a smell that one just cannot stand. Yet I have to love and care for him as my husband.” It is after the marriage that our love, patience and endurance are put to the test. This can be hard and humanly speaking unbearable but Jesus taught that “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible” (Mk.10:27). Once they get married through the holy sacrament of matrimony in church, married couples experience God’s protection and grace. There will, of course be problems, but because they have included God in the marriage, God will give them the necessary supernatural help to overcome those problems. When I was ordained a priest, on that same day my parents were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. Many times I saw them quarrelling and having their misunderstandings, but nonetheless they still loved each other and are still together up until now.

THE CRY OF A DEPRESSED WOMAN

It also happened that on the same day, when Tobit was weeping and lamenting to God in prayer, Sarah, daughter of Raguel was receiving insults from one of her father’s maids. She had been given in marriage seven times and an evil spirit called Asmodeus, was believed to have killed her bridegrooms one after another before she consummated her marriage with them. The maid told her off, accusing her of killing the bridegrooms herself and asking her to go and join them (in the land of the dead) and spare her household of bringing forth any children of her own. Obviously these comments and insults hurt Sarah so much and she went to her father’s room with the intention of hanging herself. But on reaching there she thought otherwise as she did not want to bring shame and distress upon her father. She instead decided to cry out to the Lord in prayer. At the time she was praying Tobit was praying too. Their prayer found favour before the glory of God and Raphael the Archangel was sent by God the Almighty to bring remedy to both of them. Angel Raphael was to restore Tobit’s eye-sight, to give Sarah as bride to Tobias, son of Tobit and to rid her of Asmodeus, the worst of all demons. “For Tobias was entitled

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to have her before all others who had desired to marry her” (Tob.3:17). Also “Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world was made. You will save her, and she will go with you” (Tob.6:18).

THE LORD KNOWS YOUR LIFE PARTNER

God the Almighty knows each and everyone of our needs. When we are unmarried and looking for life partners, He knows it. It is not His plan that we should be unmarried and unhappy. If His plan was for us to be married, for sure He has arranged someone right from the moment we were conceived to be our life partner. The most important thing is to keep on praying and He will send His angels to unite would-be partners through prayer. As we learn from the Bible, Sarah more than any other of her suitors belonged by right to Tobias. God has already predestined our life partners for us; we only have to claim them from him through constant prayer and leave the rest to Him. We have to be careful not to make our own plans (Ps. 143:10).



***It is not His plan that we should be
unmarried and unhappy.***

WHEN SHALL MY PARTNER COME?

Sometimes we may ask: “how come I am not getting a life partner and my age is advancing? Why am I so late?” A couple once came to see me with their daughter. The problem was that the girl was not getting a life partner and her parents came for prayers so that her marriage may take place. As we prayed the Lord revealed that this girl would react to the parents within no time and sometimes violently. So I told her it was not God’s plan that she stays unmarried. God wants her to be married. But sometimes He delays or extends the marriage time so as to give us an opportunity to get over our negative emotions and hurt feelings. This is to adjust our behaviours so that we do not carry them into the marriage. Otherwise it would be difficult staying with someone else from a totally different background.

FATHER SPEAKS TO SON

Since Tobit had planned to kill himself, he needed money to arrange for his burial. Someone from a far off land owed him some money. So he thought of

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sending his son, Tobias, to go and get the money on his behalf. Before he set off, Tobit gave Tobias some advice, lest Tobias delay and come back and find his father already dead. He told him to honour his mother and never abandon her all the days of his life. Tobit was a very good hearted man. Despite his wife insulting him and saying all the things she said, he did not retaliate, but asked Tobias to respect her and take good care of her in his (Tobit's) absence. This very enriching advice given by Tobit to his son is found in *chapter 4* of the same book. In *verse 12*, Tobit tells Tobias to avoid every kinds of fornication. For all those intending to marry, this is an important point to keep in mind, to avoid any act that would defile the marriage bed. "Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers (Heb.13:4)." The Lord does not allow any sexual relationship between a boy or girl, man or woman before marriage. The only sexual relationship permitted by the Lord is between a husband and a wife joined together in the Church through the sacrament of holy matrimony. Any intimate sexual contact outside holy matrimony is a defiling of one's body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Entering into the holy matrimony after having defiled one's body makes one to miss out on the abundant blessings that come with the reception of the sacrament. At the end, Tobit tells Tobias that God will bless him with prosperity should he fear God and shun every kind of sin – a very important pre-requisite for those married or planning to get married.

BURN IT AND FORGET ABOUT IT

It is very important for those planning to get married to bury the past once they enter into marriage and for those already married to learn to reconcile when a problem arises, to forgive each other and bury the past. The archangel Raphael also advised Tobias to do the same. He asked Tobias to burn the liver and heart of the fish that Tobias had earlier caught on the burning incense. The smell given off would make the evil demon flee away never to return. Married couples should put their past in the fire too and those intending to get married should make a lifetime confession before entering into the Holy sacrament of matrimony. A woman once asked me to pray for her because before she got married, she had been unfaithful and had many sexual relationships. She never told her husband about this. The problem was that her husband was such a good man, very kind and faithful to her. His goodness made her feel very guilty of her past and she thought she had to confess to him about it.

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However I told her that it was good that she saw the need to confess her past, but only to a person consecrated by the Lord. You should not confess your past sins to your husband but to a priest alone. Couples should not confess their past to each other as this can be a major factor in the breaking up of marriages. “Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old I am about to do a new thing” (Is.43:18) is the advise and the promise the Lord is giving to those who are going to be married. The minute they say ‘yes’ at the altar couples should completely forget the past. That is why, all couples before getting married should prepare themselves not only the externally but also spiritually through a proper sincere lifetime confession. Once done, the past should be completely buried.



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NO LOVE FOR MY HUSBAND

“Father, I hate my husband so much,” said a woman who came to see me. “I do not have any problem with other men, but my husband, I cannot stand him! I have no love whatsoever for him and with no love, how can our marriage stand? I want a divorce father!” I told her, “The problem is not with your husband but with you. Did you have any sexual relationships before you got married?” She revealed that she had many relationships and even committed abortions before marrying. The word of God clearly says “Let marriage be kept in honour by all; and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge all fornicators and adulterers” (Heb.13:4). Marriage is a very holy sacrament and when you enter into it in sin, you lose the grace and protection of the Lord and you become prone to the attacks of the devil. So make sure you bury your past sinfulness before entering into marriage by making a proper lifelong confession.

DON'T LOOK AT THE TRIBE

Tobias did not know very well the road to the place his father had sent him to collect the money owed him. So Tobit asked him to look for someone who

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would be his guide. Tobias found Raphael whom he asked to accompany him. Archangel Raphael gladly agreed to accompany Tobias. Tobias had to first tell his father about the traveling companion he had found.

Tobit was very particular about the tribe of the friends his son associated with. Even when he was giving his son advice before he set out on the long journey, he cautioned him to choose a wife not from outside his father's tribe. Thus Tobit advised his son:

Beware, my son, of every kind of fornication. First of all, marry a woman from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father's tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land."

- Tob.4:12

When Tobias told Tobit about archangel Raphael (the angel of the Lord was then in the form of a man, so they all did not know that he was an angel sent to them by God), Tobit told him, "bring him to me I want to find out about his family and tribe." When he came in, Tobit asked Raphael what family and tribe he belonged to, but Raphael answered; an answer very important to all of us, "What does my tribe matter to you?"(Tob.5:12). Many of us are blocked by many tribal, cultural and traditional beliefs which stop us from seeing the good in other people. We Christians all belong to one tribe, the tribe of Jesus and we are all one. St. Paul tells us that "In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!" (Col.3:11).

MARRYING AN UNBELIEVER

If a believer meets a non-believer or a fallen Christian and he or she wants to marry him the believer ought to pray to God and try with His help to bring the non-believer or fallen Christian to the faith. If that fails, the believer should let go of the relationship.

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A single mother came to see me about her daughter, who used to always scream and shout in the night. The father of her daughter was an non-believer. He never believed or spoke anything about God. Whenever she brought up the topic of God or anything related to God, they would quarrel. He did not want anything to do with God. I told her that when she had a relationship with the man she imparted to herself the sin of the man who was an unbeliever. “So no one pities a person who associates with a sinner and becomes involved in the other’s sins” (Sir.12:14).

A girl asked, “If we opt for only believers and good people who will help the lost ones?” Jesus was the lover of the sinners and the unrighteous, we follow Him and we have a duty to help even the stumbling. The answer is if you are in Jesus you can help them. The word of God encourages us to “keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering” (Jude1:21-22). But you are a human being with all the weaknesses. You can try to help those but if it is beyond your power leave it. “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph.2:10). You are called to do the good preplanned for you by the Lord. For example, in a tug of war, there are two parties involved: a group on the right and another group on the left. So if the man is standing on the right and the woman on the left, the woman being the believer and the man the unbeliever, the woman should try to pull the man to her side. If however the man proves stronger and pulls her more to his side, the woman should immediately drop the rope and run away. Remember too, “Bad company ruins good morals”(1Cor.15:33).

After his father’s blessings Tobias set off with his travel companion archangel Raphael. His mother, Anna on his departure was in tears and told Tobit,

Surely is it necessary for him to go? Is money the only thing that matters? Surely is it as precious as our child?” Tobit answered her, “Do not think such thoughts. Going away and coming back all will be well with our child. You will see for yourself when he comes back safe and sound! Do not think such thoughts, he repeats; do not worry on their account, my sister”. ²²A good angel will go with him; he will have a good

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journey and he will come back to us happy and well”. And she dried her tears.

- Tob.5:21-22; 6:1

There comes a point in children’s lives when their parents have to let them go, for the sake of their prosperity.

Parents should be cautious but should not fear sending their children to far off places to seek life partners or even to get married to partners staying in far off places. They should instead adopt a mind like Tobit’s; that a good angel will go with them and they will come back safe and happy. If Tobias had stayed at home, the meeting with Sarah (his future wife) would not have happened. It was in the plan of the Lord that he left home.

THE DUTY OF A FATHER-IN-LAW

On reaching their destination (Sarah’s home), Tobias and archangel Raphael were warmly welcomed by her father Raguel. He gave a great feast for them. After eating, Tobias asked for Sarah’s hand in marriage. Raguel said he had no problem with that. He did something very noble by telling Tobias the truth about Sarah and her misfortune. Tobias did not run away after hearing this truth. Many of us would just have excused ourselves for two minutes and taken to our heels never to be seen or heard of again, if we were in Tobias’ shoes. Because he was with the archangel Raphael, Tobias did not run away. We always have to speak the truth about ourselves to the people we plan to spend the rest of our lives with. If in doubt about the extent of truth we are to reveal about ourselves, let us ask our guardian angels to speak for us. God the Almighty has entrusted each and every one of us with guardian angels to guide us closer to God. “Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word” (Ps.103:20).

Finally after they got married Tobias treated his parents in law with great care and respect. “He treated his parents-in-law with great respect in their old age, and buried them in Ecbatana of Media. He inherited both the property of Raguel and that of his father Tobit” (Tobit.14:13) and he was truly blessed. God wants us to treat our in-laws with all the respect that is due to them as Tobias did, and then we will be blessed.

MARRY NOT AN OLD MAN

The Lord never permits a woman to marry a married man; it does not anger well for a young girl to marry an old man. A certain thirty three year old lady was trying to get married to a 68 year-old man. She said “I found him sick and weak and he needs support so I thought of marrying him. Is it wrong?” It is wrong because marriage is not one-way traffic. We need mutual help and support. You can’t marry a sick person; marriage is to be with a healthy person and someone who is somewhat of the same age, career, and culture. She thought to marry him because he was rich, she thought after his death she would become rich and then she could think of another marriage. Marriage is not an entertainment business, it is a lifelong commitment. Nobody can succeed in it without the grace of God. “He said to them, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given” (Mt.19:11). Apart from Him we can do nothing.



