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**What do you think?**

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**Few bad apples**

But the outrage around mss Malia suggests that there are more than just a few bad apples.

The Church’s image is virtually in ruins because of the bad behaviour of some priests, Archbishop Tlhagale said, referring to them as “wolves wearing sheep’s skin, preying on unsuspecting victims, inflicting irreparable harm, and continuing to do so with impunity.”

“We are slowly but surely bent on destroying the Church of God by undermining and tearing apart the faith of lay believers,” Archbishop Tlhagale said. “Ironically, priests have become a stumbling block to the promotion of vocations.”

He said each time priests compromise their vows, they break their fidelity and betray Christ himself.

The archbishop said that because of the scandal the authoritative voice of the Church has been weakened.

“Church leaders, he said, become incapable of criticising the corrupt and immoral behaviour of members of communities, and are hesitant to criticise the greed and malpractices of civic authorities. They are paralysed and automatically become reluctant to guide young people in the many moral dilemmas they face. At such moments, he added, Church leaders probably feel much closer to Judas Iscariot and his 30 pieces of silver or Simon Peter deeply buried in denial.”

Archbishop Tlhagale said a time of crisis for priests to strive to become the examples of the remarkable stories contained in the Gospel.

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, archbishop of Durban, in his Easter message also alluded to the sex abuse scandal.

“The current crisis facing the Catholic Church internationally—the crisis of child abuse and a lack of appropriate response—helps us realise that the Church is always in need of reformation and a return to basics.”

The primary message of the Church must be the fundamental dignity of all people from conception to natural death. Any action by the Church that compromiss this dignity is an offence against the common good and against God. Any loss of focus on the holiness of God and the call to holiness for all people leads to hurt, pain and anger—a betrayal of all that Jesus is,” Cardinal Napier said.

Facing up to this means facing up to a failure to lead all to the holiness of God and their own holy dignity.

Meanwhile, the SACBC has revealed that since the introduction in 1996 of the Professional Conduct Committee, which deals with abuse cases involving Church person- nel, 40 cases had been registered.

“All have been investigated or are in the process of investigation or are suspended due to civil/criminal action. Most of these cases deal with historical abuse—some as old as 40 years ago—and over 50% are due to civil/criminal action. Most of these cases deal with historical abuse—some as old as 40 years ago—and over 50% are complaints of sexual abuse of teenage girls,” said SACBC information officer Fr Chris Townsend.
M’hill mission centre re-opens

BY MAURICIO LANGA

A s a way of providing affordable and decent accommodation for workshops, conferences and retreats for schools, religious organisations, private companies and the Mariannhill Monastery made possible investments towards the refurbishment of the Mission Centre.

The newly revamped Mission Centre is a secluded facility that provides a conducive environment for conferences, workshops and other gatherings.

According to the superior of the monastery, Fr Gideon Sibanda CMM, the revamp of the Mission Centre was necessitated by the growing demand from groups who make up the premises for different purposes. He said the premises not only benefit schools from in and around KwaZulu-Natal, but also as far a-field as the Eastern Cape and Limpopo.

The refurbished self-catering facility can accommodate around 100 people. Those staying at the facility would only have to pay R50 per night.

“Of course we are open to the local church,” said Fr Sibanda.

“Providing a multi-purpose facility at very reasonable prices is a sign that the church can do more in answering some of social problems faced by the people.”

The Mission can be utilised to provide space for young people to discuss social ills such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, drug abuse and the problem of unemployment, Fr Sibanda said.

The main challenge is to develop effective programmes as well as empower the youth with necessary skills to face the socio-economic challenges facing them on a daily basis.

“For example, schools coming for retreats or excursions could benefit from such programmes and once the programmes have been designed the monastery could partner with other qualified personnel from the local community to help the youth in different areas of concern,” Fr Sibanda said.

By Alan Valkenburg

YOU have been asleep for five years and you awake to return to your parish. What is in place that makes you feel more Christ-like, and what is happening that is enabling your parish community to be more Christ-centred?

These were some of the questions asked by about 100 members of Pius X parish in Plumstead, Cape Town, as they completed their journey of faith during a weekend retreat aimed at bringing their parish members together in an attempt to grow closer to God, both as individuals and as a community.

