



Legacy of Pope Benedict XVI

What the catechists should know about the contributions of late Pope Benedict XVI to Catholic Church

[See story on Page 3](#)

Didache – Diploma in Theology

What is this Diploma course all about and how do I register?

[See Pages 9 and 10](#)

Monthly Reflections and Activities

How to engage the students in prayer, meditation and acts of charity through the lenten season

[See Pages 16 to 20 for some helpful suggestions](#)

“Being a catechist is not a title; it is an attitude of abiding with him, and it lasts a lifetime! It means abiding in the Lord’s Presence and letting ourselves be led by him.”

Pope Francis

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Catechists,

We are already past the halfway mark in this CCD academic year. Hope the midterm exams were conducted in your parishes and all faith formation activities are going well.

Recently, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI went to be with the Lord. Catechists all over the world are indebted to him as he was the brain and driving force behind the creation of the CCC (Catechism of the Catholic Church). The theological writings and papal teachings of the Pope were and will continue to be a blessing to the Catholic Church. Page 3 of this e-journal has more information related to the legacy of Pope Benedict XVI.

The season of lent is upon us very soon. I ask all catechists to use this opportunity to inculcate in our students, the habits of making personal sacrifices, giving up frivolous pleasures and making use of the money thus saved, for joyful alms giving. Activities in parishes throughout the Lenten season geared towards meditation and charity should be encouraged. Pages 16-20 of this e-journal give you a few recommendations for this.

We are in the second year of Eucharistic revival. This is the joyful, grassroots response of the entire Catholic Church in the USA to the divine invitation of renewing our lives on the Real Presence of the Eucharist. As catechists, let us kindle in ourselves a loving relationship with the Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and help our students to experience this.

May the Blessing of Almighty be with you and your family!

Fr. Dr. George Danavelil

Chief Editor



Katechein

A Quarterly Catechetical E- Journal

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POPE BENEDICT XVI: 'FATHER OF CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'

The world tearfully bid farewell to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on January 5th, 2023. He will be always remembered for his catecheses, encyclicals on central aspects of the Catholic faith and many theological works he had written.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is undoubtedly among the great legacies of pope Benedict XVI. His role as the **President of the Commission for Drafting the Catechism of the Catholic Church** and the six years of intense work (1986-92) behind its preparation are some of his many outstanding achievements, especially from a catechist's perspective.

He had other significant achievements also. From 1962 to 1965 Cardinal Ratzinger was present during all 4 sessions of the Second Vatican council as a chief theological advisor to the council. In 1981 he was appointed by Pope John Paul II as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He also became the President of the Biblical Commission and of the Pontifical International Theological Commission.

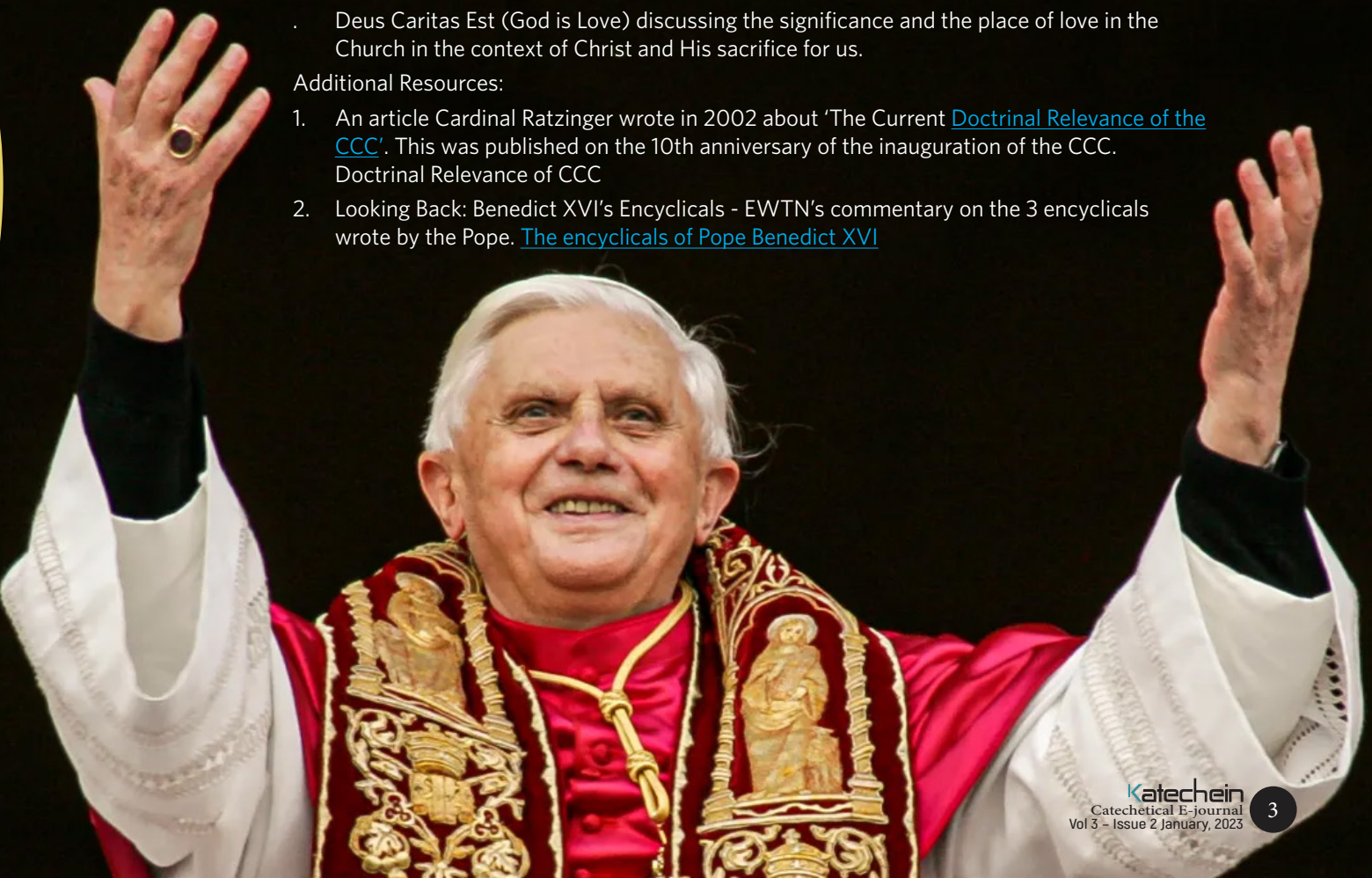
On April 19, 2005, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected the 264th successor of Saint Peter and chose the name Benedict XVI. In 2013, he became the first pope to resign since Gregory XII in 1415.