She said “I found him sick and weak and he needs support so I thought of marrying him. Is it wrong?”

ARE YOU STILL UNMARRIED?

At times, many young people meet several blocks that prevent them from getting married. There could be various causes to this and they have to be discerned in prayer and prayed for to be removed. Many a time, some of these major blocks emanate from a person’s family. Here, I suggest what some of these areas could and if you are still unmarried and encountering serious blocks to a married life pray over these areas and cover your parents and your relations in the most Holy Blood of the Lord Jesus and you will find the blocks are removed. These may not be necessarily your blocks but I am trying to show you some of them. All these blocks will be rectified by the power of prayer.

- If your parents have been involved in a polygamous relationship
- If you are born of a single mother, that is, outside wedlock
- If your parents had separated and divorced

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- If you, as child, has supported separation of your parents
- If your mother knowingly married a married man
- If the father had different women outside marriage
- If there had been incest in the family
- If one of your parents left when you were a child
- If you are not baptized and are not receiving the sacraments
- If you are receiving Holy Communion unworthily

PRAY TO THE VIRGIN MARY, QUEEN OF ALL FAMILIES

One of the most concerned persons in your family life and your family welfare is the Blessed Virgin Mary. “When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn.2:1-11). The Blessed Virgin Mary is concerned about our well being and stands ready to intercede with God for us as she did at the wedding at Cana. To benefit from her intercession pray daily, at least the whole Rosary. You will quickly find out that the Blessed Virgin Mary is requesting her Holy Son to hear your cry and support you to get the designate partner. .

CHAPTER SEVEN



THE PROBLEM OF FINANCIAL DEBTS



We often speak on financial debts but overlook the reality of spiritual debts. Because, “whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it” (Jam.2:10). As we pay off the spiritual debts the Lord who has all the riches will start opening His treasuries in heaven. “The Lord’s gift remains with the devout, and his favour brings lasting success” (Sir.11:17). We accumulate spiritual debts through different un-repented and unresolved sins.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

There are people who are forever jobless, looking for jobs for years but do not get any and when they do get a job it is over before they can even begin it. Others have jobs but they never enjoy their salary. No sooner do they get their salary than the next day almost all of salary is gone in paying debts, bills etc. So they have to borrow to sustain themselves through the next month until salary time when they once again have to pay back what they had borrowed. They enter into an unbreakable cycle of debt. It is like their salary is kept in a bag that is full of big holes. “Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared” (Hag.1:5).

Many of these blocks and bondages are related in one way or another to our own mistakes and also the spiritual debts in the family tree. Many people are living good, upright lives but they are not enjoying any prosperity in their lives. And you wonder what the problem could be. Through the physical eyes nothing is visible, but actually there is much more than meets the eye. There is a debt we have to pay off through repentance and restitution.

WHO WOULD REPAIR THE WALL

Sometimes it seems as if the entire burden of the family falls on a certain member. The Lord always chooses one or a few members of the family to stand in the gap on behalf of their family. The chosen people suffer greatly yet when you look at their lives, they lead good lives and do no wrong that may warrant such sufferings.

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

- 1Cor.10:13

Standing in the gap for others is a very big privilege whose fruits are never seen in the present but in the future generations and when we leave this earth to inherit our place in heaven; where the true rewards of our mediation will be experienced. We read from the prophet Ezekiel that the Lord is in search of repairers who would stand in the gap:

I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.

- Ezk.22:30

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCIAL DEBT

THE PLAN OF THE LORD IN OUR LIVES

Sometimes when going through trials and tribulations in our lives, with no breakthrough however much we pray, we may ask, “Is Jesus really aware of my pains? Does He care for my prosperity?” I am reminded of a woman who came to see me saying, ‘Father, today my family and I are going to die!’ I asked her why and she said, ‘my landlord has evicted me and my children from the house for not paying rent. I have no money, I have nowhere to go and I do not know what to do’. I gave her some bread and gave the word of God:

Do not wonder at the works of a sinner, but trust in the Lord and keep at your job; for it is easy in the sight of the Lord to make the poor rich suddenly, in an instant”

-Sir.11:21.

“For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me”

-Jer.8:21

The Lord God wants each and every one of us to lead happy and prosperous lives.

If you will only obey the LORD your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the LORD your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you. The LORD will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow

-Deut. 28:1-14.

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The primary principle of prosperity is *Obedience*. Only when you faithfully obey the voice of Yahweh shall you genuinely prosper. It is the plan of the Lord for us to be prosperous. But the prosperity of the Lord comes from our hatred of sin and sinful ways.



***The primary principle of prosperity
is Obedience.***

Who has had the power to transgress and did not transgress, and to do evil and did not do it? His prosperity will be established, and the assembly will proclaim his acts of charity”

- Sir.31:10

According to His words, those who purposefully avoid the occasions of sin will receive the prosperity of the Lord. We have to diligently obey His voice. It is His plan that we prosper in our jobs, that we get promoted and have an increase in salary. However if no promotion comes and we are constantly frustrated at work, then it is a sign that we are not really obeying the voice of the Lord. Then if that is the case what are we supposed to do?



***Those who purposefully avoid the
occasions of sin will receive the prosperity
of the Lord.***

If we are to find our way towards prosperity, both material and spiritual, first and foremost we have to get rid of sin in our lives.

As long as they did not sin against their God they prospered, for the God who hates iniquity is with them. But when they departed from the way he had prescribed for them, they were utterly defeated in many battles and were led away captive to a foreign land. The temple of their God was razed to the ground, and their towns were occupied by their enemies.

- Judith.5:17-18

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Even when others are fall into sin, we should not follow suit. If our friends are watching pornographic movies or reading porn magazines we should not join them because this is wrong. If all our workmates are going out for a free round of drinks courtesy of some generous colleague we should not follow the crowd. If our spouse is unfaithful, we should not also be unfaithful citing ‘tit-for-tat is a fair game.’ ‘If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice’ (Sir.15,15).

The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens,
to give you the rain of your land in its season...

Deut.28:12

God will open his treasury of rain and the storehouse of heaven. Usually we are not confident enough in the power of the Lord. A woman who had been jobless for eleven years came for prayers at our prayer house. I gave her the word of God to read and claim for one month. After one month she came back to me and told me she had completed the ‘homework’. I asked her if there was any change. She replied, ‘Now I am a little bit happier than I was one month ago. I have got a job, but it is a temporary job and I am worried, I wish it would be a permanent job. I told her, ‘For eleven years you were jobless, now God has blessed you with a temporary job. This same God has the power to make it a permanent job, if you really trust in Him. “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (Jn.11:40). Thank, praise and worship the Lord who delights in the welfare of His people. “Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant” (Ps.35:27). I asked her, ‘Did you thank God for the temporary job He gave you? She replied, ‘No, actually I thought of thanking Him when I get the permanent job’. One week later she returned to me very excited. ‘Father I am now a permanent employee. My boss called me and told me that he was happy with my work and that he was employing me permanently’.

GOD’S PLANS CANNOT BE THWARTED

All authority and power belong to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. When He decides something to happen, it happens. This authority of Jesus is established through our faith. Do we have that strong faith that when we speak to Him, whatever we ask will happen? ‘The human mind may devise many plans. But it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established’ (Pro.19:21). Num .23:19 adds that “God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” Job makes a strong profession of faith when he confesses: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job.42:2). When God promises to do something He does it.

See, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me?

- Jer.32:27

When He speaks something for sure He will fulfill it. He is not a human being to change His mind or go back on His word. So if He promises rain in its due season He will do so. We only have to pray, “Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise” (Ps.119:41). In Kenya, we have two main seasons, the dry season and the wet season. Rain too is seasonal; we have the short and long rains. However sometimes the rain does not fall when expected, therefore the dry season goes on longer than expected. The crop which the farmers would have prepared for the rainy season fails and that means that farmers will not harvest a good crop and the harvest itself will be less and will not of good quality. This however is not the plan of the Lord that the rains should delay or follow an unpredictable pattern. The Lord however promises that the rains will fall as and when expected and of the required amount.

INDEBTEDNESS IS NOT IN GOD’S PLAN

‘... you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow’

- Deut 28:12

In most cases the opposite holds true we borrow so much and lend to none because we simply have nothing to give out. Being in debt is not the plan of the Lord. In everything we do, we have to be blessed. This is the plan of the Lord.

Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

- Is.55:1-2

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCIAL DEBT

“Owe no one anything” (Rom.13:8). We should try by all means to avoid borrowing. Instead of borrowing we can learn to live on what we have.

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have
- Phil. 4:10-11

God’s plan for us in life is to be prosperous. However there is a condition, we have to obey His word, His voice and observe all the commandments that He gives us. God’s commandments help us to find the path of life and prosperity. We have to promise to fulfill His commandments. The Word of God says, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land” (Is.1:19).

On the twenty ninth of March 2009, a dam in Indonesia burst its banks, killing more than seventy people and rendering hundreds others missing. Again during the Tsunami that killed thousands of people, Indonesia was the country most affected. Many of its peoples lost their lives. Many calamities face this nation every now and again. When we see such frequent unfortunate happenings, it is human to ask or assume that God is unleashing his wrath. However it is very important to note that the Lord never retracts or withdraws His mercy, rather it is as a result of the reaction of man’s sin that such calamities befall us.

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth; The earth staggers like a drunkard, it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again
- Is.24.20

WHY AM I NOT PROSPEROUS?

If God desires and has planned for us to be prosperous in life, then why are we not enjoying this prosperity? Why are there so many jobless, homeless, poor people in our society? Why is the plan of God not fulfilled in our lives? Let us look at some of the reasons why we seem to be forever entangled in a circle of poverty. These are only some of them and can be considered as relative too.

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FINANCIAL CRISIS

We read the story of a man who was born blind but was healed by Jesus. His disciples asked Him, ‘Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned. He was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed through him”. Something may have gone wrong in our lives and in the family tree, grandparents or other relations which may have brought disaster upon the present generation. “For just as you were disposed to go astray from God, return with tenfold zeal to seek him. For the one who brought these calamities upon you will bring you everlasting joy with your salvation” (Bar.4:28-29). We cannot blame those who committed wrongs in the past for the sufferings we are now undergoing. Rather, like the way Jesus put it, the man was not born blind because of his parents’ mistake, but so that the glory of God may be seen through the healing Jesus was going to grant him. If things are not okay for us, what we can do is to change our life situation from worse to better, by personally claiming the salvation merits of Jesus Christ.

Jesus prayed: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth” (Jn.17:19). Jesus being God was very holy, but in this verse “He sanctifies Himself for the sake of His disciples so that they maybe sanctified in the truth.” Joseph the patriarch could have blamed his brothers for all the misfortunes he suffered, but he did not. Instead he says, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today” (Gen.50:20). Joseph completely forgave his brothers. Earlier He bore a son whom he considered as a fruit of forgiveness. He named him Manasseh which means, “God has made me to completely forget my hardships and my father’s house”. Manasseh was Joseph’s first born son.

Thus as a first step in getting first hand blessings from the Lord, we have to purify ourselves, our homes, our nation so that the glory of God may be seen and then we will be free from the attacks of the evil one.

LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, when you obey the LORD your

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God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul

-Deut. 30:9-10



We cannot blame those who committed wrongs in the past for the sufferings we are now undergoing.