Entitled “The Journey”, the program began with a six-week marketing campaign enticing parishioners to sign up for the event. Each weekend there was something new to pique curiosity and remind the parish of the something new to pique curiosity and remind the parish of the possibilities for growth.

“Journey of faith brings parish closer to God”

Parishioners participated in a workshop aimed at bringing their parish closer to God.

One would see on a journey of importance. Led by Holy Redeemer’s William Peterson, the first session featured a talk about spirituality by Fr Wim Lindeque of Manenberg.

Parishioners shared their feelings on issues such as the music, youth, church reflections and social activities. More than a few tears were shed as parishioners revealed what would make the parish a more Christ-centred place for them. While parishioners spoke about the future of the parish, 15 facilitators assimilated the information for a report back to the greater audience.

“Journey of faith brings parish closer to God”

Fr Frank Conlisk, parish priest, said that getting to know fellow parishioners at a deeper level was appreciated.

“I was delighted, and at times surprised, at the level of interest people showed. The six preparatory groups were fantastic. It was inspiring to see so many people from the community so enthusiastic and willing to attend so many meetings. There was a wonderfully inspiring energy and joy about the day itself, an almost tangible excitement about the future and the possibilities for growth.”

“It was truly uplifting to hear people speak of their experiences of God and to witness them take ownership of their unique spiritual journey,” said Fr Conlisk.

A group has been set up to gather all the information produced during the workshop.

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Highest German honour for SA academic sister

**BY DENISE GORDON-BROWN**

SCHOENSTATT Sister Dr Edith Raidt, president emeritus of St Augustine College of South Africa, received the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany from Ambassador Dieter Haller.

Dr Raidt came to South Africa in 1952 with the desire to “convert Africa”. After a short period in Schoenstatt’s Cape Town convent, she started studying at the University of Cape Town. She rose to head of the Afrikaans and Nederlands department.

She retired from Wits in 1994 to help set up the Catholic university in Johannesburg, has received Germany’s highest civilian honour, the Bundesverdienstkreuz (Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany).

In his address, Mr Haller said: “All your achievements, your dedication to serve a human personality and a very solid value system rooted in your religious beliefs. Or to put it in one word: your dedication to serve a human cause.

“It is for your achievements, your commitment and your enormous contribution to strengthen Germany’s reputation in South Africa that President [Horst] Köhler and I wish to award you with the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.”

The archbishop also touched on issues of accountability, transparency, equitability of the Church: parish, deanery, diocese, diocesan and national levels, he said.

Another essential part of a bishop’s ministry is governance. There are few people who stand out politically, economically and religiously. There are few people who stand out who can admire as being upright leaders,” Archbishop Brislin said.

In this context, “it is of no use saying ‘the Church says’ or ‘the pope says’ and to expect people to accept the teaching on that basis”. He said the language that is used to teach is “paramount importance”.

The dignified, carefully constructed, philosophically based language the Church uses, which is rich in biblical and magisterium references, is one that many people do not understand, the archbishop said.

“We have to find ways in which we can dialogue with people in a language that is understandable to them.”

Archbishop Brislin identified sanctification as the second area of responsibility for any bishop.

He also stressed that a relationship with God is the source of all of one’s good works, he said.

Another essential part of a bishop’s ministry is governance. “I believe we need to commit ourselves, as the Church, to the principles of good governance, at every level of the Church: parish, deanery, diocese, conference, universal,” the archbishop also touched on issues of accountability, transparency, equity and responsibility.
Vatican spin caught the pope unaware

BY JOHN THAVIS

THE Roman curia’s headline- grabbing defense of Pope Benedict’s handling of the clerical sex abuse scandal has done more to make clear that when it comes to Vatican communications, the pope is not a micro-manager.

This was during Holy Week liturgies, the pope was caught unaware when his aides spoke pointedly about the handling of criticism the pontiff and other Church communiqués addressed in recent weeks on the sex abuse issue.

One official complained that the attacks on the Church and the pope were “the most shameful aspects of anti-Semitism”, while another said the Church would survive the “current petty gossip”.

What Pope Benedict thought of these interventions was not clear. But in both cases, the remarks had the unintended effect of upstaging his own spiritual message about the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection. From the outside, the Vatican’s verbal rallying around the pope was viewed as an orchestrated campaign to counter his critics. If there was orchestration, however, it wasn’t directed by the pope.

Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher of the papal household, basically has an open microphone every time he steps up to sermonise for the pope and the Roman curia. He often is not even aware of what is going on in current events, so it was probably no surprise when he began talking about the priestly sex abuse scandal at the pope’s Good Friday liturgy.

But when, quoting a Jewish friend, he likened criticism of Church leaders to past efforts to pin “collective guilt” on Jews, he sparked an outcry heard around the world. Amazingly, Pope Benedict and other Vatican officials had no inkling that Fr Cantalamessa and other Vatican officials had no inkling that Fr Cantalamessa would put forward such a comparison.

“No one at the Vatican has ever demanded to read the texts of my homilies in advance, which is something I consider a great act of trust in me and in the Vatican,” Fr Cantalamessa said after Mass. As usual, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican’s chief spokesman, was assigned clean-up duty. Hours after the liturgy, he issued a statement saying the Capuchin’s analysis “was not the position of the Holy See”.

On Easter Sunday, at the beginning of the papal Mass in St Peter’s Square, another salvo came from Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals.

In an unprecedented salutation to Pope Benedict, Cardinal Sodano extolled the pontiff as the “unsilting rock” of the Church, praised the 400 000 priests who work “in the world” and stressed that this one came from the dean of the College of Cardinals.

But in this instance, too, the pope was not informed about the time of a text that soon would be making headlines.

“I can exclude that the pope requested or saw in advance the text of Cardinal Sodano’s greeting,” Fr Lombardi told Catholic News Service.

Whether in Rome or abroad, the pope simply doesn’t have time to personally preview the many speeches or brief greetings that are addressed to him. Fr Lombardi explained. Considering that one came from the dean of the College of Cardinals, it was probably not subject to review by anyone else, either, he said.

Cardinal Sodano’s remarks got more news coverage than the pope’s Good Friday liturgy itself. Some to complain that the Vatican couldn’t manage to stay on-message even at Easter. But that didn’t bother Vatican officials, who said it was important to let the pope and the world know that the Church supported him at this moment.

One source said the decision to add the greeting to the pope’s homily was reached the evening before, based on a growing sense that to say nothing might leave the impression that the pope was isolated in the face of criticism.

Critics of the Vatican’s communications apparatus have long argued that not enough thought is paid to the way comments by individual cardinals or other Vatican officials will play in the media. But to date there have been no serious efforts to muzzle these officials or vet their public comments. Instead, Vatican officials prefer an archaic organisation, the Vatican Press Office, to vetting the plurality of voices. — CNS

Family torn apart by permits

BY JUDITH SUDILOVSKY

For the fourth year in a row one Christian family in Jerusalem was unable to celebrate Easter together.

The family—whose elderly father asked not be named in order to protect their identity—has been unable to share important holidays with their 30-year-old daughter since 2006. Although she has the proper permits to travel from Gaza, where she lives with her husband and children, the Israeli authorities have refused to grant her travel permits.

As a holder of a Jerusalem residence card, the woman is prohibited from travelling to Israel because she has failed to register with the Israeli authorities. “It is a difficult life,” the father said.

The father and his wife call their daughter every evening via a computer with a built-in video camera so she can see them and they can see her. The family are proud to see their grandchildren growing. Every morning the daughter calls to speak with her mother as well, he said.

“We are happy to see our grandchildren [this holiday] and there are a lot of presents and hugs for them, but at the same time we are sad because we can’t see our daughter,” he said.

There are about 50 000 such Christian families in Jerusalem who have been unable to register with the authorities and who have not been able to travel to Jerusalem for the Easter holiday. The daughter, however, remained in Gaza where she spent Easter with her two youngest children and her in-laws. “It is a difficult life,” the father said.

Family members pray in Jerusalem’s church of the Holy Sepulchre on Good Friday. One Christian Jerusalem family, however, was incomplete, for the fourth successive year because their daughter was denied a travel permit. —PHOTO: AMMAR AWAD, REUTERS

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Saint’s husband dies at 97

BY CINDY WOODEN

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Christians truly believe that death is not the end. They know that God will allow his love and goodness to shine through their words and their actions, and that God loves the soul of a lost loved one. Pope Benedict has told his general audience in St Peter’s Square in the Vatican, “We will truly and completely believe the words we are allowed to write down as we and when we write: ‘you can recognise the voice and hands of Jesus himself,’” he said. “The historical fact of Christ’s resurrection means the promise of new life is not simply a wish. He said: “New life in Christ must shine in the life of one’s Christian, it must be alive and active,” demonstrating that “it really is capable of changing one’s heart and whole existence.”