During his time as Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI wrote 3 encyclical letters:

- Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth) on Church's social teaching focusing on human development in charity and truth
- Spe Salvi (Saved in Hope) about how we can grow and be schooled in hope through prayer
- Deus Caritas Est (God is Love) discussing the significance and the place of love in the Church in the context of Christ and His sacrifice for us.

Additional Resources:

1. An article Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in 2002 about 'The Current [Doctrinal Relevance of the CCC](#)'. This was published on the 10th anniversary of the inauguration of the CCC. Doctrinal Relevance of CCC
2. Looking Back: Benedict XVI's Encyclicals - EWTN's commentary on the 3 encyclicals wrote by the Pope. [The encyclicals of Pope Benedict XVI](#)



LFML INAUGURATION AND PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

The Little Flower Mission League (LFML) was inaugurated in our Diocese on October 22, 2022, at St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Forane Catholic Church, Somerset, NJ. Along with the inauguration, the diocese also celebrated the platinum jubilee of LFML's founding. The program started with a flag hoisting by Bishop Emeritus Mar Jacob Angadiath. More than 550 children participated in the rally from 15 parishes/missions from East Zone and more than 350 adults joined them. Rev. Dr. George Danavelil, Director of LFML welcomed everyone during the Holy Qurbana and read the names of the newly formed Diocesan Executive Team. Joint Director, Rev. Sr. Agnes Maria, MSMI, and Assistant Directors Rev. Fr. Bins Chethalil and Rev. Fr. Dels Alex attended. The new lay office bearers Mr. Cijoy Cyriac, President; Mr. Tison Thomas, General Secretary; Mr. Jimmichan Mulavana, Vice President



and Mrs. Sophia Mathew, Joint Secretary along with the Director, Joint Director, and Assistant Directors were given the oath of office by Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt.

The mission rally was flag offed by Vicar Rev. Fr. Tony Pullukattu and the trustees. The rally was led by Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt, Bishop Emeritus Mar Jacob Angadiath, LFML Director Rev. Dr. George Danavelil, Joint Director Sr. Agnes Maria, MSMI, Rev. Fr. Bins Chethalil, and President Mr. Cijoy Cyriac. The one-day activity also included a seminar conducted by Rev. Fr. Kevin Mundackal, Director of the Youth Apostolate. The inaugural meeting at the end was convened with all the children and parents present. Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt provided the inaugural address and Bishop emeritus Mar Jacob Angadiath provided the keynote address and distributed the certificate of participation to all parishes/missions that participated in the mission rally. Rev. Sr. Agnes Maria, MSMI welcomed everyone, Rev. Dr. George Danavelil, and Rev. Fr. Tony Pullukattu congratulated all the participants. Mr. Cijoy Cyriac, President of LFML chaired the meeting and addressed the participants. Mr. Tison Thomas, General Secretary of LFML thanked everyone. Mrs. Sophia Mathew was the emcee for the meeting.

LFML NEWS CONTINUED...



The inauguration and jubilee celebrations were successful due to the hard work and dedication of the Vicar Rev. Fr. Tony Pullukattu, Trustees Mr. Tony Mangan, Mr. Bobby Varghese, Mr. Robin George, and Mr. Sebastian Antony. The Vicar and Trustees were assisted by Mrs. Priya Kurian and Mrs. Sophia Mathew along with a slew of committees including the church program team, church arrangement team, food arrangements, stage management, AV team, decoration team, rally coordinators, medical team, registration team, and other volunteers, and more than 100 volunteers from the parish helped make this a successful event.

Many parishes/missions also inaugurated LFML in their own zones/parishes/missions in October.

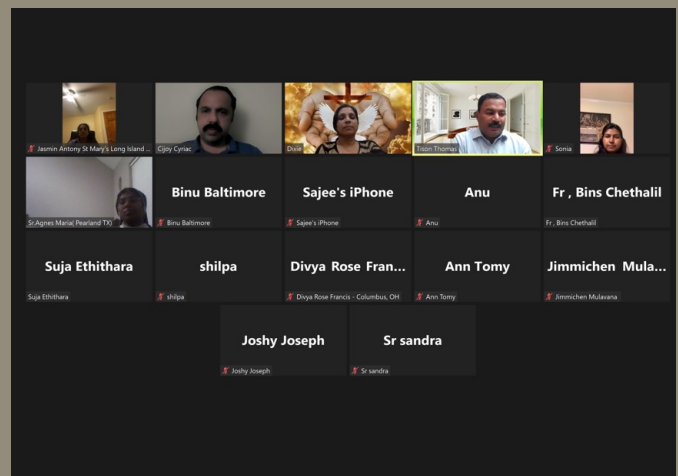


LFML NEWS CONTINUED...



A vocation seminar was conducted by Fr. Melvin Paul Mangalath for the LFML children on November 27. More than 200 children participated in the seminar.

Mission League also conducted a diocesan-wide Christmas program for children, called Journey to Bethlehem on Thursday, December 2022 and was participated by more than 250 children. LFML also asked parishes/missions for a one-minute video called "Gloria in Excelsis". This one-time video is for LFML members and Sunday School children to encourage them to creatively submit a crib-making video to the diocese. The aim is to keep Christ in Christmas. From the parishes/missions, a total of 18 will be selected from 6 zones. Finally, the best three videos will receive an award from the diocese at the diocesan level.



HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION (HCA) IN ST. THOMAS SYRO MALABAR CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHICAGO, USA

In the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago, HCA is one of the official lay organizations for children, along with our Little Flower Mission League (LFML). The diocese envisions that children develop a missionary spirit from a very young age and start attending organizations that instill faith and a missionary spirit. Children from Kindergarten through and up to third grade (those who haven't received Solemn Holy Communion) are members of HCA.