THE STORY OF A NURSE

At the retreat centre in Mumbai where I was working before I came to Africa, there was one team member who was in the praise and worship ministry. She was jobless when she first joined the ministry. By the grace of God, she was blessed with a job after being in the ministry for six months. The job however was in Saudi Arabia where Christianity is not practiced much, and churches are almost non-existent. This meant that she could not go for Sunday Mass. She took this job after the priests at the centre allowed her. On reaching there, she was greatly distressed about the fact that she could not go for Sunday mass or even carry her Bible. She kept calling her spiritual fathers at the centre for constant prayer. This team member was a nurse by profession, but the university from which she got her degree had not been approved by the Indian government. The degrees that were issued by this university were not recognized and were considered fake. This team member did not know this and the only reason she went to this university was that the fees were very low and affordable for her parents. Since her father was a heavy drinker they lost everything including the land where they were living. Many times, she and her siblings went hungry. In her neighbourhood, there was a very rich family. At night when everyone was asleep, they would go to the pit where their rich neighbour threw their trash and look for leftovers. They would carry home whatever they found, and boil it again and eat. This is how they survived for a long time. All her siblings were not able to go to school for lack of school fees. Her parents managed only to send her to school. She was hardly well dressed and also the lack of sufficient food deterred her mental growth. She was slow in responding to questions. However she was a very good girl, so committed to the Lord and in service to Him.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

One day there was an announcement that there was a job opening in Qatar, where at least the government allows free practice of Christian worship. On hearing this news this lady called her spiritual fathers in India and asked them to especially pray for her as she was going to give a try at this job. To her, this was the only way she could work and at the same time continue with her commitment to God and His service. The job interview was to be conducted in Mumbai, India. This job was a very big lucrative government job offering a huge salary. She came back to Mumbai for the interview but first made a stopover for prayers. The priests prayed for her, but were not very convinced that she would get the job, because she was not very smart. There were about 3,000 people from all over India who had turned up for just 13 vacancies. All the hotels in Mumbai were fully booked, with people coming with their friends and relations for support. She stepped into the interview room and the main interviewer just took one look at her and told her, "I have seen you before. You are the girl I saw last night in my dream. Congratulations, the job is yours". There were no questions but the job was given to her. God had given this man a vision of the girl whom he should take for the job. "Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word" (Ps. 103:20) was a revelation for her on that day. As it says, our angels speak for us, if we ask them to. She had a pure intention for getting this job. Her intention was not to get a high paid job or fame. But she was very clear that she should get a job that should not detach her relationship with the Lord.



***You are the girl I saw last night
in my dream. Congratulations,
the job is yours".***

This girl had one intention for wanting to work in Qatar, to be able to go for Sunday mass and to be able to carry her Bible wherever she went and read it whenever she wanted and to be able to worship God freely. When praying for God to bless us financially, our intention should be pure intending only to glorify God.

THE MULTINATIONAL FOOL

A man started out in a small way with a modest investment of KShs. 300 manufacturing shoe-laces. He did well for himself. At the end of the first year he made a profit of KShs. 1,000. The following year he got Kshs.3,000. In five years time he had accumulated sufficient capital to confidently launch into the manufacture of footwear. Sheer hard work and skilful management saw him in another ten years emerging as the leading shoe-manufacturer in the country. Now all he talked about was higher turnovers, higher profits, money and more money. Everything else took second place. He was not satisfied in being the nation’s leading shoe-manufacturer. He was more ambitious. He dreamt of a breakthrough on the international market as a multinational shoe maker. But before he could anticipate it, he was laid low by a massive cerebral stroke. They rushed him to the hospital. Within an hour he was dead. The post-mortem revealed a severely enlarged heart, a stomach riddled with ulcers. This was the price he paid for an over-ambitious multinational dream. What good is a full bank account, if your life is empty?

A Missionary described how some Africans still follow the practice of removing the clothes from dead bodies before burying them. One of the purposes of this practice is to demonstrate that we leave the world the same way we came into it. “For we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it” (1Tim.6:7). What counts when we die is not the wealth we acquire during life, but how much we grew in Christ.



What counts when we die is not the wealth we acquire during life, but how much we grew in Christ.

“BY ALL MEANS”, BRINGS FORTH ALL BLOCKS

We should avoid all the unjust means of getting wealth.

(I) ARE WE IN POSSESSION OF UNDESERVED WEALTH

A certain mother was having sleepless nights because of her children. “I have small plots and flats in many places” she said, “I acquired all this wealth through my own efforts. Now my children are fighting

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over the property'. 'You are very selfish and proud. All the wealth you collect is not just for you but for your family and it is to be shared equally among all the family members. No man is an island, we have to share whatever property we have with our immediate family members,' I said to her. She was married to a second husband to whom she bore three children. From her first marriage, she had seven children. I told her to take her property and divide it into eleven portions. Take one portion for you and your husband as it is important for you also to remain with something and not give everything away to the children so as not to be dependent on them. She was to divide the remaining portion into ten equal portions for the children". To this she replied "I will divide the property as you have said, but for the portion to be allotted to my children, I will give my youngest son the most (ten acres of land). Among all my children, he cares for me the most". I told her that she could not afford to be partial. As it is, it was too late to divide the property, something which should have been done earlier. I told her, "Right now you are sixty-eight years old. At this age you should be preparing your soul for heaven and not dividing property". As soon as your children get married, it is better to divide the property among the children. The parents will have peace and the children will be blessed. However, some parents purposefully wait until those moments when they are breathing their last, and then they call a lawyer and quickly draw up a will. All this time their children will be bowing before them so that at least they can be considered generously in the will.

(II) UNJUST GRABBING OF THE WEALTH OF OUR BROTHERS OR RELATIVES

In my father's family, there were five children; four boys and one girl. My father was the third born. His father, that is, my grandfather, had a mill. My father and his brothers took turns in running the mill and in sharing in the proceeds from the mill. Each child had a share in the mill. The eldest son of my grandfather did not share the proceeds of the mill as was required, but my father never complained. Later I came to learn that my uncle had seven children, but even these children he did not share his portion of the mill with them. As a result there was constant fighting among the children for the mill. Their father, who was my uncle, was forced to sell the mill at a very

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCIAL DEBT

low price, much lower than it was worth. Out of the sale, his family got literally nothing. People look at immediate gains but what we actually need is a perpetual blessing from the Lord.

HOW SHOULD WE CARRY OURSELVES WHEN FAMILY PROPERTY IS BEING SHARED OUT?

Abraham is the best example regarding the division and handling of our property.

So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

- Gen. 13:1

Here we read the story of Abram and his nephew Lot. Both of them had been so graciously blessed by the Lord with much wealth, flocks and flocks of livestock. As they were staying on the same land, the land could not support both of them living together for their possessions were so great

So that the land could not support both of them living together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together. As a result dispute broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and those of Lot. Abram then told Lot, ‘we do not want strife between us or between my herdsmen and yours for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land open before you? Go in the opposite direction to me: if you take the left, I shall go right; if you take the right, I shall go left.

- Gen.13:6-9

We can see that Abram was truly an upright man. He told his nephew that there was no need for them to quarrel and fight or for our herdsmen to quarrel and fight. He respected the fact that Lot and he were blood relatives. Many times when it comes to division of family property, we forget that we are one family from the same stock. We often put property and our own individual prosperity before our kindred. Secondly, Abram tells his nephew that there is a whole stretch of land before them. He tells his nephew to choose whichever stretch of land he wanted to possess. He tells him “if you choose the stretch to the right I will go to the left and if you choose the one on the left I will take the one on the right.” Abram gives his nephew chance to make the first choice; he asks him to choose first the portion of land that appealed to him

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then whatever was to remain is what Abram would take. Note that Abram is much older than his nephew, Lot, and yet he was so gentle and humble before him. To him wealth had no priority over his relations with his kinsmen. He did not let his seniority be a major factor in determining who gets to choose first and which piece of land.

Having been given the chance to choose first, Lot looked around and chose the Jordan plain which was so well irrigated and at that moment the most fertile land. It was to the east. Abram moved to the west which was very poor land. Abram looked like a fool before his wife and family for having taken a very unproductive piece of land. Many a time you hear the wife say to her husband, ‘my dear that piece of land near the airport is the best. Fight for it. Do not let anyone take it from you. Don’t you know that our children are studying and growing up?’ There is nothing wrong in making an effort to have these things but we should not do it at any cost including the alienation of those dear to us or any other person. The Lord was pleased with Abram and the choice he had made, because he had shown that he was not a man of the world. The Lord then made him a promise “

Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD. The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you

- Gen.13:13-17

Later we find that the very fertile land Lot had chosen was actually on the outskirts of Sodom, a very sinful city. He had two daughters who unfortunately mingled with the Sodomites. Now when the Lord God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot lost his wife who was turned into a pillar of salt. Lot fled with his two daughters to a nearby town called Zoar. All his property and wealth were destroyed, leaving him with nothing. Later, Lot moved and settled in a cave with his two daughters. We know that his daughters mingled with the Sodomites and became defiled and later committed sin against their father

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(Gen.19:30-38). At the end Lot was left with nothing other than the loss of his own wife, defiled children, loss of all the property, human dignity and morality.

Abram now having his name changed to Abraham, on the other hand was so much blessed by God in everything and in everyway. So when the family property is being divided, do not simply go for what 'the prime' at any cost. It is important as Christians to be discerning people, to know what the will of the Lord for us is in each circumstance. Above all, and in all you do, what you really need is Jesus; Jesus will give you all you need.

A hardworking woman came to see me saying, 'Father, you have to pray for me. I am the only bread winner in my family. I work so hard but I am not able to save. The rest of my seven brothers and sisters just eat off my sweat'. I told her, 'When you save for your brothers and sisters you save more and more. When you share whatever you have with your brothers and sisters the Lord will bless you'.

(III) CHANGING THE LAND MARKS OR BOUNDARIES OF OTHERS

Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans, for their redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.

- Pro.23:10-11

Cursed be anyone who moves a neighbor's boundary marker

- Deut.27:17

A couple once came to see me for prayers. Both husband and wife were seriously injured and had their legs broken. The wife disclosed that they were involved in road accident. She continued to say that every so often they got involved in a road accident. This accident however was the worst. She and her husband had bought a piece of land through crooked means. On that day, they had travelled to the site of the land for its commissioning. As they were travelling back, they were involved in a horrible accident, which maimed both of them.

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Another man came to the prayer house and asked me to pray for his 'matatu'. 'Matatu' is a public service minibus that serves commuters here in Kenya. He said that a friend once asked him if he could sell to him the 'matatu'. The friend offered such a low price for it, that this man did not even think twice and at once took up the offer. However, it was always involved in accidents. He said he was incurring more losses than profits. If we get something for free or at a very cheap price, we should ask ourselves, whether it is really the Lord's giving.

A local supermarket had a 50% discount on a great variety of household items. This supermarket was well known for its high quality goods, so that a 50% discount made everyone scramble for it. A friend of mine went for this offer and bought an item. Within no time this item fell into pieces, because it was very old. I know that however good an offer sounds, it is not necessary to go for it. Offers are usually given for those items which have been on the shelf for so long and are so old that the management knows that no one wants to buy them. They get rid of them by giving a low price. The devil can also possess and attack material things. Human life will not have fulfillment because of an increase in material possessions. When we die, we cannot drive our car to heaven.

A friend sent me an email that read: A husband told his wife that when he dies everything should be written in his name. So the wife agreed to this. After his death, at the reading of the will, the lawyers asked the bereaved wife whether she did as her husband instructed her. She replied that she had taken the value of all his property and written a cheque of this value, and placed the cheque in his coffin so that he could withdraw the amount when he reached heaven!

'Father, I have three children. I need more money and wealth to comfortably take care of them and their future', a mother insisted. We scheme, plan and work so hard for our children, who later on reject and mistreat us as parents. Instead of fighting for wealth or property for our children we should fight for more eternal things like family prayer. Why don't we give Jesus to our children?

