## KERALA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' COUNCIL'S COMMISSION FORSOCCAL HARMONY AND VIGLLANCR



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## Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Has A New Domain:

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has opened a new domain within the official website of the Holy See. In this way, the congregation hopes to facilitate the consultation of its documents which, having the express approbation of the Holy Father,participate in his ordinary Magisterium as the Peter's Successor. Attentive reception of these texts is important for all members of the faithful and in particular for those who are engaged in theological and pastoral work.

## Pope Blesses Eucharistic Congress Bell Symbol of a Call to the Eucharist

During Wednesday's general audience Benedict XVI blessed the 50th International Eucharistic Congress
(IEC) bell. The IEC will take place June 10-17 in Dublin. The bell was presented to the Pope by an Irish delegation, led by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin. The bell has been touring Ireland and up to around a quarter of a million people have rung it, according to a press release published by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

## Jordanian prince urges Arab Christians not to emigrate <br> A member of the Jordanian royal family has urged Arab Christians to stay in their native lands.

"The Arab Christians are Arabs and are the pioneers of thought and Arab revival," said Prince Hassan binTalal, the uncle of King Abdullah II and a leader in interreligious dialogue, at a conference organized by the Jordanian Royal Institute of InterFaith Studies, the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo, and the Mennonite Central Committee. Stating that the departure of Christians from the region harmed Christians and Muslims alike, Prince Hassan called upon Muslim leaders to rethink their policies towards Christian communities. "Prince Hassan asked for the meeting to stop this exodus and to ask Christians very clearly to remain," said Father Samir Khalil Samir, SJ.

For Christians, sacrifice can be life-giving


A mosaic depicts the death of Christ and the blood and water flowing from His side, as described in John's Gospel.
SOME say that at heart, Christianity is counter-intuitive. Its message contrasts strikingly with the patterns usually proposed to us for living successfully and harvesting life's riches. After all, Christianity counts losses as gains, insists that selflessness paves the way to self-discovery and locates the seeds of new life in death. Christianity also ranks love far above efficiency when it comes to fostering our surrounding world's good functioning And paradoxically.

Christianity esteems sacrifice for its capacity to open channels along which this love can flow. In the Christian view, sacrifice literally can be life-giving.

## Catholics and Anglicans need to commit to unity, pope says



## Pope Benedict XVI and Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams arrive for vespers in Rome. CNS photo

Remembering the common roots of the Christianity they share, Roman Catholics and Anglicans should renew their commitments to praying and working for Christian unity, Pope Benedict XVI said. The pope and Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, held an evening prayer service on March 10 at Rome's Church of St Gregory on the Caelian Hill. This was the church from which Pope Gregory the Great sent St Augustine of Canterbury and his fellow monks to evangelise England in 597.
"We hope that the sign of our presence here together in front of the holy altar, where Gregory himself celebrated the eucharistic sacrifice, will remain not only as a reminder of our fraternal encounter, but also as a stimulus for all the faithful - both Catholic and Anglican - encouraging them ... to renew their commitment to pray constantly and to work for unity," Pope Benedict said during the evening prayer service.

Camaldoli monks and nuns were joined by cardinals, Anglican and Catholic faithful and representatives of other Christian communities in Rome for the prayer service.

Archbishop Williams told Vatican Radio that he and the pope spoke about the situation of Christians in the Middle East "and about our shared sense of deep anxiety and frustration and uncertainty about what the future holds there". say Catholic officials


Christians in Syria live in fear of a repeat of persecution like what was seen in Iraq, said officials of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. "The same pattern like in Iraq is re-emerging, as Islamic militants are now kidnapping and killing Christians in Syria," said Mr Issam Bishara, vice president of the Pontifical Mission and regional director for Lebanon and Syria.
"Christians are concerned about the repercussions of the events taking place in the region. They fear that the experiences of Iraq and Lebanon which took place against the backdrop of a civil war - could play out again in their own lands. These concerns haunt the Syrian Christians."
"We lost Christians in Iraq; if we lose Chirstians in Syria, what will happen to the Middle East?" said Mr Ra'ed Bahou, the Pontifical Mission's regional director for Jordan and Iraq. "Christians are leaving the region, and we have to work to reduce this loss. Time is not with us. Syria is the last castle of Christianity in the Middle East. If they start emigrating from Syria, it is the beginning of the end of Christianity in this area."

On March 7, Mr Bahou said that there were no official statistics, but an estimated 200 Christians were among the recent wave of Syrian refugees entering Jordan. He said many of those same refugees earlier had fled Iraq for Syria.