Once the children receive the Solemn Holy Communion, they should be transferred to the LFML. These programs also shape the faith formation of children in the parish/mission Sunday School Program. Without faith, we shall see nothing of importance in mission work; with it, we see everything. This conviction is what we want to transmit to students in Sunday School classes.

i. Diocesan leadership

The Bishop of the diocese is the patron of HCA. Bishop will provide overall guidance and direction for all the activities. To assist the Bishop in this day-to-day activity, the Bishop appoints a Director, who provides general guidance for parishes/missions. To assist the Director of HCA, a Joint Director may be appointed by the Bishop. To assist the Director and Joint Director the Bishop appoints a diocesan core team. Following is the current diocesan team appointed by Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt.

ii. Parish/Mission Leadership

The Vicar/Mission Director will be the Director of HCA at each parish/mission. The Vicar/Mission Director may appoint an HCA Coordinator to coordinate the activities who may be assisted by an HCA Activity Coordinator and an HCA Spiritual Coordinator. HCA Coordinators are preferably Sunday School Teachers and or a religious sister if there is one. HCA Activity Coordinators could be youth leaders in the church who assist with monthly activities. The HCA Spiritual Coordinator assists with spiritual activities and prayers. The Vicar/Mission Director may appoint additional HCA activity/spiritual coordinators based on the size and complexities.

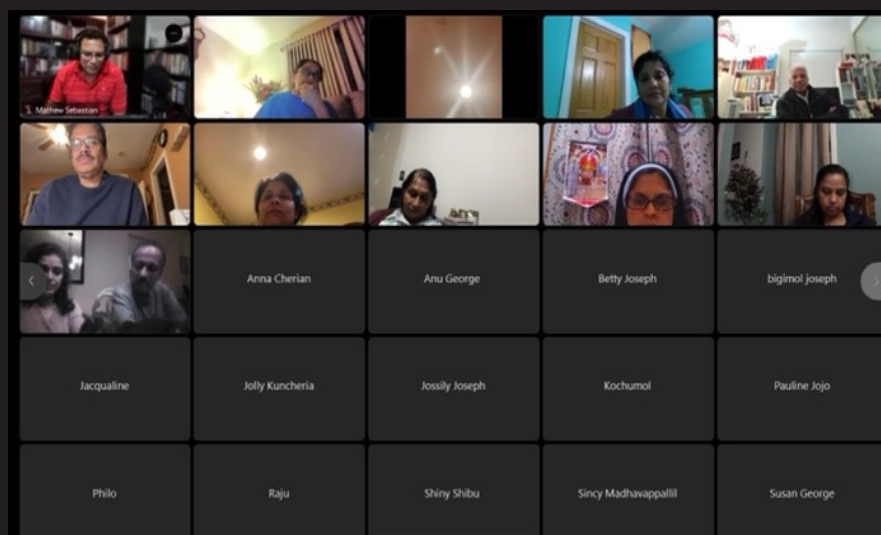
Eparchial Team for the Holy Child Hood Association

Mar Joy Alappatt	Patron	Bishop, St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago
Rev. Dr. George Danavelil	Director	St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago
Rev. Sr. Rose Paul, CMC	Joint Director	Mar Thoma Sleeha Cathedral, Bellwood, IL
Rev. Fr. Varghese (Daey) Kunnath	Core team member	Vicar, St. Jude Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, South Jersey, NJ
Mr. Tison Thomas	Core team member	St. Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Baltimore, MD
Rev. Sr. Meera	Core team member	Sacred Heart Knanaya Forane Catholic Church, Tampa, FL
Ms. Leena Antony	Core team member	St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Milpitas, CA
Ms. Reema Alex Manalil	Core team member	St. Mary's Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Long Island, NY

DIPLOMA IN BIBLICAL STUDIES FOR ADULTS

A Bible Study program for adults, "One-Year Diploma in Gospel Studies," is in progress in our diocese under the Mar Thoma Theological Institute of the Cathedral. This course started on May 15, 2022, after completing the "Two-Year Diploma in Theology" course on February 5, 2022. A deep study of the New Testament is the focus of this program. The course explores the Catholic teachings that are hidden in Sacred Scripture! The 24 sessions of this program are met online, for 1.5 hours each, every other week. The leading professors of Vadavathoor Seminary, Dr. Andrews Mekkattukunnel, Dr. Sebastian Kuttianickal, Dr. Thomas Vadakkal, and Dr. Cyriac Valiyakunnumpurath are presenting the classes remotely. Remarkably, 70 devoted members from our parishes are attending this program.

It appears that the participants are enjoying the online classes offered by the scholars of Vadavathoor Seminary. The professors explain particular words and phrases followed by brief explanations of topics in the Scripture passage, clearly showing the Catholic doctrines contained in the paragraph. The lessons include the Catholic Church, the Holy Mass, the Sacraments, and especially the Holy Eucharist. Finally, a brief "application" to daily life is given in each session. The participants are required to complete a short assignment after the completion of each segment.



DIDACHE – DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY



How do I Register?

Please contact your Parish Vicar or local Parish Didache Coordinator to register for this course. Your parish may already have a group (recommended) interested in pursuing this program in an on-site setting.

Diploma in Theology

MAR THOMA Theological Institute, under Syro Malabar diocese of Chicago, organizes a Diploma course in Theology to contribute to the biblical, liturgical, theological and catechetical formation.

The Catechetical Department of St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago coordinates this online program in collaboration with various theological institutes in Kerala.

Catechesis Department
St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Diocese, Chicago



CONTACT US 

Mar Joy Alappatt

Patron

Bishop, Syro Malabar Diocese of Chicago

Rev. Dr. George Danavelil

Diocesan Course Director

gdanavelil@gmail.com



MAR THOMA Theological Institute
St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Diocese, Chicago

Didache

learn. enrich. serve.



Diploma in Theology





What will I study?

The Diploma in Theology program includes 24 subjects to be completed over a span of 24 months with one subject per month. Each subject requires that you complete readings and an exam towards end of each month. This program is intended to give parishioners an understanding of the major areas in theology for personal interest or as a component in preparation for ministry (catechetics) or in preparation for further study. It will help lead participants to appreciate even more the treasure of our Catholic faith and wisdom of the Church.