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCIAL DEBT

(IV) COLLECTING UNJUST INTEREST FROM THE POOR

I know many who have rental houses and use rent collected from the houses as a source of income. In reality this kind of business is very risky, because at times when accepting a tenant, you will never know if he will or will not pay the rent to the full as and when required. If you happen to throw out a tenant for failing to pay the rent you put yourself in a lot of danger. Being a landlord means you are responsible for the people staying on your property. When you throw out a tenant, you are throwing out an entire family, and their being out on the cold streets becomes your responsibility.



If you happen to throw out a tenant for failing to pay the rent you put yourself in a lot of danger.

I met a boy whose mother was frequently falling sick and all his family's income was spent on paying hospital bills. 'Everyday we pray, but the more we pray, the worse she seems to get and now we do not know what to do', he lamented. 'What kind of business does your father do?' I asked. 'He is in the business of money lending. He lends money and collects interest from the same. But now it has reached a point where we do not have extra money, because all of it goes into paying my mother's hospital bill'. I told him, 'I will help you but you have to do exactly as I instruct you. You are to tell your father to immediately stop collecting unjust interest'. 'But father' he said, 'it is very difficult for my father to stop this business now because he is owed millions, kindly suggest another alternative'. I told him there is no other alternative. The word of God says,

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.

- Ex.22:25

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When you charge unfair interest, you collect sorrows and tears of the people whom you are collecting from. We ought to be aware that there are good alternative ways of doing business that can have the blessing of the Lord. “The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it” (Pro.10:22). Some people who pay you back the interest they owe are left with nothing to live on, so they can even pray against you. A woman once came to see me and said, “Father pray for me, I do not know when I am going to die but it surely seems soon. Every time I meet with my debtors, they threaten me saying that if I come to them asking for my money, I will die the following day. Yet asking for my money from my debtors is inevitable”.

The lover of money will not be satisfied with money;
nor the lover of wealth, with gain”

- Eccl.5:10

Alas for you who heap up what is not your own!”
How long will you load yourselves with goods taken
in pledge?”

- Hab.2:6



***When you charge unfair interest, you
collect sorrows and tears of the people
whom you are collecting from.***

(V) FALSIFYING BOOKS

In India, a jobless man came to see me so I could pray with him. He was a bus conductor but had lost his job. He was married with two children. He was fired for stealing company money. His child needed school fees and this man had no way of raising the money. So he thought of collecting money from the passengers without issuing them with a bus ticket saying that the tickets were over. He would then pocket the money. He did this for some months. However, his employer found this out and immediately fired him. I told him that he had to ask for forgiveness from the Lord.

THE PROBLEM OF FINANCIAL DEBT

(VI) FAILURE TO PAY DEBTS

One man owed ten million shillings to someone and was not able to pay back this money, yet he had to pay it back. He came to me for help and advice. I asked him what amount he could afford to pay back. 'If I try five million shillings', he said. I told him to get the five million and tell his creditor that he was not able to pay immediately the entire amount of ten million but could manage five million at that time and would return the remaining five million later in installments.

When we take loans from others, we should try to pay back even the little we have. Refusing to pay back or dodging our creditors when we see them becomes a big block in our financial prosperity. It can bring blocks in our lives, in our families, our children and future generations, therefore multiplying our sorrows. Unless our creditor clears us of all our debts to him we must pay back every cent of the monies we borrowed. We cannot go to heaven having left huge debts here on earth. We first have to clear them and then heaven's doors will be wide open for us.

(VII) BRIBES

Bribes block justice to the deserving person. For example if you bribe a nurse to let you see the doctor and a poor sick person comes, since he cannot bribe for lack of money, he will be denied treatment or his treatment will be delayed. This will put him at more risk or even cause death! Bribery promotes injustice and brings shame to the Nation. Giving and receiving of bribes blocks our financial prosperity and even that of our future generations.

(VIII) STEALING, LOOTING, ROBBING OR EVEN GIVING FALSE WITNESS

Similarly money acquired by way of stealing, looting, robbing or giving false witness puts us in financial trouble.

(IX) UNDERPAYMENT OR NONPAYMENT OF WORKERS

There is a story told about a sacristan in a certain parish who would never have enough to eat. He only ate what the parish priest had left over. The sacristan died and later the parish priest died too. When both reached heaven, the sacristan was taken by St. Peter to a very

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beautiful mansion, his home in heaven. Then came the turn of the parish priest to be taken to his home. As they were walking they passed the house of the sacristan and the sacristan waved heartily at the two as they passed by his beautiful home. This encouraged the parish priest. "Surely, if my sacristan can get such a beautiful mansion, what about me?" On they walked past all the beautiful mansions. St. Peter asked the parish priest if he was worried. "Oh no," came the quick reply, "I feel confident, a beautiful mansion awaits me". At last they came to a small grass thatched hut. "Here we are," exclaimed Peter, "I present to you your home". What a shocker! The parish priest could not believe his eyes. "What?" he exclaimed. "Well," replied St. Peter, "while you were on earth the materials you sent me enabled me to only build this hut. As for the sacristan every time you barked at him, he kept silent. He did not bark back, he was kind and loyal to you".

I usually say that if at the end of the month, all your monies have not fully come in and you are in doubt as to which obligations you should settle first, pay your house-help even before you deduct money for rent. They also have needs to take care of and all through the month they have been working for you. It is very important when employing a house-help or any casual worker in your home, that you discuss with them all the ground rules, terms and conditions for their employment, so that there is a common understanding right from the beginning. We are all the same before God since we are all made in His image (Cf. Gal.3:28). Failure to honour our obligation to our support staff and those employed by us can bring a lot of financial bondages on our part.

(X) FAILURE TO PAY UP

One girl was promised by an uncle that he would pay her school fees. Later he told her that unless she had a physical sexual relationship with him, he would withdraw his sponsorship. This is obviously wrong and such acts cannot fail to go unpunished by the Lord.

While conducting a retreat in Uganda, I met a man who had been jobless for a while. He had many failed job offers. He gave his papers to many people who promised to give him a job, but they never fulfilled their promises. Others would promise to help him

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financially but would never fulfill their promise. I asked him if at any one time he promised to do something for his parish priest or church but did not fulfill it. He said, “One day his local church was having a fund raising function to build the parish church. That day there were many people and each was pledging money through promissory notes. However he did not have any money. So he pledged a promissory note of 100,000 Ugandan shillings and placed it in the basket that was going round, knowing very well that he did not have that kind of money. He did not even put his name on the note thinking that no one would know what he had done. I told him you thought no one knew, but our Lord knew. He knows everything and nothing is hidden from his eyes.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured, says the LORD. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? Says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses”

-Hag.1:8-9

Again we read in Proverbs:

You are snared by the utterance of your lips, caught by the words of your mouth”

- Pro.6:2

We trap ourselves with the words that we speak, which later binds us.

(XI) SELLING LIQUOR, CIGARETTES, CONDOMS, RUNNING CLUBS OR PUBS.

A woman experienced a lot of blocks in her business after coming closer to the Lord. Before then, she was a good Catholic but was never serious. When she became serious in her faith, she met a lot of blocks in her life. She was running a liquor shop in the heart of the city to which she also attached a night club. Then her business partners cheated her out of business. Later the Lord revealed that she

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stops all these immoral businesses as they were desecrating many families and relations. “Put a knife to your throat if you have a big appetite” (Pro.23:2).

(XIV) DISSATISFACTION IN THE WORK PLACE

One priest friend of mine was traveling to the airport to pick up a fellow priest. On the way, he was intercepted by policemen, who had set up a roadblock. The policeman walked all round the car probably looking for faults but found none. Finally he came to the window of the car and asked the priest for the fire extinguisher, which the priest produced. Then he asked him for his driver’s license but all was fine. At last he said, anyway since I have stopped you why don’t you just give me 50 shillings for a soda’.

Another policeman once told me, ‘you know our salary is very little, we can hardly support ourselves and our families. For me I pray to be placed in the traffic division as a traffic policeman. At least, in that department, I can collect extra money through finding petty mistakes from motorists which I can use to compensate my meager salary.’

(XV) TITHING

Tithing means giving 10 percent of our income to the Lord. Tithing began during the days of Abraham

And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him one tenth of everything.

- Gen.14:20

This practice has continued as a tradition in the Church from the time of early Christianity.

Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, “How are we robbing you?” In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me- the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test,

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says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the LORD of hosts.

- Mal.3:8-12

These verses speak about tithing and the promises God gives when we tithe. Tithing is an express of our dependence on God our recognition of Him as the master and provider of our income and job.

A person came to see me. He had a very good and well paying job but, he had no savings. He had two to three bank accounts but all of them were empty. No sooner did he get the money than it disappeared before he could do anything useful with it. He wanted to know why this was happening. When I was praying I asked him, 'is there anyone who asked you to help in church construction or something of that nature?' He said that as his parish church was being constructed, the parish priest knew that he had a lot of money. This man told the parish priest that he would give him what he could. The man however did not keep his word, even after the parish priest approached him on several occasions regarding this pledge that he had made. 'Every time the parish priest approached me, I told him I would pay later. Unfortunately I never kept my word. I took the whole issue lightly, never thinking it was a serious matter. Now the Church construction is over and the building is complete'. The Lord then revealed this word of God to me which I read out for him.

You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes

- Hag.1:5-11

And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He

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blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him one tenth of everything

- Gen.14:18-20

Our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all kept their commitment to God in paying their tithes and God blessed them abundantly. What usually stops us from tithing is our pride and greed.

Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in the same year reaped a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, and the man became rich; he prospered more and more until he became very wealthy

-Gen.26:12-13

So that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one tenth to you”

- Gen.28:21-22

Tithing however differs from offerings. Offerings are done every time Sunday mass is offered and are given during the mass. However tithing is done periodically, either monthly, annually, half or quarter yearly, etc depending on a person’s income or financial disposition or even the person’s personal arrangement he has made with his God. Somebody without any income is not obliged to pay the tithe, as tithe is always a portion of the income.

To tithe is to invest in the pocket of the Lord and when you tithe you receive the Lord’s special protection. Tithes are not to enrich the priests’ pockets but are meant for the work of the Lord. If your salary is 100 shillings and you give 10 percent of that to the Lord, that is 10 shillings, as tithe, the Lord can perform a greater miracle with 90 shillings than with the 100 shillings. The Word of God says, “With every gift show a cheerful face, and dedicate your tithe with gladness. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, and as generously as you can afford. For the Lord is the one who repays,

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and he will repay you sevenfold” (Sir.35:11-13). Repayment can be done only if we pay. The Lord will never forget our kind heart for He is faithful. The Lord said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts.20:35).



To tithe is to invest in the pocket of the Lord and when you tithe you receive the Lord's special protection.

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

William Colgate an American who founded the Colgate Company, was from a very poor family. He thought to himself, ‘I have to help my siblings get out of this poverty’. One day while he was lying on the bank of a river he was seen by a pastor who happened to be passing by the river. The pastor asked him why he was lying there and not in school like other children. William told him that he could be in school like the rest of the children, but his parents were too poor to raise the money for school fees. The pastor said, ‘I will introduce you to a business venture, but you must promise me to give one-tenth of whatever earnings you will make to the Lord. William agreed. So the pastor took him to work in some place, where William began doing little jobs here and there. He never forgot the promise he made to the pastor and always gave one-tenth of whatever he earned to the Lord. Later on William started the Colgate business. Today Colgate enjoys a huge worldwide market share and is also a common worldwide household toothpaste brand. Many types of toothpaste come and go, but Colgate over the years has remained standing strong and it gets stronger.