Priests call for slain minister's sainthood


Catholic priests have called for the canonisation of Shahbaz Bhatti, a former federal minister who was gunned down last year for criticising the country's harsh blasphemy laws. Churches across the country held memorial services on March 9 and hundreds of Christians took part in rallies to mark the first anniversary of the death of the minorities affairs minister.

Members of Bhatti's party -the all Pakistan Minority Alliance - placed candles and flowers in the street in Islamabad where he was assassinated. "There is no doubt in my mind - the Church should considerdeclaring Shahbaz Bhatti a saint; his life should be documented," said Fr Bonnie Mendes, Caritas Asia's former regional coordinator. "He was a true Catholic and was killed for his faith. The Church needs to come together and promote the cause to canonize him," he added.

## Simplicity and Lent



Embracing simplicity can be seen as a response to Lent, the appointed time for conversion and repentance. It is also a positive move towards a more sustainable way of living for our planet in crisis.
Conversion means to seek God above all things, according to St Benedict. This involves a "turning away from" certain habits of our life "in order to return wholeheartedly to Him who is the only reason for our lives", writes Benedictine monk, Br Vic-tor-Antoine D'Avila-Latourrette, in The Gift of Simplicity

India's infant mortality rate abysmal: health minister


India's infant mortality rate (IMR) of 47 per housand live births is worse than its neighbours, Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad said today. "Unfortunately, IMR and Materhal Mortality Rate (MMR) in India is very bad," he old the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of parliament. Azad said with 1.2 million infant deaths per year, India's IMR is worse than Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Pakistan is the only country, India can be compared with, he said. On the question of 12 infant deaths in district hospital in Murshidabad n West Bengal last year and 15 infant deaths in Malda Medical College during January 17-18, this year, he said the children were brought to the hospials in very serious condition. Investigations revealed that most of these children were referred to these nstitutions in a serious condition and were mainly hew born babies, the minister said. He added that working and functioning of hospitals is the duty of each state government. "We do only specific intervention." IMR in West Bengal is 32 per thousand ive births.

Mahatma Gandhi baptized by US Church


The revelation was made by researcher Helen Radkey in an e-mail to Nevada-based Hindu activist Rajan Zed.

A US Church has baptized India's father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi in proxy, triggering sharp reactions from his grandson and others. The revelation was made by researcher Helen Radkey in an email to Nevada-based Hindu activist Rajan Zed According the Radkey, Gandhi was baptised by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Sal Lake City in Utah on March 27, 1996, the confir mation of which was completed on November 17 , 2007 at Sao Paulo Brazil Temple.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is more popularly known as Mormon Church, one of the fastest growing Churches in the US. Radkey, who is from Salt Lake City and now been excommunicated by the Mormons, said she viewed the record on baptism of Gandhi on February 16 but it had since disappeared and was no longer available in the Church's database. It was unusua for a record to vanish, said Radkey, who of late has been in news because of bringing out in the public similar unknown facts and secrets of the Mormon Church. "I have not come across other Indian leaders baptised by Mormons. My copies of the Gandhi record are dated February 16, 2012. The record disappeared shortly after that date. I assume Mormons did not want others to know about Gandhi's baptism," she said. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Gandhi who lives in Up State New York, told The Huffington Post that he was "surprised" to hear abou the posthumous baptism. "It bothers me in the sense that people are doing something when a person is dead and gone and there is nobody to answer for that person. That's not the right thing to do," he was quoted as saying. Arun, who teaches nonviolence in the US, noted that his grandfather was against proselytizing of any kind, whether it involved Hindus or others. Suhag Shukla of Washington-based Hindu America Foundation said, "The proxy baptism of Gandhi is deeply offensive, not only to Gandhi's legacy as a devout Hindu, but to Hindus world over.'

## Hindu pitches for Christian president

She plans to mobilize support for the issue by visiting various states and meeting heads of political parties.


A former officer of the Indian Administrative Service has urged the government to give chance to a Christian candidate for presidentship during the forthcoming presidential elections. "A Christian president would give representation to the people of the community who are feeling let down by the government," said P. Sivakami at a press conference in Delhi. Sivakami, who heads the Tamil Nadu-based Samuga Samatuva Padai party, said that she has made the demand as her party's goal is to serve the minorities and the neglected communities. She plans to mobilise support for the issue by visiting various states and meeting heads of political parties. She also plans to raise awareness about the issue among people through posters and handbills.Sivakami said that the candidate should have a good record, be concerned about public welfare, should not have excessive leaning toward political parties and be able to carry himself/herself in international circles. "Right now I do not have anyone in mind but with time a suitable candidate will emerge," she said. The former IAS official said that the appointment of a Christian president would empower the community. "We had presidents from every minority community and its time that we have one from the Christian community," Sivakami said. The elections for the new president are due in July.
Student Slaps principal
The principal said she wants to counsel the teenager to make him useful to society.