The signs that Christ’s victory over sin and death is changing minds are everywhere, including in situations where violence is replaced with peace, where justice is promulgated instead of being merely engaged in dialogue, where respect is shown for others and where men and women make personal sacrifices to assist others, he said. In the world today, there is much suffering in the world, more violence and more suffering. The...joyful contemplation and prayer of Christ who vanquishes sin and death with the power of love, is a favoritism of the Lord for redressing and professing our trust in our protector in heaven.”

Continued to feel that you were...ourselves, made holiness something attainable for all of us”.—CNS

Bishops on Pakistan crisis: keep the faith burning

W

orkers at several Catholic institutes have died and undocumented immigrants and refugees of Pakistan in recent bomb blasts across Pakis- tans. Police are making it hard for the poor to meet their daily needs. The country is also experiencing major power shortages, and workers at Catholic schools and hospitals told the Asian Church news agency UCA News that these shortages are seriously affecting their operations. With the country in the grip of these crises, auxiliary Bishop Sebast- ian Shah of Lahore asked Christians to keep the risen Lord with greater con- sideration and professing our trust in the force of light and darkness. The...joyful contemplation and prayer of Christ who vanquishes sin and death with the power of love, is a favoritism of the Lord for redressing and professing our trust in our protector in heaven.”

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A five-year mark, two key objectives of Pope Benedict XVI's pontificate have come into clear focus, shaping the Church's role in the public space and sphere of religious life.

In hundreds of speeches and homilies, in three encyclicals, on 13 foreign trips, during synods of bishops and even through new web-sites, the German pontiff has confronted what he calls a modern “crisis of faith,” saying the root cause of moral and social ills is a reluctance to acknowledge the truth that comes from God.

To counter this crisis, he has proposed Christianity as a religion of love, not rules. Its core mission, he has said repeatedly, is to help people accept God's love and share it, recognizing that true love involves a willingness to sacrifice.

His emphasis on God as Creator has tapped into a yearning for meaning, for which he has been dubbed the “green pope.” He has presented the writings and beliefs, ranging from faith, catechising them on Christ’s suffering and passion, but also to social justice and the “green pope.” He has presented the patristic and pastoral traditions, including the venerable figure of St. Augustine to Confessions.

During a late 2006 visit to Turkey, the pope personally apologized to Muslims for the Crusades, a major change in the Vatican-Muslim relationship. During a 2006 visit to Turkmens and an Islamic mosque in Tunisia, the pope expressed sadness that some Muslims had been treated as second-class citizens in the Holy Land pilgrimage in 2006, and he thanked “our Jewish friends” for their role in bringing the pope to Israel.

In the same letter, however, he expressed sadness that some Catholics seemed willing to believe rumors that the pope was a political revolutionary or a social reformer. In calling for a personal relationship with Jesus, he touched on a point the pope has made elsewhere: “One must never know Christ only theoretically.”

The pope has presided over three synods of bishops: on the Ecumenist in 2005, on Scripture in 2008 and on Africa in 2009, and has convened one on the Middle East in 2010. He streamlined the format of these encounters to allow for more exchange of opinion, and has sometimes joined in the discussions. There's much interest in his position on Scripture, expected soon, because of the “days” during which familiarity with the Bible is essential for young people.

The Year of St Paul 2008–2009 familiarised Catholics with the apostle, and the archbishop of Canterbury is expected to underline a missionary awareness of the Church.

In calling the “Year for Priests” which began in 2009, the pope said the Church must acknowledge that some priests have done great harm to others, but must also thank God for the gifts of many priests who have been drawn to the Church and the world.

The papal visit to the United States in 2008 was the first visit by a pope for 25 years, and included a visit to the World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia, the second day of secret balloting in the Sistine Chapel by the world's cardinals.

The youth is pope's 'greatest concern'

BY FR MATTHEW GAMBER

When Pope Benedict XVI visited South Africa last September, he called for “creative harmony” between God's love and the demands of social justice. In a year when the Church has been at odds with politicians and the media, the pope's words have resonated positively throughout the media spotlight, underlining the pope's importance in bringing the Church closer to the public sphere.