When you tithe, God protects you in a very special way. I met a person who had been jobless for a long time. God blessed Him with a job. Three months after getting the job, he lost his job. For the first two months after getting the job, with all the excitement and enthusiasm, he paid his tithe faithfully. However in the third month, his needs seemed to increase, so he postponed the tithe payments, thinking that the Lord would not mind. Unfortunately he lost his job in that same month.

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THE WIDOW'S OFFERING

When the poor widow came to give the offerings she might have prayed 'let no one see me and my poor offering'. The Lord saw the widow in a very special way, looking at the heart of this great woman and not what she put in the offering box. You may have very little to give to the Lord, but you just give it; offer it to the Lord and He will protect you. Many are the problems you may be facing at work, job insecurity, lack of promotion, jealousy from work mates, tough boss etc, but when you pay tithe to the Lord, He will protect you from all these evil attacks. For through tithing we express our utter dependence on God.

CHAPTER EIGHT



CHASTITY IS A SACRIFICIAL VIRTUE



All the religious take three vows; chastity, poverty and obedience as part of their religious commitment. Out of these three, I personally feel that the vow of chastity is the most delicate and the most difficult to keep. Because if you do not keep the vow of poverty and if you are disobedient sooner or later you will be caught by the superiors. But if you are unchaste nobody can detect it except the Lord. So it is very delicate as somebody can be very unchaste in his thinking and feelings all the time and never be reprimanded at any time.

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WHAT IS CHASTITY?

Chastity is the renunciation of all kinds of sexual intimacy and expression knowingly or unknowingly. Celibate chastity literally means giving up the married life or a human partner to live with. It means to choose Jesus Christ as your lifetime partner. Psalms 86:11 is a beautiful prayer pointing to chaste life.

Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

Those who are called to a consecrated religious life are all invited to be unmarried and undivided in their interests as they worship the Lord in their body. St. Paul says:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Rom.12:1-2

IS THERE A CRISIS IN THE CELIBATE LIFE?

Is celibacy in a crisis? It would be presumptuous to state categorically that the catholic celibacy is under threat. There are in the world more than one million religious persons and priests who have personally chosen the celibate life after their long years of formation. Every human being on the face of the earth has been called to follow his Master and responds in his own unique way. We can consider celibacy as one of the available means to follow the Lord more closely.

It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb.

Rev. 14:4

The Lord advised Jeremiah, “*You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters*” (Jer. 16:2). You have a mission to fulfill for the sake of the kingdom of God.

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WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CHASTITY

The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband.

- 1Cor. 7:32-35

The life of chastity is an invitation to live for the Lord with complete devotion and concentration. We read that even the angels and saints are jealous of the chaste. St. Paul also felt jealousy toward chaste virgins, but he also expresses his fears as he was aware of human weakness:

I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ

- 2Cor. 11:2



***We read that even the angels and saints
are jealous of the chaste.***

Religious chastity demands the sacrifice of the joys of marriage in order to imitate Jesus Christ, the chaste one. It is a call to follow Him with an undivided heart and serve the people in that undivided love of God (Cf. Ps. 86:11).

Celibacy is not just the abstinence from marital life but the consecration of life for a supernatural task. Consecrated celibacy or chastity is a gracious invitation to be filled with the love of God. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "To be a celibate means to be empty for God: to be free and open to his presence,

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to be available for his service.’ Celibacy is the ability to relate with all categories of people without any exclusive human attachment. Celibacy calls for complete openness in all our relationships and contacts. For a celibate, practically there is nothing secret or personal.

If we are not serious about the sacrificial aspects of the vow of chastity we may fall into different types of perversions to fill up the human emptiness created by chastity. These can even include getting inordinately attached to things including pets, computer gadgets, radio, TV, etc. The pervasion could also be in form of addiction to drinking, computer games, films, magazines, television, internet etc. It means as we empty out ourselves in chastity we need to be filled with the unconditional love of God through an unceasing prayer life.

One day I was preaching about the vow of chastity, I said Jesus alone is my example in the chaste life. One of the priests attending the retreat asked me my age. When I responded I was thirty two He said to me: “Better start preaching about chastity when you are over forty because Jesus was God and lived only 33 years. The crisis comes after that.” We often forget that Jesus was born as a full human being “but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). The so called crisis is always there for all but the one who is filled with the love of God will overcome it.

I heard the story about two monks who were crossing a river. A young girl was also standing there, not knowing how to cross to the other side. One of the monks picked her up in his arms and carried her across. The monks then continued on their walk. Half an hour later, the second monk said to the first, “Why did you do that? You know that as monks we are not even permitted to look at a woman or touch her, let alone pick her up in our arms.” “Well, I already dropped her at the river bank, but you are still carrying her in your heart. I think that is more serious”.

WHY DO THE RELIGIOUS TAKE THE VOW OF CHASTITY?

All the vows are taken for a closer imitation of Christ. The religious are called to become another Christ. When a religious takes the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, he tries to imitate Jesus the Chaste, Poor, and

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Obedient. The most Holy Son of God was establishing a life exclusively and absolutely for the service of His Father.



All the vows are taken for a closer imitation of Christ. The religious are called to become another Christ. When a religious takes the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, he tries to imitate Jesus the Chaste, Poor, and Obedient.

HOW CAN WE KEEP THE VOW OF CHASTITY?

We have seen that chastity is a sacrificial virtue and the religious profess this virtue as they follow Jesus who was chaste. In order to keep the vow of chastity we should also know how Jesus was chaste. Jesus was chaste because He was filled with the love of His Father. “*The Father and I are one*” (Jn.10:30), said Jesus. In order to keep the vow of chastity we need to be filled with the love of God. Unless and until we are filled with the love of God we will not be able to keep the vow of Chastity. The call to a chaste life is a supernatural call. Naturally speaking chastity is not possible. Those who desire to be chaste should earnestly pray to be filled with the love of God. Any emptiness in this regard will be harmful.

We can keep chastity only through sacrificing our sensual, sexual pleasures and enjoyments. We read from the first letter of St. Peter:

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin.

- 1Pt.4:1

In the past some saints described it as an angelic virtue. But it is not true, because chastity is not a virtue for the angels; it is unavoidable for them as they have no sexuality. But as for the human beings chastity is a sacrificial virtue as naturally all human beings are sexual beings. St. Paul teaches us that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal.5:24). That means those who want to follow the

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Lord closely have to crucify their flesh with its passions and desires. And

By the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-what is good and acceptable and perfect
- Rom.12:1-2

Chastity will not automatically flow to anyone as there is an aspect of great sacrifice. Just because somebody has taken the vows or the congregation demands it or the superiors profess it, does not make them chaste. Furthermore, it is a virtue that goes beyond the discipline of continence, it involves a person's inner dispositions. Somebody can be totally unchaste through their thoughts, emotions and feelings while no external manifestations are visible. Jesus said those who look at women lustfully commit adultery in the heart (Mt.5:28).

St. Paul said, "but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified" (1Cor.9:27). He knew without sacrifice it would not be possible to please God, "Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb.12:14). Again in order to keep the vow of chastity we have to be in constant touch with the things that are above.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col.3:2-3). "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.

- 1Pt.1:15

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO KEEPING CHASTITY?

The major obstacle to keeping chastity is the sin of lust, which is among the most committed sins in the whole world. Lust is inordinate sexual passion. Lust makes a man's heart blind, the mind weak and soul a slave. Those with lust fall into all kinds of sexual desires.

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One girl who had had four boyfriends and was with a fifth came to see me. She told me that she did not want to have all these boyfriends, but even as one hurts and fails her, she could not help falling in love repeatedly. She also had committed abortion after abortion but was still running after boys. The Lord spoke to her, “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want” (Gal.5:16-17). What is born out of lust is lust, until we are born out of the spirit we will have attacks of lust. For example we read of Joseph the patriarch who had a regenerated mind. He was continuously tempted but he did not fall into sin.

And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her.

- Gen.39:10

Job was the just man who made a covenant with his eyes:

I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I look upon a virgin?

- Job.31:1

These men of God endured temptation through personal sacrifices and renunciations.

HOW DOES LUST ENTER?

Lust comes to us through various means chief among them reading and watching pornographic material, listening to filthy immoral music, engaging in filthy talk and other means of exposure to various forms of sexual indecency.

Lust enters into a person through different means

1. Ancestors
2. Desire of the Parents
3. Senses

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4. Sexual Abuse
5. Lack of Love
6. Sex outside marriage
7. Bad sexual habits like masturbation

1. Ancestors

There are instances of inordinate sexual desire which guides some people to fornication, adultery and prostitution. Even after many treatment and counseling sessions they fall into the same trap. What they need is not just medication but deliverance. A keen observation on their family tree reveals that some of their fore-fathers also had this same struggle with sexual perversions.

There was a rehabilitation center which was run by the government in India. I met a woman who had uncontrollable sexual desires and she was caught many times in the act of prostitution. Doctors had found the problem to be hormonal imbalance but prayers showed that she was born of adultery and some of her known ancestors had been prostitutes. More than treatment, such cases demand the breaking of the long standing bondage found in the family tree.

2. Desire of the Parents

A single mother came weeping saying her only daughter had gone wayward. Since she entered the university she never obeyed the mother, always answered her back and was misbehaving. The mother was hurt saying, “my life was only for my daughter. I did not marry again just to bring her up. Now she calls me as a careless naughty woman who gave birth in the university. She rebelliously follows my past life saying “I don’t care”. I am deeply hurt and offended.” The Lord spoke to this mother:

Children of adulterers will not come to maturity, and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish. Even if they live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honour.

- Wis.3:16-18

The product of lust will produce lust and will become an easy prey to lust. In another instance, I remember a hyperactive child, brought by the mother, for

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prayers. It was revealed that the child was born outside of marriage in a semi-rape sexual union. Later the parents started living together but the union was a forced one. The fruit of an unprepared union will not grow to maturity (Cf. Wis.3:16-18).



The product of lust will produce lust and will become an easy prey to lust.

3. Senses

A boy was addicted to the sin of masturbation and was unable to overcome it. He could never control his eyes from watching anything that was lustful. He was addicted to filthy films, pictures, magazines, pornography etc. He started falling into it in form 2 now he was all grown up but still struggling. Later through prayer it was revealed that he fell into it through seeing naked pictures from a barber shop. His best friend took him to a shop and showed him the pictures. So the sin of lust entered into him for the first time through his eyes. Until he washed his eyes in the Holy Blood of Jesus he couldn't overcome it. The root cause of the sin of lust in him was through his eyes. He started washing his eyes in the Holy Blood of Jesus and he found that this was a great change in him. The moment he watched some picture he would immediately divert his attention and started praying the Holy Trinity Prayer. The Holy Trinity Prayer- is a prayer prepared by Rev. Fr. Mathew Elavumkal VC, Director, Divine retreat Ashram, Delhi- "*Abba Father purify my eyes in the Holy Blood of Jesus and fill my eyes with your Holy Spirit.*" 10 times daily.

4. Sexual Abuse

A 49 year old lady once came with a request to deliver her from lustful thoughts which affected her even during Holy Mass. She was a prayer group leader but had this evil attack. She told me, "Father I am so ashamed of myself due to these evil thoughts. I made my confession and I receive Holy Communion but I don't know why these lustful thoughts are not leaving me. I am really sad". The Holy Spirit asked her to remember about any experience of sexual abuse during childhood. She remembered the being

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bused by an uncle when she was just 13 years of age. It was her most trusted old uncle who sexually abused her several times. She could never forgive him since then. She carried the grudge and she did not even go to his funeral. So now the Holy Spirit was speaking to her whenever she was participating in the Holy Mass regarding the unforgiveness she was harbouring against her uncle. Unforgiveness is a door kept opened for the devil and he can attack us through any form of sin. In her case he attacked through lust. She was asked to forgive her uncle and pray for his soul and to pray daily:

Be merciful to them, O Master, and keep them safe; bring their lives to fulfillment in happiness and mercy.