In yet another incident of student rage, a ninth grader slapped his principal in Mumbai, The Times of India reported today.

The principal St Elias High School in Khar West, a Mumbai suburb lodged a police complaint soon after the incident on Monday, but later decided not pursue the case as she is keen on reforming the boy. "He is under the influence of alcohol and drugs. We will have to counsel him," she told the newspaper that has decided to withhold the identities of the two.

The principal also said the 15 -year-old boy reacted violently when she scolded him for disturbing other students during a school examination. She asked him to leave the class. "He hit me but I brought him back to school. But he did not appear for the exam on Wednesday," she added. This incident happened a month after another ninth grader stabbed to death his teacher in Chennai, southern India, for sending adverse reports to his parents.

The principal in Mumbai said she made the police complaint for "my safety, but I have told them not to take action against the child." She said the boy has been "a problem child" but the school did not expel him lest he becomes a social nuisance. "The school wanted to provide him a chance to reform. He should be useful to society," she added.

Tripura to teach human rights in schools


> The subject will be incorporated as part of social education subjects for students of grades VI to VIII.

Tripura government has become the first state in India try to introduce human rights as one of the subjects in school curricula, official sources said today. In a bid to spread awareness on legal and constitutional rights, the subject will be incorporated as part of social education subjects for students of grades VI to VIII.

One woman's inspiring journey to Catholicism

## Baptism leads mother to find new life of service.



For Kanako Ota, a resident of Sakai City in Osaka, this year's Easter Vigil on April 7 will be a uniquely momentous occasion. For that is the Kanako Ota in front of a favorite statue of the Blessed Mother date when she will receive the at Sakai Church in Osaka sacrament of Baptism. "My parents are professed Buddhists, but I had a feeling I would end up being baptized. I even told my husband before we were married," she says. Baptism, of course, marks a person's spiritual birth. For Kanako, it will also mark the culmination of a long and often painful journey.

She attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through high school. As she puts it herself, her family life was "complicated." Just six months after she was born, her mother tried to kill herself. The attempt failed but she injured herself so badly, she was left with an artificial arm and leg. Following that, she became mentally unstable and repeatedly attacked her own hand with a carving knife.

Kanako went to Catholic schools throughout her childhood. "In the middle of all the troubles with my mother," she says, "I sometimes went to the chapel at school, as if to seek counsel. "I turned to the statue of the Blessed Mother and the crucifix and pleaded, 'help me!' Sometimes I just let out a scream insidemy heart."

Looking back on it now she sometimes feels that, in a strange way, her move towards Catholicism was influenced by her family's Buddhist devotions. "Maybe I learned something, seeing my mother go before the family altar every day," she says. "Maybe even with the differences of religion notwithstanding, you sort of pick up the way you are supposed to relate to God."

When she was 26 , her mother died. Some of her last words were, "my life was all for nothing." Kanako, who had a one-year-old child of her own by then, says she felt "relief" more than sadness after the event. "Because I had a mother, a family like that, I really contemplated human pain and sadness, and the way to live a happy life; I learned to feel," she says. "I realized, 'I was born to learn this lesson.' And I decided I wanted to become the sort of person who could walk alongside the weak - people like my mother - on their journey."

The years went by and she and her husband produced four children. But when the children grew older and her household duties began to grow lighter, she began to think about what to do with the next phase of her life. She found herself suspecting strongly that she "might find my allotted role at a church." She began to go to Mass at Sakai Church, which was where the religious sisters she had met during her days in Catholic school went. Then she decided to take courses to learn more about the faith. What fascinated her most during her courses were those moments when, during discussion with fellow participants, it became clear that the world of the Bible and her own life overlapped. People and situations from her past kept coming to mind. She reflected most often on her mother, thinking, "That person in the Bible-that's my mom."

Now, Kanako is helping out at a public kindergarten for children with special needs. There are times when communicating with them is difficult, but a relationship of trust does grow as she searches for a way to work with each individual child. "I feel so happy when I realize that I have developed deeper bonds with them through a meeting of hearts," she says.

A statue of the Blessed Mother that she received while in school still stands in her home. When her children were studying for exams at school, she gave them rosaries as an o-mamori, or a sort of mystical protection. They, in turn, are united in their support of her religious pursuit.
"How do they feel about my baptism? They're probably thinking to themselves, 'So, she's finally getting around to it?' " she says. "I've certainly never encountered any resistance from them. On the contrary, they often ask me with concern if I've left my Bible somewhere safe."

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