The youth is pope's 'greatest concern'

The incident reveals the warm relationship that Pope Benedict, the former theologian, has cultivated with young people. Since his election to the papacy five years ago at age 78, his connections have included a meeting with young people in the Vatican during the papacy five years ago at age 78. His conversations have included a visit to the Vatican and the Saint of the Week in your e-mail inbox FREE.
One of Pope Benedict’s greatest concerns is how the Church relates to an increasingly hostile secular world today. ANTHONY EGAN SJ explains.

Pope Benedict’s understanding of Church and state is complex. Some of his public statements give the impression that he has supported the revival of Christian faith in Europe and so wishes to turn back the clock and establish a renewed Christendom.

But I think this is a misreading. Benedict has kept interreligious dialogue near the top of the Catholic agenda since his papacy began, but his relations with the Jewish and Muslim communities continue to be marked by alternating tension and progress.

In his five years as pontiff, Pope Benedict has made numerous exchanges with Muslims. He met the head of the Islamic World Conference in Turkey in 2006, and in Rome in 2010. He has visited mosques in Cologne, Germany, in New York and Jerusalem.

But some Muslims still mention with concern the remarks he made about Mohammed in a 2006 speech. Some members of the Jewish community remain uneasy with his recent decision to advance the sainthood cause of Pius XI, who was elected in December 1919 and in 2010 to lift the excommunication of those Jews who refused to work within the laws of the Church.

Aside from concerns over Pope Benedict’s record during World War II, Jewish leaders have a largely favourable view of Pope Benedict and the sincerity of his respect for their faith and culture.

On the eve of Pope Benedict’s visit in January to the Rome synagogue, the city’s chief rabbi said the German pontiff was making an important step along the difficult path of Catholic-Jewish dialogue.

“The Pope could have chosen to advance the sainthood cause of Pius XI without lifting the excommunication of those Jews who refuse to work with the Church,” said Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni.

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“The Pope could have choose...
**Pope Benedict's legacy**

We review this week Pope Benedict's first five years as supreme shepherd of the Catholic Church, we do so acutely aware that his pontificate is still very much in its formative stage. The results of his leadership will not be fully apparent until well after its completion, when that sad day arrives, we hope.

Indeed, it is not easy to predict what is to come after Benedict. He will remain the German pope. Commentators who in the current climate of opinion that the pontificate of Benedict XVI will be overshadowed or even defined by the sexual abuse scandal may well overestimate the lasting impact of their opinion.

Other issues may well exercise future historians. These will certainly include Pope Benedict's endeavours in inter-religious dialogue, particularly with Muslims and Jews; his efforts at defining the place of the Catholic Church in a rapidly secularising West; his positions on social justice and on life and family issues; and the impact of his leadership on the Catholic Church itself.

When history eventually writes the story of Pope Benedict's pontificate, it will surely regard him as an often misunderstood and misinterpreted pope. Paradoxically, Pope Benedict is predictable and yet he frequently surprises. And sometimes the cause for misunderstanding is the pope himself.

For example, when in a 2006 lecture in Regensburg he quoted the medieval Emperor Manuel II who had said the prophet Muhammad was a false prophet, he was widely condemned. But it could be argued that Pope Benedict's overriding pontifical theme—above all, in his first encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*—was the theme of the first encyclical of his predecessor, *Dei Verbum*, which achieved considerable success. Why would the pope object to it? Because he is a thoughtful and doctrinally cautious pope who can find no way to innovate on matters such as the pro-commissioning of Catholic politicians who legislate on access to abortion.

There is much that the secular left should admire about Pope Benedict's positions on matters such as the death penalty, ecology, immigration and capital punishment. And yet, for much of the secular left all this is meaningless because it regards the pope objectorante on other matters, particularly abortion, embryonic stem cells and contraception.

Above the din of all the posturing and sometimes artificial controversy, Pope Benedict's overriding pontifical theme—which is to carry out not as the CEO of a multinational institution but as a shepherd, a teacher and a pastor—is that of love. Love in its different but complementary manifestations was the theme of his first encyclical, *Dei verbum*. The pope whom many expected to be a doctrinal enfant terrible has been a pastor of love, with evangelical zeal to God's love at the faith's centre.