- Tob.8:17

She was miraculously set free from lustful thoughts the moment she released her late uncle through forgiveness.



Unforgiveness is a door kept opened for the devil and he can attack us through any form of sin.

5. Lack of Love

The love of a mother flows to the child through breast milk. Experts have found that the child grows in the womb of a mother by being fed through a fluid called amniotic fluid. This fluid lets the child grow with all the faculties. This fluid has all the ingredients for a child to grow with integrity. This fluid also has the power to inject the love of a mother. And some of the contents of this fluid are present in the breast milk of a mother. So if a child is not properly breast-fed it will not only be undernourished but will also become vulnerable to feelings of lack of love that can lead to lustful desires in search of love. At the moment of birth the child cries aloud as the child is separated from the fluid, but the moment he is breast-fed he stops crying as feels loved, protected and cared for.

Experts say many people who are addicted to drinking, smoking, drugs and other bad habits could have had some deficiency in during some stage of development and lack of breast feeding from the mother is cited as one of

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those serious deficiencies. The Alcoholic Anonymous foundation found that the majority of people are addicted to the bad habit of drinking due to a lack of proper motherly love. Lam. 4:1-4 throws some light on this situation:

How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed!
The sacred stones lie scattered at the head of every street. The precious children of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold-- how they are reckoned as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands! Even the jackals offer the breast and nurse their young, but my people have become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives them anything.

Lack of proper love from parents creates feelings of rejection in the children. Rejection can guide people to self-destruction if they form the “*I don't care*” culture.

OVERCOMING THE SIN OF LUST – PRACTICAL AND DEVOTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

As already noted, in order to overcome the sin of lust we have to be filled with the love of God. In addition, we have to develop a deep and profound devotion to the most blessed Virgin Mary. Mother Mary is the woman given to all who love Jesus: “Behold this is your mother” (Jn. 19:27). Only a mother can provide motherly love. And we have graciously received a mother from the hand of our most holy Jesus.

SOME PRACTICAL STEPS

1. Be prudent in our relations, dialogues, travels.
2. Make regular confession to a priest
3. Never neglect community prayer and sharing
4. Find a devoted and committed Spiritual Father and get his assistance
5. If you find it very challenging that you may fall away boldly ask for a transfer
6. Always pray and find out if there is any one coming to your mind more than Jesus, if so stop all the unnecessary communications.

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PRESCRIPTION TO OVERCOME THE SIN OF LUST

1. Holy Rosary
2. Meditation on the Way of the Cross
3. My Jesus, wash in your Holy Blood the egg and the sperm of my parents that conceived me. Recreate me as your child O Lord. (50 times, daily)
4. My Jesus, wash away the sin of lust that entered into me for the first time through my senses (of touch, ears and eyes), wash it in your Holy blood and fill my senses with your Holy Spirit. (50 times, daily)
5. My Jesus by the merits of your passion, death and resurrection, wash away the sin of lust that dominated me for many years through my emotions, imaginations, memory, thoughts and bad habits. Bind the evil spirit of lust at your feet and fill me with your love. (50 times, daily)
6. My Jesus kiss me on my forehead and fill me with your love (100 times, daily)
7. Holy Trinity Prayer

CHAPTER NINE



POWER OF PRAYER



PRAYER MEANS TO LOVE THE LORD

To pray means to love the Lord. To love Him means to share in His life. To share in His life means to partake in His mission. To partake in His mission means to do whatever He says. Many of our prayers are not answered because we don't pray with love. A deep love for Jesus is the greatest prayer. Once I posed a question to the Lord, "When are you really happy with me?" He immediately responded saying "I am happy when I see you in my presence". When I meditated on this point the Lord further revealed as He did in the scripture: "there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:42). We are happy when someone who loves us visit us and speak to us, then what about our most Holy God who loved us even before our birth and died for us?

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Many of us think that when we do so many things and neglect prayer that the Lord is happy but it is absolutely wrong. He is happy only when we sit in front of him to pray. Prayer is the greatest means to please the Lord and to know His will. Prayer can never be substituted with work.



***He is happy only when we sit
in front of him to pray.***

PRAYER MEANS TO SHARE IN HIS PAINS

Prayer is an invitation of the Lord to us to partake in His sorrows. That is why the more some people pray the more difficult life becomes. They find that they are attacked with feelings of tiredness and severe sufferings. Actually the more we pray the more the Lord believes in our faithfulness and He shares a bit of His pain. It is a privilege to share in His pain. The Lord never permits suffering to overwhelm and dominate us because He is faithful.

He is always there when we suffer and He is never too late to respond. The raising of Lazarus from death is the best example of the timing of the Lord. We know that our Lord was informed when Lazarus fell sick but He did not visit him. He was informed when he died but He did not come for the funeral. Rather He came after four days when the body had started to decay. We now know that this was perfect timing, to prove to the world that nothing is too late for Him as everything happens according to His plans. Prayer and the plan of God in our lives go hand in hand.

PRAYER GIVES US PROTECTION

We all have to develop the culture of prayer, whether it be personal, family or community prayer. When we pray, we receive the protection of the Lord. When we pray we are able to know the mind of the Lord and conquer the devil and his plans in our lives and that of our family members.

PRAYER GIVES US PATIENCE

Patience is a virtue that is fast disappearing in our family life, prayer life and in our lives as a whole. Whenever we are struck with the slightest affliction,

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we run to the Almighty wanting a quick solution to our problem. If speedy help doesn't come, we take the matter into our own hands and instead rebel against God. We stop praying and going to church saying that God is ignoring us, He no longer loves nor cares for us and many other things. In revenge we purposefully fall into sin: we divorce our drunken abusive spouse, we neglect our stubborn children, we seek other 'quick-working-gods' but all these actions just make the situation worse.

An Italian doctor who had lots of problems came for prayer. I asked him if he prayed. He answered, "Everyday father I pray". "Do you pray to Mother Mary?" I pressed on. "Father, I do not pray to Mother Mary but I pray one Hail Mary everyday". How will the Lord come down into our problems with just one Hail Mary everyday? Another religious brother told me that he prayed five minutes everyday. We have to do better than this. Before Jesus began His public ministry He spent forty days in the desert praying and fasting for the great work He was about to begin. In the gospels He often spent entire nights in prayer-in conversation with His Father. We all want to imitate our Lord and master, Jesus Christ, but not if we only pray one Hail Mary and for five minutes everyday.

Whenever we conduct a retreat, together with our intercessors, we offer prayers and entreaties for that retreat long before it begins. This is in order that the Lord may bring as many people for the retreat, to experience Him and His abundant love and therefore bring total conversion into their lives. When people come for retreats, their coming is not their own doing but that of the Lord. He is the one who brings them. When the retreat finally kicks off, on the first day, the Lord always reveals that many feel uneasy, many feel that being away from their daily, busy schedules for a whole five days, just praying and being with the Lord is too much, and most people want to go away, the moment they arrive. This is despite their need for the Lord or their heavy problems and burdens that made them come in the first place. However, they do not go away. The Lord who brought them by the power of His Holy Spirit calms them down and keeps them still right until the retreat ends.

At the retreat centre in Mumbai, a man approached me who was so sympathetic to me. "Father, you work so hard, you should take one week off and go far from this place and rest. You really need it. However just spare me two

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minutes to listen to my problem”. Then he started to tell me his problems. I asked him to attend one retreat at the centre where every week we held retreats in six different languages. But he told me coming for a retreat would be very difficult as his work tied him down. He was so busy that getting five days off would be a big problem. It is said that, “Being busy means, B-being; U-under; S-Satan’s; Y-yoke. See now you are sick and so much in need of God’s intervention in your life, is that right?” he nodded, I continued, “You took time off to come and see me yet I can never solve your problems. True, I will give you a guideline, but ultimately it is Jesus who will rescue you and give you an answer to your problems. You cannot come and expect the Lord to relieve you of your problem in just one second. He Himself has to speak to you and let you know the root cause of your problem(s). If you can take some time just to come and see me surely you can also spare some time for the Lord. You have to be with Him, listen to Him however long it may take for him to answer you.”

We all want speedy solutions to our problems. We do not want to wait for 5 whole days of no talking, no cell-phone, no television (not in today’s world!!) waiting for a ‘slow’ Jesus to speak to us or to act on our problems. One thing is for certain; my dear brothers and sisters, we all have to wait patiently for the mercy of the Lord. Yes, the Lord may be ‘slow’ in fulfilling His promises, as I also have come to find out but He fulfills them all the same.

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

- 2Pt.3:9

JESUS, THE REAL EXAMPLE

Jesus was constantly in prayer always.

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God.

- Lk.6:12

Although He didn’t need to pray, day and night Christ continued in prayer. He fasted and prayed for forty days. At his baptism, before every miracle, at Gethsemane, on the Cross, Christ prayed. His disciples also did the same in the cenacle. Of St. Paul, Ananias was told, ‘Behold he is praying.’

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One day after Mass a lady came to see me and said, “Your mass was too long.” I replied, “That means you have no time for Jesus and you don’t really love Him”. In another incident Cardinal Garrone told the Rector of a seminary who was speaking about the crisis in celibacy, ‘The crisis is not celibacy, but prayer.’ St. Thomas Aquinas said he had learned more at the foot of the crucifix than from learned volumes. *The Imitation of Christ*, says, ‘What does it benefit to discuss the Trinity, if by your sins you displease the Trinity?’ St. John Don Bosco said, ‘Prayer that does not help correct our defects is displeasing to God.’ Prayer is needed for a happy community life and for a family spirit. According to Patrick Peyton ‘The family that prays together stays together.’ One of the workers in a religious house wanted to urgently speak to the superior but could not find him. When he met him in the chapel, he exclaimed, ‘Who would have thought you would be here!’ The chapel is the place where the ordinary people should search and find their shepherds.



‘Prayer that does not help correct our defects is displeasing to God.’

According to John of the Cross, ‘Those men who work feverishly and imagine they can reform the world with their exterior works would be much better off and much more useful to the Church and more pleasing to God, if they gave half their time to prayer.’ ‘Whenever we think God is not listening to our prayers, it really means that we are not listening to his answers’ said Francis Mauriac. ‘Heaven is full of answers to prayers which no one has bothered to pray’ (Billy Graham).

Prayer is infallible. ‘Ask and you shall receive,’ if not the thing asked for, something better. Manzoni said, ‘Man is never as great as when he kneels before God in prayer.’ Augustine once said, ‘Prayer is the breath of the soul’. And while leaving religious life, religious priest said: ‘I cannot blame the Society, it gave me everything. Not superiors, they were very understanding, but I neglected prayer.’ St. Augustine says, ‘Ready though God is to give to all, he only gives to him who asks, lest He should give to him who cannot receive.’

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Are you an atheist?

You show your esteem for God by the amount of time you allot to Him in prayer. If you have no time for God, no matter what your pretexts, you have no esteem for God. Your employment of time is determined by your judgement of values and if God has no place in your time, it means He is of no value to you. You have time for whatever you consider important; to fix your hair, look after your clothes, read a newspaper, a little conversation with someone, three or four meals a day, and so on. If there is no place for God, it is because He is unimportant. ‘Without prayer you are practically an atheist.’

St. Teresa of Avila said, ‘There is only one way to find God, and that is prayer. Those who point to any other way are deceiving you.’ A very active young priest with only 5 years in the ministry felt exhausted and wanted to leave the priesthood. He approached his Bishop, who told him, ‘pray more intensely than up to now for a week and then I shall allow you to leave.’ After a week of prayer, he wanted to continue in the ministry. The Bishop was John Paul II, (Bishop Karol Wojtyla of Krakow) and the priest was the Pope’s secretary, Mgr. Stanislaus Diswiz, now Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow.