Audience?

- To those whose ministry would be enriched by formal certification in this field
- Those who wish to learn more about our faith to be able to speak with others about it at work, at home or in parish
- Parents who wish to be able to share faith with their children more easily
- Those who love to learn more about the intricacies of Orient theology

Highlights of this program

- Two years to finish the program
- 4 semesters, 24 subjects
- One Subject per month
- Certificate by MAR THOMA Theological Institute

Course Subjects

First semester

Introduction to Bible
Introduction to Liturgy
Introduction to Theology
Patrology
Introduction to Canon Law
Pentateuch

Third semester

Wisdom books of the Bible
Justice - A Christian Perspective
Introduction to Gospels - Mark
Ecclesial Identity of Syro Malabar
Liturgy of the Hours
Prophetic literature

Second semester

Syro Malabar Qurbana
Ecclesiology
Fundamental Moral Theology
Laicology
Indian Church History
Sacraments in General

Fourth semester

Revelation and Faith
Christology
Johannine Literature
Pauline Epistles
Marriage and Church
Eschatology

Cost of the Course

Tuition (per semester)

\$100

The need for printed booklets are decided by the local coordinators of each site and may add to the cost of the Tuition above.



Course Materials

The material for each subject will be provided as a PDF at the beginning of the semester. A printed copy is made available per the needs of each site. The course material consists of 40-60 pages of study material prepared by renowned Professors of respective courses offered.

Student speaks!!

The invitation I received in late 2019 was a timely blessing. Only my Heavenly Father knew that the Theology series of the Pontifical Oriental Institute through the Syro-Malabar Diocese would be food for the mind and spirit during the Covid shutdown. ...The less one knows, the easier one becomes prey to: false messaging, dismissal of the Truth, being non- appreciative of the teachings handed down through the Apostles and Early Church Fathers, being unable to transmit faith tradition to the next generation, thereby not fulfilling our responsibility to evangelize.Wish these courses were available a few decades back.

Learning materials are very helpful for anyone who seriously approach the subject. The curriculum is designed for laity to develop an understanding of complex biblical and ecclesiastical topics. Online classes are very informative and awesome! The design, presentation and depth of coverage of the course contents are comprehensive and fitting for this diploma course.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Pope Francis Issues Motu Proprio *Vos estis lux Mundi* ("You are the light of the world"). The Holy Father recently issued new norms for the worldwide response to the evil of sexual abuse. These norms add to layers of response already in place in the United States, including the Essential Norms and the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The new norms affect the global Church and require:

- Easily accessible reporting systems
- Clear standards for the pastoral support of victims and their families
- Timeliness and thoroughness of investigations
- Whistleblower protection for those making allegations
- Active involvement of the laity

Bishops also will be held accountable under the authority of this Motu Proprio, which covers sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons, sexual acts compelled through the abuse of authority, and any coverup of such crimes. The norms also require that Church institutions comply with civil reporting laws.

The Catholic Church is committed to the safety of Children. By creating the Charter to Protect Children and Young People, the United States bishops have made a promise to protect and a pledge to heal. We work to heal and reconcile. We guarantee effective responses to allegations. We ensure the accountability of procedures. We call for complete transparency. Over 4.5 million children and ninety-eight percent of people who work with children have been trained to identify and prevent abuse through safe environment policies. We have administered over two million background checks. We are making the Catholic Church one of the safest institutions in the country. Together we can make a promise to protect and a pledge to heal.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DIOCESAN SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

- We have Safe environment programs in all parishes and most missions.
- We are in the process of training more Facilitators and Site administrators as the need arises.
- We are in good standing with the USCCB Protection of Children Central office.
- We have a new Contract with Virtus Program where all the documentation, including background checks and training, is centralized in one location.
- We have trained and retrained many Local Site Administrators and Virtus Facilitators for the various institutions in the diocese.
- We managed many complaints without a profound impact on our community.
- We collaborate with the Director of Religious Education to achieve safety in our classrooms.

We have completed another year of triumphs, pains, sorrows, and joys as the Lord gave us and made us competent to sustain it. We sincerely thank all parish priests, DRES, Virtus Facilitators, and Local Site Admins for the cooperation rendered for the success of the safe environment ministry of the diocese.





At this time, the brutally cold weather makes people's lives miserable, especially in the North-East and Central parts of the country; we hope that Christmas's peace and delight will make everyone feel warm, blessed, safe, and protected. The members of the Safe Environment team at the diocese wish all families and children of the diocese a blessed and joy-filled Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year. God bless!

From Thomas Moolayil, Executive Director



CATECHIST TRAINING IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

"Being a catechist is not just a job, it is a vocation and a divine call". This was the main theme of the Catechist training session - 'Called to be a Catechist' - led by the Eparchial Chancellor and the Diocesan Director of the Department of

Faith Formation, Fr. Dr. George Danavelil. The session was held on January 14th at the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church of San Francisco, in Milpitas, CA. Fr. Danavelil emphasized the elevated dignity of Catechist as a ministry and the relevance of this ministry in the world today. He also reminded the attendees about the qualities and goals a Catechist should have.

The session was attended and well-received by more than 60 Catechists and parishioners of St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church of San Francisco, St. Teresa of Calcutta Syro-Malabar Catholic Mission, Livermore, CA and St. Mary's Knanaya Catholic Church, San Jose, CA. This session was also the 24th and final class for the SFO Bay Area Syro-Malabar church students of the DIDACHE Theology Diploma Course conducted by our Diocese.

The Vicar of St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church of San Francisco, Rev. Fr. Ligory P. Kattiakaran gave a concluding message to the attendees. The director of St. Teresa of Calcutta Syro-Malabar Catholic Mission, Rev. Fr. Sijo Tharakunnel was also present during the session.



QUESTION BOARD

The question board would like to hear from the teachers, their feedback on the semester 1 exams. Please feel free to write to smquestionboard@gmail.com



DIDACHE GRADUATION ST. ALPHONSA CHURCH, COPPELL

Three years ago, the 'Didache' Class of 2022 started the theology course at St. Alphonsa Coppel under the guidance of Paurastya Vidyapitham and Department of Catechesis, Syro Malabar Diocese of Chicago. On Oct 29, 2022, that journey came to a fitting end which culminated with a graduation ceremony and the graduates walked out as Alumni.