It is a simple and yet revolutionary notion. And it may well be this history will record as the defining product of Pope Benedict's pontificate, of the Catholic Church, but he part of the solution in prayer.

**Letters to the Editor**

**Why we go to Mass**

**Divinely merciful**

The Editor reserves the right to shorten or edit published letters. Letters below 300 words receive preference. Pseudonyms are acceptable only under special circumstances. The Editor's discretion in the use of the writer's name must be supplied. No anonymous letter will be considered.

People go to Mass for different reasons. Some attend to give thanks to God and to have the assurance that they will be forgiven. Some attend to receive Grace in Holy Communion. Indeed, a good many attend to stay awake. Others go just to be with a friend. A few go for the social side, and fewer still for the singing. Still fewer attend to have curiosity's sake and never return.

There are times when Mass-goers could be forgiven for not being there if they were not struggling to stand while the prayer "May the Lord accept the sacrifice from your hands..." is being rattled off, or when not at Mass the bishop or the Father of the Eucharist is scrambling up the aisle to say Mass because the "Our Father" is being said.

I think Mass intentions should be a memorialisation in the Eucharistic prayers.

**Abuse justice**

The abuses and cover-ups have badly wounded the Church. We are all the Church, so we should all be making acts of reparations to help heal those wounds.

One such act is to cover-up and lack of support for the poor victims of sexual abuse. Let us pray for Peter a long time to really forgive himself for denying Christ, and it's time to take a long time to recov- er, but our humiliation can also be used to help the healing process.

**Our humiliation can help healing**

**Veil a treasure of my womanhood**

**Celibacy to stay**

**Divine Mercy image by Jesus himself for the healing process.**

**Malcolm Bagley, Cape Town**

I can help healing in a thoughtful and doctrinally guided way to innovate on matters such as the pro-commissioning of Catholic politicians who legislate on access to abortion.

Devilish joy

I think many will agree with me that a general cleaning of the stables is long overdue. What damage this is doing to our beloved Church, and how the devil must be rejoicing at the way the pope has achieved this. These continuing revelations are vile and repugnant and something must be done to restore the dignity and beauty of our Church and our faithful.

**Roy Glover, Tzaneen**

**Girls at risk**

**The Reformation was a revolt**

**Leaving room for the Eucharist**

Let us not join in further abuse of the Church, but be part of the solution in prayer.

**Kiewist Vlok, Klerksdorp**

**Leigh Tung**

I am not the one who expresses preventative measures to provide room for the Eucharist.

**The Reformation was a revolt**

**The letter of Denise Gordon-Tzaneen**

I am dissatisfied with the handling of a situation, and how the devil must be rejoicing at the way the pope has achieved this. These continuing revelations are vile and repugnant and something must be done to restore the dignity and beauty of our Church and our faithful.

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**Reflections of my Life**

Woosh: Helicopter church takes off

**NE of the newest entrants in Nairobi’s ever expanding “churchscape” has a name that reminds me of a story I heard about Jesus.**

The church is called Helicopter of Christ Ministries. When I first saw it one Sunday in January, it was overflowing with worshippers with some sitting on plastic chairs dangerous- ly close to a busy road. The first question I asked myself was: where did all the members of the new church come from? Had they left other churches or were they completely new converts? It did not take me long to figure things out.

In Nairobi, people are moving from one church to another all the time. The initial attraction of the Helicopter of Christ must have been, of course, the promise implied in the church’s name. Its members must have been made to believe that Jesus would within a short span of time more or less lift them up from their misery and settle them in a wonder- land of personal peace for the rest of their lives.

That is where I find the connection with the tale I heard about Judas. He is said to have been fully convinced that Jesus was the Son of God. Judas was supposedly a street-wise fellow who “sold” Jesus to make quick money while all the time believing that nobody could actually kill the Son of God. In fact, all Jesus’ disciples seem to have thought that the Korban was ineffec- tual and would either miraculously evade cap- ture or blow his enemies to smithereens as much as a snap of the fingers.

That is why, when Jesus was captured without any resistance, was tortured and nailed to a cross to die, Judas lost his mind and killed himself. The other disciples were inconsolable. How could the story of the great miracle-worker Jesus, who had dismissed all the fears they had thought the whole thing had been all fake and gone?