‘In true prayer, it is not God who hears what is asked of him; but he who prays and who continues to pray until he hears what God has to say to him.’ (Soren Kierkegaard). We should not forget that “God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son” (Jn 3:16); God still loves the world despite its atheism, wars, terrorism, massive exploitation, injustice, divorces, murders, abortions. The world is kept going by prayer as we learn about Abraham pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen.18:23-33.

PRAYER MUST BE UNCEASING

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart” (Lk.18:1). It is important to pray always without becoming weary. He uses the example of a woman who lacks the usual leverage – looks, money, power, a husband. The only resource she has is persistence. Jesus tells us that when we pray, we should imitate her.

The storyline of the parable is clear and compelling. In ancient Israel, widows were often listed among the more vulnerable members of society.

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And it appears that the widow of the parable has in fact been defrauded of her property by some unscrupulous persons. Her only recourse is the local judge. But he has long since abandoned his covenant of morality and is swayed only by bribes--something that the destitute widow cannot provide. This unprincipled judge is proud of his freedom from the structures of religion and is happy to proclaim this on all occasions. However, the persistence of the widow gradually wears him down and finally causes him to grant her justice. The lesson drawn by Jesus is crystal clear: How much more likely is God, the most just of all judges, ready to grant our requests for justice when we are treated unfairly!

HOW MANY QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?

Are you jobless? Childless? Homeless? Hopeless? Are you completely broken? A widow? Do you have house rent? Do you have school fees for your children? Do you have many financial debts? Are you hungry? Do you think that 'it is better to die than to live'? Do you give up easily? The Lord speaks to you through Sirach. 39:15-17:

Ascribe majesty to his name and give thanks to him with praise, with songs on your lips, and with harps; this is what you shall say in thanksgiving: 'All the works of the Lord are very good, and whatever he commands will be done at the appointed time.' No one can say, "What is this?" or "Why is that?" – for at the appointed time all such questions will be answered.

Jesus advises us to be persistent in prayer. Prayer is our communication with God, our relationship with the divine. Like any friendship, prayer relationship takes time, effort, and sacrifice.

PARABLE OF THE CRAZY OLD LADY

This is a beautiful story regarding the way the Lord answers your prayers. Frankly, don't we wish that Jesus had told this parable in a little different way? Couldn't he have gotten the same point across if He had said something like this: Verily, verily I tell you that once upon a time there was a good lady who lived next door to an atheist. Everyday, when the lady prayed, the atheist guy could hear her. He thought to himself, "She sure is crazy, praying all the time like that. Doesn't she know there is no God?" Many times while she

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was praying, he would go to her house and harass her, saying, “Lady, why do you pray all the time? Don’t you know there is no God?” But she kept on praying. One day, she ran out of groceries. As usual, she was praying to the Lord explaining her situation and thanking Him for what He was going to do. The atheist heard her praying and thought to himself, “Humph...I’ll fix her.” He went to the grocery store, bought a whole bunch of groceries, took them to her house, dropped them off on the front porch, rang the door bell and then hid in the bushes to see what she would do. When she opened the door and saw the groceries, she began to praise the Lord with all her heart, jumping, singing, and shouting everywhere! The atheist then jumped out of the bushes and told her, “You crazy old lady. God didn’t buy you those groceries, I bought those groceries!” She broke out and started running down the street, shouting and praising the Lord. When he finally caught up with her, he asked what her problem was... She said “I knew the Lord would provide me with some groceries, but I didn’t know he was going to make the devil pay for them!”

CHAPTER TEN



MOTHER MARY



THE MOST FAITHFUL WOMAN

Why is Jesus faithful to the Blessed Virgin Mary? It is mainly because of the faithfulness of Mother Mary. We know that Jesus never performed any miracle for Blessed Virgin Mary. Mother Mary never received any special favour from her son. She is the only faithful woman from the very beginning of Jesus' life until His death on the cross. She is the only woman who followed Jesus without receiving any special favour from Him. She did not get any miracle from Jesus (the miracle at Cana was performed for that family and not for Mother Mary). She was a 'neglected' Mother and yet a woman of a great heart and faith. Her cousin Elizabeth spoke of her as blessed because of her faith.

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And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.

- Lk.1:45



***She was a ‘neglected’ Mother
and yet a woman of a great heart
and faith.***

There were more than 10,000 people who ate the bread multiplied by Jesus, more than ten lepers who were healed by Him; many who were paralyzed and were set free, many who were possessed and were delivered by Him. Where were they when the Lord was in crisis? We don't find anyone who was helped by Him helping Him, except a few women and St. John. Among these, Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God is a special person who stood by Him up to the point of His death. She journeyed with him and interiorly bore the pain of the road to Calvary and the Cross itself, she stood by the Cross as Jesus died. For this reason she is referred to as co-redemptress.

The Lord is faithful to His Mother because His mother was the most faithful woman who ever lived on this earth. John Powell in one of his books interprets the statue of Michelangelo which he was carved out of marble as a beautiful tribute to this young woman. It is likewise a tribute to her “yes” to God’s will. In the statue, Mary is holding Jesus in her arms, looking upon his torn body with a mother’s tender and loving compassion. Michelangelo calls his statue the “pieta.” Pieta is an Italian word which means “faithfulness.” Mary said her “yes” to God’s will, and she was faithful to the end. The Christian who has really put on the mind of Christ knows that the Lord never really spoke of success, but only of “faithfulness,” of pieta. When we see our Christian lives in the perspective of the gospels, faithfulness to God’s will is the only real, eternal crown of success.

MOTHER MARY AND ME

The woman I love and respect the most is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She taught me so many things not through words but through her life. I found her as the most exemplary human being; a person who never complains about

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anything and a woman of graceful silence and faithfulness. I noticed that I was miles away from her in every sense when I came to know of my own weaknesses. I always had a need to be appreciated, loved and recognised. I had a tendency to love those who loved me (Lk.6:32-36). And yet I found Mother Mary being faithful to her Son irrespective of concerns or mutual love.

When I was young, I lost something personal that was worth Kshs. 2000. It was so precious to me that either I had to get it back or I needed to get this money to buy a replacement. It was impossible for me to raise this money because I was just 9 years old. I was very sad because when I asked my mother she told me that she had no money for me. Being a young boy our parents never gave us even one shilling to carry. Our parish church was very near our home and it was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I had noticed one thing in my Mother that whenever she needed something, for example when she wanted to find lost items or her children to pass in their exams, or wanted some blocks removed from her life. She would send me to the church to offer a candle, or some money or some fruits to Mother Mary. I always found that her prayers were answered. In my distress, I thought the one person who could help me was Mother Mary but I did not have even have a shilling to buy a candle and burn it for her. I told Mother Mary while kneeling in front of her statue, “Most Blessed Mother Mary, you know me. I lost that precious item of mine, but I have nothing to give you as an offering. I promise you that from today I will pray five Hail Marys daily till my death, if you please help me to get it back”. Immediately after the prayers I went and found it in the same place where I had lost it. I found it through the powerful intervention of the Blessed Mother Mary. I had searched for it fervently on the day I lost it, but the moment I asked for the intercession of Mother Mary I got it back. I know the prayer of the “memorare” came true in my life. I love Mother Mary because she never forsook me in my crisis. The faithfulness she had to her Son is the same she had towards me, her sinful Son. I honour her because she is so good.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIFT

The most beautiful gift the Lord has ever given to those who love Him, is His most Beloved Mother, Mary. None of us has a 100 percent selfless mother. Here comes a mother with complete commitment and unflinching love to all

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her children. From being the mother of her Holy son she becomes the mother of the universe the moment she accepts the word of her Son from the Cross, “behold this is your son”. Actually, hers was a long journey as she realised her call to universal motherhood. She achieved it through unconditional faithfulness to her Son up to the moment of his death. She fulfilled the demands of her Son throughout her life. He had said, “My mother is the one who hears the word and fulfills it”. She kept the dignity of her Son through obedience, submission to the will of God and with real humility.



***From being the mother of her Holy son
she becomes the mother of the universe the
moment she accepts the word of her Son from
the Cross, “behold this is your son”.***

WHY CAN'T I BE THE MOTHER OF GOD?

A woman once said to me that she did not find anything unusual or extraordinary about Mother Mary. “The only reason why you people (us Catholics) attach so much importance to Mother Mary, is because God called her to be the mother of the Saviour. If I am called, I too can be the mother of God. So the only difference between her and me is that she was called and I was not”. “Yes, you were not called to be the mother of God then, but still even now, God is calling you and every woman to be the mother of God. It is through her life that Mother Mary proved that she was worthy to be called the Mother of God. You too can become the mother of God, but through your life,” I said to her.

INWARD APPEARANCE DETERMINES YOUR OUTWARD APPEARANCE

A man who had photographs of him taken complained loudly when the copies were brought. “Why do I look like an ape?” he shouted. “Well, dear”, said his loving wife, gently, “you should have thought of that before you had your picture taken.” If you wish to look well you should live well. Your life and actions reflect much on your appearance. And your honest face can be a letter of recommendation. I read somewhere about an elderly woman, who when asked what kind of cosmetics she used for her beautiful complexion,

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gave an edifying but effective reply. “I use for my lips - truth, for my voice - prayer; for my eyes - pity; for my hands - charity, for my figure - uprightness; for my heart - love.”

When his teenage daughter was praised by someone, the father said. “They are only praising your youth. You can take no credit for beauty at sixteen. But if you are beautiful at sixty, it will be you own soul’s doing. Then you may be proud of it and be loved for it.” The Blessed Virgin Mary kept her beauty emanating from her adorned soul. She was able to walk through the joys and sorrows of being the Mother of the Saviour because of the interior strength and beauty she had built as she unreservedly responded faithfully to God.



If you wish to look well you should live well.

A MOTHER WHO NEVER BOASTED!

At the wedding feast of Cana, where Jesus performed the very first miracle of His public life, she noticed that the wine for the guests was over. She quietly went to her Son and told Him that the wine was over. Then she told the servants simply to do as her Son would instruct them. Then she stepped back and we do not hear of her again in that scene. We have a lot to learn from her in this event. Mother Mary teaches us to always take our complaints straight to our Lord, because He alone has the power to change things or situations. Rather than airing our grievances to the four winds why not go to Him first for He will surely show us the best way out. After Jesus had performed the miracle, no one knew that it was through her intercession that this miracle had been performed. No standing ovation or round of applause for saving the situation. If any glory was to be given it was to God Himself, Jesus Christ. Mother Mary did not take any credit; neither is there credit given to her for her timely and wise intervention in the situation. On the other hand when we do something small, we want the whole world to know; we want to be appreciated and recognised. Even then, she did not go asking her son for special favours just because she was His mother and He was the Son of God. She never asked favours for herself but for others, thus making her the perfect intercessor.

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This is the very same reason why Catholics regard Mother Mary as our most powerful intercessor in heaven. Her Son loves her so much and will never refuse to grant her any requests brought to Him by her, for her children on earth. Mother Mary on the other hand will never despise the petitions of her children. Jesus Himself gave her to us on the cross when He was about to die. When he said to John the apostle, “Son this is your mother” (Jn.19:27) and to His mother, “Mother this is your son”. John represented the entire human race at that time, today and forever.

In the year 589 the whole of Europe was devastated by the epidemic that claimed many lives. The city of Rome was the one most affected. There were so many deaths that the people could not even bury the dead in time. At that time, Gregory the Great was head of the Church. He ordered public prayer, fasting and penitential procession. However, the disease continued to have many victims. The Pope then turned to Mary’s intercession and led a procession of all the people of Rome carrying her image. The epidemic disappeared and the cries of sorrow and suffering were replaced by songs of thanksgiving and joy.