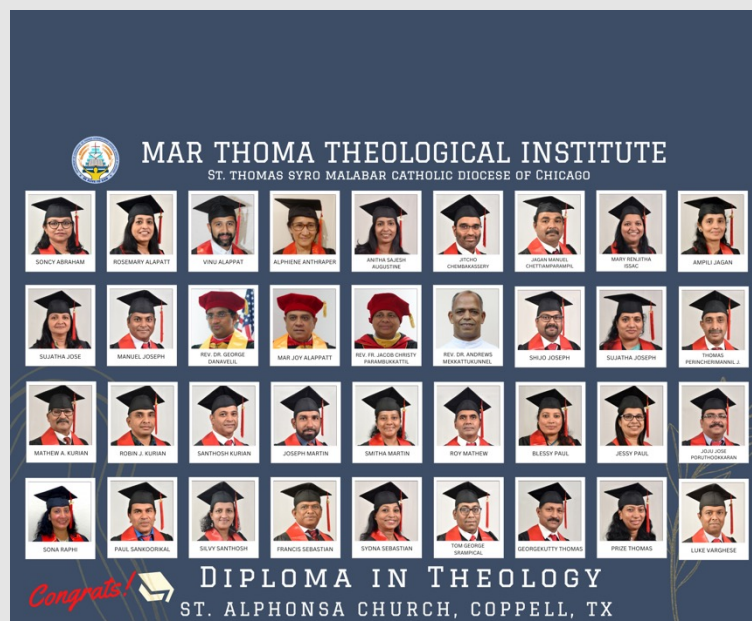
We remember the graduation day with warmth. The opening statement of Fr. Jacob Christy Parambukkattil (Vicar of St. Alphonsa Coppel) in his welcome address captured it well. "This is a proud moment for all." It truly has become not only a proud moment but also an inspirational moment to many others.

Bishop Mar Joy Alappatt, our keynote speaker of the event, gave an inspirational address to the graduation class. He said, "In the journey towards the destiny - which is salvation, our faith is important, and this program forms our faith and us in the proper manner."

Rev. Dr. Andrews Mekkattukunnel, President of the Paurastya Vidyapitham gave the commencement speech. He later accepted the students presented to him by Rev. Dr. George Danavelil, the Diocesan course director of Didache program in USA. All dignitaries joined the Bishop who presented the Diplomas to the Graduates.

Mrs. Blessy Paul, student representative gave the valedictory address on behalf of the graduates. Manuel Joseph, parish course coordinator offered words of gratitude to all who made this day blessed.

The program came to an end with the assembly singing the Syro Malabar Anthem.





ENGAGING FAITH FORMATION RESOURCE LIST

CATECHETICAL RESOURCES

- [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)
- [Bible in a Year with Fr. Mike Schmitz, featuring Jeff Cavins](#)
- [Catechism in a Year with Fr. Mike Schmitz](#)
- [Catholic Answers](#)
- [Made this Way: Prepare Kids to Face Today's Tough Moral Issues](#)
- [Theology of the Body](#)

LESSON PLANNING RESOURCES

- [Vocation Lesson Plans from USCCB](#)
- [Catholic Lesson Plans from Jared Dees](#)
- [Additional Catholic Lesson Plans](#)
- [Catholic Resources from Loyola Press](#)
- [Catholic Mom](#)
- [Sophia Institute for Teachers](#)
- [Catholic Icing Crafts](#)
- [Life Teen](#)

PRAYER VIDEO RESOURCES

- [The Pope Video](#): Monthly Prayer Intentions of Pope Francis
- [Scripture Videos](#)
- [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network: Apostleship of Prayer](#)
- [Saint of the Day](#)
- [Holy Fatima Saint of the Day](#)

OTHER VIDEO RESOURCES

- [Rome Reports: News from the Vatican](#)
- [Formed](#)
- [Ascension Presents](#)
- [Word on Fire](#)

TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES & INTERACTIVE LESSONS

- [Rubber Band Cup Stack Challenge](#)
- [Marshmallow Spaghetti Tower Challenge](#)
- [Water Suspension Magic Trick](#)
- [Paper Cross Lesson](#)

GAMIFICATION RESOURCES

- [Kahoot](#)
- [Jeopardy Labs](#)
- [Jeopardy PowerPoint](#)
- [Quizlet](#)
- [Blooket](#)
- [Quizizz](#)

CATHOLIC MEDITATION RESOURCES

- [Pope Francis' Catechesis on Meditation](#)
- [Explanation of Catholic Mindfulness](#)
- [Hallow Catholic App](#)
- [Amen Catholic App by Augustine Institute](#)
- [USCCB: Meditation & Lectio Divina](#)
- [Ignatian Audio Meditations](#)

DEPARTMENT OF FAITH FORMATION UPDATES



Catechetical Sunday

We celebrated Catechetical Sunday in our diocese on the third week of September. Many parishes/missions had programs and activities to celebrate catechetical Sunday by recognizing teachers and special meetings to appreciate the catechetical ministry. The Sunday Schools in our diocese started in-person schools in all parishes/missions in our diocese. More than 9500 children and more than 2600 teachers are part of the Sunday School program through-out our diocese. Parishes/Missions started with blessings of teachers and children.

Sunday School Excellence Award

Thanks to all the parishes/missions that sent the application for Sunday School Excellence Award for academic year 2021. The Diocese is impressed by the quality and number of activities done by our parents/ teachers and students from those parishes. The purpose of this award is to educate and make aware of the diocesan policies, programs and activities for Sunday Schools. The aim is to have parishes/missions provide excellent services to our children and youth. The department will review the submissions and let everyone know of the awards.

Dei Verbum Bible Quiz

The first level of the Dei Verbum Bible Quiz was conducted successfully on December 4, 2022. There are 3400 people participated in the Phase I. A total of 1200 people are selected for the Phase II that will be conducted on Saturday, February 11, 2023. The department and the Dei Verbum team received a lot of compliments regarding the Bible Quiz. I take this opportunity to thank you for encouraging the parents, teachers, and students to take the Bible Quiz.