This tale could be just that—a tale. But associating religious and religious figures with miraculous power is deeply rooted in human hearts. Indeed in Nairobi, the kind of Christian- ity that the church of the helicopt- er remembers is one that seems to show itself as one on the wane. The story of God who made the heavens and earth, and a woman who fell into sin prompting the Creator to come down from heaven, take a human body and die in order to save the salva- tion all human beings is good, but it doesn’t really ring true in Nairobi.

People want Christ the superhero who fixes things and makes them go right every- thing. They want their minds blown by the dramatics of an intervention that would result. But the Easter story opens us to: it is certainly not a Helicopter of Christ story, whatever the ownership of the church. It is one that intends to convey through the name the power of God is showing itself deep in the heart of a man himself to the extent of accepting a painful and shameful death on one’s own cross.

This death is not exit into oblivion. It is a passage into fullness of divine glory, the resur- rection. Called to be an imitator of Christ, East- er reminds me to live my life with intense faith in God, to hope in his promises and to try and love him and fellow human beings as he has loved us. I should die to selfishness and resurrect to love him and fellow human beings as he has loved us.

I wish you a happy Easter season!

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**February 13, 1988 saw the solemn blessing of the monastery of the Contemplative Dominican Sisters at Senekal, in the west of the diocese of Bethlehem.**

Like all new begin- nings, it had to go through many trials, but there is no doubt that the Lord wanted it to succeed and prosper.

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**Bishop Carlos Fernandez de Salamanca, Spain, speaks to the Contemplative Dominican Sisters in his diocese. Nearly half of them are former members of another monastery which had to be closed down because its community had grown too old to keep it alive.**

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**Did Christ condemn paedophiles?**

Our King James Bible, Matthew 18:5-10 has some strong words, namely that anyone “who shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea”. This verse is often quoted by priest paedophiles who have been unmasked by victimization reports, to justify their offences. Is this a likely interpretation?

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**Nuns cut off from the world**

**Last week Bishop Bucher recalled the foundation of the Contemplative Dominican Sisters’ monastery at Senekal, almost three years after the Spanish nuns first arrived in South Africa.**

The ceremony was attended by Bishop- opphanes Brennknecht of the neighbouring dioce- se of Bethlehem. Like all new begin- nings, it had to go through many trials, but there is no doubt that the Lord wanted it to succeed and prosper.

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**Michael Shackleton answers your question Open Door**

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**ST ANTHONY’S HOME**

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PARISH OF THE MONTH

Ascension Parish, Southridge Park, Mthatha

Mthatha parish places emphasis on youth and community

BY NADINE CHRISTIANS

Ascension parish in Southridge Park, Mthatha, laid its first stone on May 29, 1995, with its first Mass taking place in June that same year. The initial idea was to have a Catholic Church for students from the University of Transkei and the Eastern Cape Technikon (both having amalgamated to form Walter Sisulu University).

That idea, said Sookdev Rajkaran, parish pastoral committee vice-chairperson, was abandoned as students found it difficult to commute to the church.

The parish, he said, was built with funds from Swiss Fr Urs Fischer CMM, now a retreat master at Marianhill, and the convent of the Clarist Sisters (Franciscan Clarist Sisters) is attached to the parish since July 1995.

The parish, under the leadership of Fr Bonaventure Semaganda and Fr Moris Daniel with youth and sisters of the Clarist Sisters is attached to the parish since 1995.

The parish, under the leadership of Fr Bonaventure Semaganda, and assisted by Fr Moris Daniel CMM, has a rich mixture of cultures and boasts about 180 members and nine outstations: Kwa-Parnie, Qospopo, Nibhello, Xamunze, Mainwini, Bongweni, Maqinini, Sawutini and Binyi.

Khanyisa High School, a Catholic school with more than 1 000 learners, Khanyisa Children’s Homes with 21 orphans and five preschools run by the Clarist Sisters are attached to the parish and make up the parish community, said Mr Rajkaran.

Youth, said Mr Rajkaran, is an important part of church life.

“We have a youth association (Youth for Christ) with over 30 teenagers. They meet every Friday and have donated their time to the old age home at Bedford and the Khanyisa Children’s Home.”

The parish also established A Men’s Union in 2009. Thus far they have provided Buckets of Love with canned and non-perishable groceries.

“For Lent this year the catechism children collected cans of baked beans, peas, tin fish, jam, fruit cocktail, and non-perishable items such as sugar and rice in their Care and Share campaign. Over a thousand items were collected and were distributed to the poor in the sub-parishes at Easter.