A SILENT SUFFERER

Many of us think that being the mother of God her life must have been a bed of roses. If there is anyone who suffered on this earth apart from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it was His most Holy mother, Mother Mary. We have a tendency to undermine the sorrows of Blessed Virgin Mary by just looking at her as a blessed woman. It is very important to journey with her in her life which was never too easy. She is said to have lived through seven sorrows which included being a refugee.

1. The prophesy of Simeon (Lk.2:34-35)
2. The flight onto Egypt (Mt.2:13-14)
3. The loss of the child Jesus in the Temple (Lk.2:43-45)
4. The meeting of Jesus on the way of the Cross
5. The crucifixion
6. The taking down of the body of Jesus from the Cross
7. The burial of Jesus

MOTHER MARY

Mother Mary was a silent sufferer. When the news was broken to her that she was going to be the mother of the Saviour of the world. She was engaged to be married to Joseph. According to Jewish tradition, it was against the law for a girl to conceive before she got married. The girl would be stoned to death if found to be with child before marriage. Mother Mary was told that she was going to conceive and bear a Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. You can imagine what went through her mind: the thought of being stoned to death if found she was pregnant before her marriage and how she would explain all this to her betrothed Joseph. Despite all this she immediately told the archangel Gabriel, who delivered the news, that let what the Lord has said be done for “for nothing will be impossible with God” (Lk.1:37). She accepted to do whatever God planned to do with her. She did not run to Joseph or to anyone else for that matter to break the news, instead we are told she pondered all this in her heart and let God take care of the rest. By being silent God really took care of the rest. He sent His angel to let Joseph know what had happened to his betrothed and what they were to do.

WHY DID JESUS CALL MARY ‘WOMAN’?

Gen.3:15 says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head and you will strike his heel”. It is actually a pre-figuration of the life of Blessed Virgin Mary. There are two incidences where we find Jesus calling His mother as ‘woman’, at the beginning of His public ministry and at the time of his death. He calls Mary as the mother of God at the most decisive times in his life. It is to let people know that this mother is not an ordinary woman but the woman prefigured in the book of Genesis. This is the only woman who brought forth the offspring that crushed the head of the devil. Listen to her and accept her as your mother. The Lord wanted to reveal this great truth that if through the disobedience of the first woman Eve, death came to this world, then through the obedience of Mother Mary life entered into this world. Honour this mother who carried forth the true light to remove all the darkness.

Judith 16:5 , “But the Lord Almighty has foiled them by the hand of a woman” speaks about a woman who spoiled the plan of an evil King. We remember that this is also a pre-figuration of Blessed Virgin Mary as she spoiled the tricks of the devil through her silent sufferings.

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The doctrine on the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was defined by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854, four years before the apparitions of Mary at Lourdes. Belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception dates back to the dawn of Christianity. It holds that Mary was untouched by sin from the moment of her conception. In other words, Mary was born free from original sin and remained free from all sin for the rest of her life.

Related to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is the story of Lourdes involving apparitions of Mary to a 14 year-old girl named Bernadette Soubirous. Mary said to Bernadette during one of the apparitions: "I am the Immaculate Conception." In 1858 she reported having an apparition of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It took place at a hillside just outside the village of Lourdes in France. At first, authorities scoffed at the report. Later, when she reported further apparitions, they threatened to punish her. Then one day the apparition told Bernadette to dig into the ground. She obeyed, and a spring bubbled up. Soon miracles began to occur at the spring. A blind man washed in the waters and regained his sight. A mother washed her paralyzed baby in the waters and it became well within 24 hours. Years after Bernadette's death, the same child, then an old man of 77, was an honoured guest at her canonisation in Rome.

Today over 1,800 remarkable cures are on file in the Medical Bureau at Lourdes. These cures have all been certified by an international team of 20 distinguished physicians and surgeons of different religious backgrounds. One of the most remarkable, recent cures took place in the late 1970s. It involved a former serviceman, 23 year old Vittorio Michel of Italy. He had contracted bone cancer and doctors had given up hope of his recovery. In desperation, his friends and family took him to Lourdes. He was in a waist-to-toe body cast. They washed Vittorio in the spring waters. Within a week his pain vanished and the bone repaired itself. Today Vittorio is in excellent health.

HOW IS THE BLESSED VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD?

The blessed Virgin is called the *Mother of God* because Jesus Christ, her son, who was born of her as man, is not only man, but is also truly God. She is the "*mother of my Lord*" (Lk 1:43). It is not the Catholics but the word of God that clearly speaks of Mary as the Mother of God. Elizabeth who was

MOTHER MARY

filled with the Holy Spirit exalted “Mary is the Mother of God”. As already noted, the Blessed Virgin is our Mother because Jesus, when dying on the cross, recommended us to the care of His Mother (Cf. Jn 19:27). Being the brothers and sisters of Jesus, we are “*the rest of her children*” (Rev 12:17; Cf. CCC 508, 2682). The Catholic Church shows great devotion to the Blessed Virgin because Jesus Himself has shown great love and affection for her (Cf. Eph 6:1).

YOU CAN’T BREAK MARY WITHOUT BREAKING JESUS

The Iconoclasts went to churches destroying all the statues. They came to a church to break the statue of Mary with the Child Jesus and found an old lady praying. She shouted from the Church, ‘you cannot break Mary without breaking Jesus.’ Devotion to the Mother of Our Lord is an integral part of Catholic faith. ‘Every encounter with Mary ends with an encounter with Jesus Himself’ (Paul VI). Mary is like a mirror and a prism. She is like a mirror, because she reflects the face of Christ. She is like a prism because she refracts or breaks up the light of Christ into the various colours of His virtues: obedience, humility, charity and the spirit of sacrifice.

A Catholic boy attended a protestant prayer meeting and found himself welcomed by them. The pastor asked the new comer, “Let me hear you say your prayers”. Off went our little Catholic, full speed in the Our Father, so fast he could not apply the brakes and slid into the Hail Mary. The Pastor said: “We don’t have to hear about her. Move on to the creed”. Full speed again, till he came to “born of the Virgin...” He turned to the pastor: “Pastor”, he said “here she comes again!” Yes, she comes interwoven with her Son in the Catholic system.



‘Every encounter with Mary ends with an encounter with Jesus Himself’

YOU ARE NOT REJECTED

THE DIFFERENCE IS BETWEEN HER SON AND ME

A shoeshine boy was plying his trade in New York's Grand Central Station. A silver medal danced at his neck as he slapped his shine cloth repeatedly, across a man's shoes. "Sonny," said the man curiously, "What's the hardware around your neck?" "It's a medal of the mother of Jesus," the boy replied. "Why her medal?" said the man. "She's no different from your mother." "Could be," said the boy, "but there's a real big difference between her son and me."

QUEEN OF ALL THE CONSECRATED

In Michelangelo's masterpiece of sculpture, the Pieta, the Mother seems far too young to be the Mother of the dead son. Someone said this to Michelangelo, and he replied, 'You don't know anything. Chaste women retain their fresh looks longer than those who are not chaste. The Madonna was without sin, without even the least unchaste desire, and so she was always young.' (F.H.Drinkwater). Blessed Mother Theresa said, "Love Jesus with the heart of Mother Mary".

MARY: THE FATHER'S CHOICE

One of the bishops preached, "If you have any complaint against the Blessed Virgin Mary address your problem to the Abba Father in heaven. It is the Heavenly Father who found Mary worthy to become the Mother of God. If the Most Holy Father did not find any fault in her who are you to find it?" There are many people who think that Mary has no role in the work of salvation. To think this way would be to ignore God's plan. There was no need for the Son of God to be born of a woman. He was the second Adam who came to restore humanity infected with sin. Just as the first Adam had no mother so also the second Adam could have come without a mother. But God's plan was that He should be born of a mother and that our salvation should come to us through Mary His mother; that she should accept Him, love Him, care for Him, feed Him and bring Him up until He was ready to give His life on the cross for us.

In the present day people not only downgrade but also ignore the important role of the virgin mother Mary. The great loss of priestly and religious vocations and the weakening of family life have coincided with the dwindling of devotion to the Mother of God.

MOTHER MARY

IF YOU LIVE IN THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA

When the city of Hiroshima was wiped out of existence by the first atomic bomb one household was singularly spared. All the members of that house were alive until a few years ago while every person within an area of one mile of the centre of that explosion was dead. One of those people is Fr. Hubert Schiffer. Fr. Schiffer said that hundreds of experts and investigators have over the years been studying what might have been different about that house that only was eight blocks from the centre of that atomic explosion. He affirms that there was only one thing that was found to be different. In that house the family rosary was said every day. Those people who lived in that house were living the message of Fatima.

Epilogue

“I will not reject anyone who comes to me” (Jn.6,37), is a promise by the Lord who is always faithful in all his promises. The Lord is the only one who really delights in the welfare of his servant (Ps.35, 27). He is sad when we are sad. He is the only one caring for our integral welfare. He loves us irrespective of all our goodness and evil tendencies. His love is unconditional and unlimited. He always remembers us (Jer.31, 20). The purpose of this book is to tell the readers that Jesus is so good, so merciful, so compassionate, so mighty, so great, so loving and so much caring more than ever we have imagined. He is beyond our understanding. He is Love itself, Mercy itself, Compassion itself. The only thing we can do is to bow down before Him always as Sir.43, 27-33 says, “We could say more but could never say enough; let the final word be: He is the all.” Where can we find the strength to praise him? For he is greater than all his works! Awesome is the Lord and very great, and marvellous is his power. Glorify and exalt him as much as you can, for he surpasses even that. When you exalt him, summon all your strength, and do not grow weary, for you cannot praise him enough. Who has seen him and can describe him? Or who can extol him as he is? Many things greater than these lie hidden, for I have seen but few of his works. For the Lord has made all things, and to the godly he has given wisdom.”

I give all the glory and honour, praise and worship to the Father Son and the Holy Spirit who called me to become a Priest. I am sincerely grateful to my God for believing in me and made me His servant. And I earnestly pray for all those who will have read this book be blessed, be forgiven, be healed and be delivered in the mighty Holy name of the Father, son and the Holy Spirit.

**Fr. Antony Parankimalil VC,
Director, Vincentian Prayer House,
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Fr. Antony Parankimalil VC is a Catholic Priest. He belongs to the Vincentian Congregation founded in 1904 in Kerala, India. He was ordained a priest on 28th December, 2004. He did his priestly ministry in the Tabor Divine Retreat Ashram in Mumbai, India, upto 2007. He served as the Rector of the Vincentian theology students in Hekima College, Nairobi until 2012. At present he is the Director of the Vincentian Retreat Centre, Thika and the Vincentian Prayer House, Nairobi. At present he is the Director of the Vincentian Prayer House and the Rector of the Vincentian theology students in Nairobi.

You are not Rejected is a great asset for your spiritual life. Fr. Antony's personal and pastoral experiences and prayerful thoughts shared in this book will surely be a great help in communicating God's unfailing love especially for those who feel rejected.

Very Rev. Fr. Biju Valliparambil VC
Regional Superior (Vincentian Fathers – Sacred Heart Region, E. Africa)

“You Are Not Rejected has been written for all congregations and all categories of people, although it embraces Catholic doctrine. It leans heavily on the word of God (the Holy Bible) and draws on Christian values and morals. It does not however choose male or female, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black or white, religious or non-religious. It speaks to all of us, to the whole family. It invites us all to the family of the children of God. It is my sincere hope that as you begin to put into practice what remedy you and, you will experience (a) newfound freedom and will definitely want to share it with others.”

Dr. Pamela Mandela Idenya (M.D, MMed(ENT), MPH)

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