The second level will be conducted Saturday, February 11, 2023, from 12 noon CST to 1:30 p.m. CST (10 a.m. PST to 11:30 a.m. PST; 1:00 p.m. EST to 2:30 p.m. EST).

A list of candidates who qualified for the second level will be sent to the parishes/mission soon. Each candidate who participates in the second level has one hour to finish the Bible Quiz after the start.

We also received a few suggestions and recommendations from Vicars/Mission Directors and Sunday School Principals. There were some concerns that the questions for the first level were very tough for our youngsters as well as our adults. Even though this is a competition, the main purpose of the Bible Quiz is to encourage all of us to read and learn the scripture. With that goal as our aim, the department along with the Dei Verbum team decided on the following for the qualifications for the second level.

Based on the suggestions and recommendations and after thoughtful consideration, the department and the Dei Verbum team decided to reduce the eligibility criteria for who can enter the second level to the following.

Sub-Juniors, Juniors, and Seniors qualifying eligibility for participating in the second-level Bible Quiz is changed from 80% and above to 60% and above.

Adults qualifying eligibility for the second level is changed from 80% and above to 75% and above.

First Semester Exam

The first semester exam question papers and answer keys were sent to all parishes/missions and most of the parishes/missions conducted them successfully in December. A few of the parishes/missions plan to conduct them in January.



Textbook Revisions

The department distributed more than 12,00 textbooks to parishes/missions this year. The 10th grade textbook was revised in 2022 and distributed to all parishes/missions. In 2023 the department will be revising the 5,6,7th grade textbooks. These revisions will help improve the English grammar and sentences. Also, the textbooks will be re-formatted. The textbook revisions are expected to be completed by the end of April, 2023.

2022-2023 Learning Series

A new learning series under the leadership of Fr. Joby Joseph was undertaken as a continuing education series for the catechists in our diocese. The first three sessions were scheduled on Saturdays from 3-4:30 p.m. Central Time on January 14, 21 and 28, 2023.

Didache – An adult faith formation program

In collaboration with the Paursthya Vidyapeedam, the Department of Faith formation has undertaken a Diploma Course in Theology for our diocese. Two parishes already graduated their students. The latest being St. Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Coppel, Texas, graduated 32 students in October 2022. The purpose of this two-year Diploma course in Theology is to assist catechists and other interested adults in their biblical, liturgical, theological, and catechetical formation. 15 parishes are currently enrolled in the Didache program with approximately 450 students attending.

Sunday School Excellence Award

The Department of Faith Formation received 15 entries from parishes and missions for the Sunday School Excellence Award for the 2021 School Year. Parishes and Missions submitted the application based on one of the identified four levels.

Level I was for parishes that has more than 400 students, Level II for parishes that have students enrolled between 200-399, Level III was for Sunday Schools that have students between 100-199 and Level IV is for Sunday Schools with less than 99 students.

The award entries will be evaluated by a diocesan team which includes a review of materials submitted, onsite visits to the parishes/missions, and interviews with the Vicar, Mission Director, Teachers, Parents, and Students

The purpose of the Sunday School Excellence Award is to educate and make aware of the different diocesan requirements based on the diocesan directory. A Sunday School program that provides faith formation activities based on the diocesan directory should excel in the faith formation activities of their children. The diocesan team will visit each of the parishes/mission.



LENT

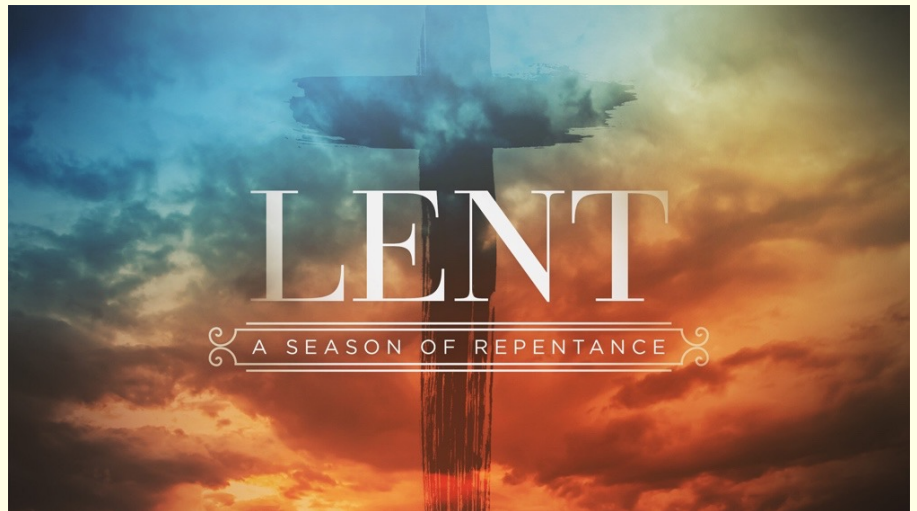
50 DAYS OF AN EXCITING JOURNEY WITH THE LORD

During this lent, Jesus Christ invites us to return to the source and summit of our faith in the celebration of the Eucharist. The National Eucharistic Revival is a movement to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

As we approach the second year of Eucharistic revival, let us get ready to strengthen our liturgical life through Eucharistic adoration.

The Lord accompanies us in many ways, but none as profound as when we encounter him in the Eucharist. On our journey toward eternal life, Christ nourishes us with his very self. We are nourished by his flesh just as a child is nourished by the milk. The capabilities, talents, and gifts we have received from God are meant to be used for good. When we misuse our gifts, and when we selfishly focus on ourselves choosing the path of vice rather than the way of virtue. Without the grace of Christ received at Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, and nourished by the Eucharist, this selfishness dominates us (The mystery of the Eucharist in the life of the Church, paragraphs 5 & 11).

Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that the "love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all." We are not the only ones in need of the love that Christ has shown us. We are called to help the rest of the world experience it. "What the world needs is God's love; it needs to encounter Christ and to believe in him. The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the



Church's life, but also of her mission." Jesus is sent by the Father for the salvation of the world. At the very end of the celebration of the Eucharist, we who have received the Body and Blood of Christ and have been incorporated more profoundly into his Mystical Body are likewise sent out to proclaim the Good News for the salvation of the world: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."