Over half of this was provided by the children from Khanyisa School,” he said.

The parish boats a band and choir “which we are very proud of”.

“The band practises every Thursday and has also incorporated the youth in its activities. A youth Mass with music by the youth band and choir is held every quarter,” he said.

Mr Rajkaran said: “The Southern Cross has been sold from the inception of the Church.

“We promote it by announcing the number of copies that are sold and also announce the leading articles regularly.”

Parishioners are always included in parish activities and how their parish is run.

Planning meetings take place twice a year and a questionnaire is used annually to get feedback from parishioners, said Mr Rajkaran.

“The parish has two annual fundraising activities: a Parish Day held when we celebrate the feast of the Ascension; and a dance is held either in February [Valentine’s Ball] or in September [Spring Ball].

Cake sales are held to provide seed money for the feast day and the dance. The funds raised are used for the maintenance of the church and the sub-parishes.

The youth group also has fundraising activities in the form of cake sales and a family dance to finance their many activities.”

He added that every year the sub-parishes get together to celebrate Easter. This normally includes the Easter Saturday night vigil.

“In May a Charismatic weekend will be held, which will be hosted both by the cathedral and our parish. Fundraising activities in the form of a talent contest and cake sales have already taken place. Another highlight in 2010 will be the official opening of a new church building in our sub-parish of Nibhello,” he said.
Pope Benedict steps off his aircraft after landing in Angola last year on the first papal trip to Africa in 11 years. (Photo from CNS)

Pope Benedict on the road

BY CAROL GLAZT

WHEN Pope Benedict was elected on April 19, 2005, just three days after his 78th birthday, he said he would be more of a stay-at-home pope than his glototecting predecessor Pope John Paul II.

But Pope Benedict has hit the road more than expected. In his five years as pope he has travelled to every continent except Antarctica, visiting 17 countries on 13 foreign trips. Inside Italy, he’s visited 23 cities.

This year, he has five foreign trips planned: this month to Malta, followed by Portugal in May; Cyprus in June, England and Scotland in September and Spain in November.

The goals of these trips will mirror the aims of all of Pope Benedict’s apostolic journeys: preaching the Gospel, underlining the contributions Christians value bring to culture and society, and bringing the face of the successor of St Peter to the people.

Pope Benedict has reduced the number of daily events bringing to culture and society, and bringing the face of the successor of St Peter to the people. This year, he has five foreign trips planned: this month to Malta, followed by Portugal in May; Cyprus in June, England and Scotland in September and Spain in November.

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It’s the Easter season, with resurrection in the air, but that does not mean that it’s going to be easy to follow Jesus. We may be sure that this season is not going to be trouble-free. In the first reading we see Paul newly arrived in Pisidian Antioch. The first one (omitted in our reading) is quite a success; Paul and Barnabas are welcomed, and glorified God’s word. The second one (omitted) is not so successful, as Paul and Barnabas are expelled from the city in disgrace, but “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” The third reading for next Sunday shares some of this joy, and explains why Jews and Christians can follow the Lord whatever happens: “Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth, serve the Lord with gladness, go into his presence with musing.” It asserts that God is in charge, and “we are his people, the flock that he shepherds.” You can always rely on God, however difficult things may appear to be.

The same notion is present in the second reading. We see a great and multi-national congregation gathered “before the Throne, and before the Lamb” (God and Jesus). Their attire is made of “white stoles, and palm-branches in their hands.” The angelic messenger tells us who they are: “Those who have emerged from great tribulation” who have washed their stoles and whitened them in the blood of the Lamb. “Make no mistake, we are talking of death and the brutal martyrdom that Rome and all its evil powers since then visited on those who were opposed. It’s not easy, but there will be victory, and those who make it through to the end will “worship God day and night in his Temple; and the One Sitting on the Throne will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Why is this? “The Lamb will shepherd them inside them by the brooks of living waters, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” The theme is already deep in the Old Testament: it is there in Sunday’s psalm, and the beautiful 2nd lied psalm to which the last line of the second reading alludes. It is also there in the gospel reading for next Sunday, a continuation of Jesus’ teaching about himself as the good Shepherd. He says of his relationship to his suffering, and to his doubtful, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, pierced, 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