Amid the roaring waves in our lives, Jesus is present, reminding us that he is more powerful than the storm. We are called to place our trust and faith in something greater than our own understanding. We are called by someone who already loves us, and offered himself to us, Jesus Christ, his body given daily to us, and his blood poured out for us. We are not alone in our journey. In the Eucharist we encounter his real presence, and we share our faith with others. Together we become one with him in his very flesh. When we bring his presence out into

the world, we can be a light to others.

During these 50 days of Lenten journey with Jesus, let us make all the efforts to convert our hearts and minds to fall more deeply in love with Jesus Christ, truly present in the Holy Eucharist. Rather than just thinking of what to "give up" for Lent, we should also think of what we can "take up" during Lent. **In addition to more prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, trying to spend more time** in the presence of Christ is true worship of God in sincerity and truth. It clears our minds, brings us peace, and allows the grace of the Holy Spirit to seep more deeply into our hearts.

The Lenten chart on the next page is an example for you to use it as it is or modify it according to your class.

THE 2023 LENTEN CHART PAGE 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Fast: Pray for: Meditation	February 20 One full meal Intentions of Pope "Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart." Jl 2:12	February 21 Sleep without pillow Cardinal & Bishops Adoration: Spend some time thinking of all the things you're grateful for.	February 22 Laziness All Priests "I am the bread that came down from heaven" Jn 6:41	February 23 Anger Parents "But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret." Mt 6:6	February 24 No phone after 8 Grandparents "If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted, then light shall rise for you in the darkness." Is 8:10.	February 25 Television Our Vicar "Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth." Ps 86:11	February 26 Sweets Unborn babies "The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days." Mk 1:12
Acts of Love:	Offer Holy mass and Write your Lenten intentions on a paper and place them in a bowl so you will be reminded each day to turn to God.	Thank God for each of them and as you, imagine placing them in a gratitude bucket.	Pick a favorite song and hum it quietly to yourself and Jesus. It helps us to praise God with our whole heart.	Seek out quiet times and places for prayer each day during Lent.	Donate food to an elderly person	Go for a walk together in a park. Praise God for His creation around you.	Help the needy in your neighborhood and ask God for his forgiveness.
Fasting: Pray for: Meditation	February 27 Judging others Teachers "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." Mt 25:40	February 28 Chocolate You don't like "This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Mt 6:9	March 1 Junk food Your family "A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me." Ps 51:12	March 2 Let go of a grudge All missionaries "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Mt 7:7	March 3 Staying late Church leaders "Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come offer your gift." Mt 5:24	March 4 Sweets Political leaders "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." Mt 5:44	March 5 Being picky Catholic Church "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Mk 9:7
Acts of Love:	Look for ways to treat each person you encounter today as you would treat Jesus.	Offer an Our Father together with your family. Pray it slowly and pay attention to each word and phrase.	Be aware of your words and actions. Be a light to all who encounter today.	Offer a prayer together as a family to strengthen your relationship with God.	Discuss ways your family members need to forgive & reconcile with one another. Offer each other words of forgiveness.	Make an effort to be kind and patient today with someone who is difficult to love.	Spend time in front of the Eucharist and listen to Him. Praise God through the Creed.

THE 2023 LENTEN CHART PAGE 2

Fasting: Pray for: Meditation	March 6 Social media Homeless Forgive and you will be forgiven." Lk 6:37	March 7 Putting yourself first Your Classmates "The greatest among you must be your servant." Mt 23:11	March 8 Arguing Parish Families "I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life." Jn 8:12	March 9 Lunch All the Children "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Jn 8:7	March 10 Sacrifice a meal All the youth "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son; so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life." Jn 3:16	March 11 Judging people Sick people "As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, my God." Ps 42:2	March 12 Anger Parish Ministries "Look to the Lord for his strength; seek to serve him constantly." Ps 105:4
	Acts of Love: Ask God to show you how to forgive and to ask for forgiveness from others. Pray an Act of Contrition.	Look for an opportunity to serve someone else today. Do a chore without being asked. Pick up after someone else. Whatever you choose, do it with love.	Light a candle before family prayer. Together, watch its warm glow. How can you let the light of Jesus guide you? Share your thoughts.	Be careful of throwing stones at people through unkind words. Think carefully before you speak to make sure your words are filled with kindness.	Share the Good News of Jesus with someone else today. Make it happen!	Pray for families and nations who long for peace. Make an effort to practice peace through your words and actions.	Consider how you can you turn your anxieties over to God and serve him through your faith and trust.
Fasting: Pray for: Meditation	March 13 Snacking Health care workers "Whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven." Mt 5:19	March 14 Facebook Increase in Vocation "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." Ps 34:19	March 15 Movies Your neighbors "Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'" Lk 1:38	March 16 Complaining Souls in purgatory "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Lk 18:14	March 17 Busyness Sick people "But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God." Jn 3:21	March 18 Social media Less fortunate "You changed my mourning into dancing; O Lord, my God, forever will I give you thanks." Ps 30:12	March 19 Chocolate Lonely people "Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah." Mt 1:16.
	Acts of Love: The Commandment teaches us to love God and to love one another. Thank God for your loved ones	Name some of the "brokenhearted" people in the world. Offer a prayer for their comfort and consolation.	Offer a Hail Mary together and look to Mary as a model of faith.	Offer to help someone today without expecting anything in return.	Thank someone today who has been the light of Christ for you.	Send a card offering cheer and comfort to someone who is sad or lonely.	Ask Saint Joseph to pray for your family and to help you to care for one another.

THE 2023 LENTEN CHART PAGE 3

Fasting: Pray for: Meditation	March 20 Movies Religious leaders "Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your mat, and walk. Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.'" Jn 5:8-9	March 21 Television someone hurt you "And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus." Lk 16:20 Read the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).	March 22 Phone Vocation "Pray without ceasing." 1 Th 5:17	March 23 Sweets Religious Vocation "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son." Lk 15:21	March 24 Sacrifice a meal Priests "I will give thanks to You, Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forever" Ps 86:12	March 25 Chocolate Vocation "I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jer 31:33	March 26 Junk food Unborn children "Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper." Jer 7:23
	Acts of Love: Offer a family prayer for all of those who need healing. Look for ways to bring God's merciful love to others.	Decide on a way your family can reach out to someone who needs comfort and healing.	Discuss as a family how you will keep Jesus in your minds and hearts each day of the Lenten season and always	Examine your conscience in the presence of the Lord. Ask the Lord to help you to strengthen your relationship with Him.	Pray the Stations of the Cross together and of thanks to Jesus for offering his life for us.	Talk about ways in which God has blessed your family. How will you live as God's people this week?	Make each step you take today be filled with love and consideration of others.
Fasting: Pray for: Meditation	March 27 Social media SyroMalabarChurch "So they said to him, 'Who are you?'" Jn 8:25	March 28 Sacrifice a meal Souls in purgatory "The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works." Ps 145:9	March 29 Facebook Our Country "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mk 12:30	March 30 Fast Laziness Our Diocese "And many there began to believe in him." Jn 10:42	March 31 Expectations Unborn babies "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace." Jn 2:16	April 1 Social media Grandparents "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Mt 5:3	April 2 Television Your Family "Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out, 'Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Mk 11:9
	Acts of Love: Who is Jesus in your life? Let this question be a conversation starter about the place of Jesus in your home and family	Practice compassion today by following the example of Jesus. Listen carefully to others and look for ways to share your love with them.	Share ways in which your family members show love for God with your minds, hearts, souls, and bodies.	Re-read your Lenten decisions intentions at the beginning of Lent. Have your faith in Jesus been strengthened?	Ask your favorite saint to come and be with you in adoration. Imagine them sitting next to you. Pay attention to their posture.	Lend your ear to someone who is poor in spirit today. Show your care and concern by listening with love.	Place palm branches in a place where they will remind you to give praise to Jesus Christ daily.

THE 2023 LENTEN CHART PAGE 4

Fasting:	April 3 Noise, turn off music	April 4 Social media	April 5 Excuses	April 6 Give up juice/soda	April 7 No phone after 8	April 8 Staying up late	April 9 Being ungrateful
Pray for:	SyroMalabarChurch	Peace at home	World peace	Your ancestors	Catholic church	Sick people	All Prisoners
Meditation	"Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Jn 13:21	"I will praise the name of God with song, And exalt Him with thanksgiving" Ps 69:30	"Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair." John 12:3	"Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist." Jn 13:5	"And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit." Jn 19:30	"If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Rom 6:8	"For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead." Jn 20:9
Acts of Love:	Reflect today on those times when you have betrayed Jesus by turning away from his call to love and forgive others. Ask for his help in being faithful disciples.	Kneel before the Lord. Simply focus your mind on Jesus in the Eucharist. Ask Blessed mother to kneel with you and pray with you. Give thanks to the Lord in adoration.	Mary of Bethany shared something precious with Jesus. What will you give to others this week that shows your love for Jesus?	Perform an act of service today for someone in your home or neighborhood. Do so with a generous and loving heart.	Place a crucifix or cross in the place where your family gathers for prayer. Take turns holding it and offering a prayer for all of those who are suffering today.	Offer a prayer for all of those who will find new life in Christ thru baptism and all the children who are getting ready for first Holy communion this year.	While our Lenten journey has come to an end, the Easter season has just begun! Look ahead to the next seven weeks and how you will continue to reflect and rejoice in the light of the Resurrection

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR CATECHISTS

WHAT POPE BENEDICT CONTRIBUTED TO CHURCH TEACHING



1. POPE BENEDICT XVI THE THEOLOGIAN

[Pope Benedict's Contribution to Church Teaching](#)

When it comes to theology and Church teaching, Pope Benedict XVI will long be regarded as a heavy hitter and a gift to Church theologians for years to come. The former Pope wrote 3 encyclicals on spiritual, social and economic issues during his Papacy.

In this EWTN video, Dr. Chad Pecknold, a Professor of Theology shares what elements of Pope Benedict's teaching stand out to him the most.



2. EUCHARISTIC MIRACLE AT TUMACO, COLUMBIA

[Eucharistic Journal 3 - Tumaco Columbia](#)

In this episode of Eucharistic Journal, you will find the details of the Eucharistic miracle that happened in Tumaco, Columbia on January 31, 1906.

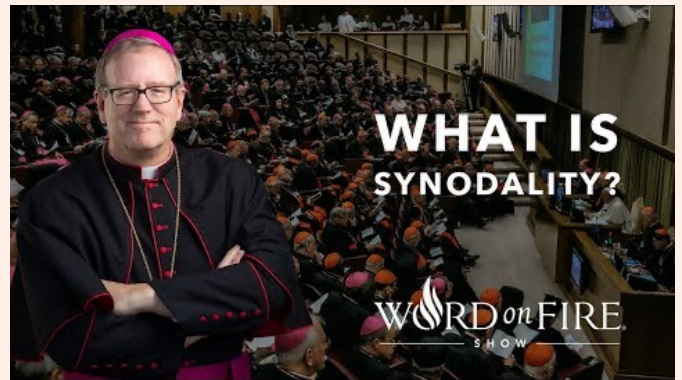
A Eucharistic procession lead by the local priest Fr Gerardo Larrondo and joined by all the inhabitants of the village calmed the seas during the undersea earthquake in 1906 in the small island of Tumaco..

3. BISHOP BARRON TALKS ABOUT SYNODALITY IN THIS EPISODE OF WORD ON FIRE

[What is Synodality?](#)

Pope Francis has called for a Synod on Synodality happening from 2021 to 2024. He has declared that Synodality is what God expects of the Church in the 21st century.

For general public, what does it mean? It is a way of 'journeying together', speaking and listening to one another and the Holy Spirit.



4. ST. VALENTINE, PATRON SAINT OF LOVE

[Story of Saint Valentine](#)

Saint Valentine of Rome is a third century Roman saint widely associated with love, young people and happy marriages. His feast day is celebrated on February 14.

Although much of St. Valentine's life is not reliably known, many different legends are attributed to him. Watch this video to learn a few of these.

St. Valentine is often represented in pictures with birds and roses and his feast day is an occasion for celebration of love.

