



Sri Lankan NSW
Catholic Association

LanCatholic

Quarterly Newsletter of the Sri Lankan New South Wales Catholic Association
Volume 1 Issue 1 August 2020

VISION STATEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Serving the community in the values and footsteps of Jesus Christ

Editorial

I warmly welcome you all to the readership of this revived newsletter of the Association and hope that it will increase your participation in its activities.

LANCATHOLIC is the voice of the Lankan Catholics in New South Wales.

It is said that there is an opportunity to be had out of every adversity. This has been more than proven with the situation that has taken over the whole world in the last several months. COVID-19 has not only brought the world to its knees but also changed the way we live, work and pray. The adjacent article highlights how the Sri Lankan Catholic community in New South Wales came together. Every demographic of the community were involved - from the toddlers, teens, young adults, the middle aged and even the seniors. Not only were they drawn to pray and reflect together but they revelled in learning a new technology - ZOOM. This platform will no doubt provide the opportunity for the SLNSWCA to extend its reach and attract more involvement.

The pandemic driven lockdown also contributed to the whole world coming to a halt and taking stock of itself. It is said that it will bring about an economic re-set. Here again it provided an opportunity for the Committee of the Association to spend focussed time on thinking through the future of the SLNSWCA which has been in existence for around 2 decades. It has worked on a revised constitution and structure which will be shared with the community shortly. Essentially it offers a new model for active member participation. It is also intended to have an annual general meeting with the participation of the wider community for the first time.

The new format of the newsletter will have a number of new facets that will be of interest to all sections of our community. You are invited to send your comments and feedback as well as contribute content. I wish you all a happy read!

Aubrey Joachim - Editor

The President's say.....

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. May I also welcome to you all to the readership of the SLNSWCA's revived newsletter.

In conveying my opening views I wish to share with our community members some thoughts and messages of Pope Francis with regard to communities. The Holy Father has said that we should all be active members of our communities and contribute towards building up the civil and spiritual lives of society and eventually that of our countries. We need to cooperate with all men and women of goodwill placing the gifts given by God and the Blessed Mother at the service of our community. We have an obligation to re-establish and strengthen our cultural, social and spiritual roots that have been given by our ancestors. We all have the responsibility of understanding our community's challenges and demands and try to support such needs and live in harmony. Thereby we enrich our community and society by our distinctive identity and ingenuity. Those roots should never be allowed to die but need to germinate again in this country. It is an act of fraternity to work towards the common good. That is our responsibility.

Flavian De Silva
President, SLNSWCA

COVID-19 brought the community together

It is unlikely that many of us would have faced a situation where we were prevented from practising public community worship over an extended period. Considering that some of us grew up in a Sri Lanka that from time to time was subjected to various forms of civil unrest we would have been subjected to curfews that prevented us from attending our Catholic obligations of attending Mass and other devotional services a few times.

To those of us who have a religious bent, the most challenging aspect has been the inability to attend church services that we have all devotedly followed since our childhoods.

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Spirituality at home during COVID-19

As we all know COVID-19 has changed the way we live - and even practice our faith. In many cases there has been an increased sense of spirituality demonstrating that in times of adversity people turn to God.

At the height of the lockdown the SLCANSW commenced daily prayer services which included the Rosary, a scripture reading and a short reflection. At the initial stages Fr. Ruwan Pradeep participated in these services. Given that the initial disruption was during the Lenten period, it was suggested that it would be appropriate to have some form of 'virtual retreat' wherein invited guest preachers would provide spiritual food for thought. The challenge of finding appropriate clergy to participate in this mission was miraculously solved when there was significant response from priest and nuns from across Australia as well as Sri Lanka. This initiative provided our community with a refreshingly wide offering of spiritual views as some of the clergy were experts in the areas of scripture and theology. There was even the opportunity for interactive participation and debate. The levels of participation in these ZOOM prayer services were significant and even reached numbers in the 80's. The following were the clergy who participated and the SLCANSW thank them for their involvement:

- Rev Fr Neil Bulathsinghala
- Rev Fr Hilarion Fernando
- Rev Fr Gayan Thamel
- Rev Fr Angelo Wijewickrama
- Rev Fr George Sigamony
- Rev Fr Shammi Perera
- Rev Sr Dulcie Fernando
- Rev Fr Alvin Peter Fernando
- Rev Sr Carmel Fernando
- Rev Sr Judith Gunaratne
- Rev Sr Concepta Andradi
- Rev Fr Francis Jayakody
- Rev Fr Araliya Jayasundera
- Rev Fr Kennedy Perera
- Rev Fr Terence Bodiyangoda
- Rev Fr Srian Ranasinghe
- Rev Fr Isuru Weliwatte
- His Lordship Maxwell Perera
- Rev Rev Fr Crispin Leo
- His Lordship Cletus Perera
- Rev Fr Gyom Nonis
- Rev Fr Upul Silva
- Rev Fr Nilushan Fernando
- Rev Fr Sheron Dias
- Rev Fr Anthony Lakshman
- Rev Fr Shane Wickramasinghe
- Rev Sr Cynthia Mendis
- Rev Fr Herman Perera



Disruptive changes to our spiritual lives ... will the change be permanent?

Perhaps for the first time in the history of the existence of religion and spirituality a new phenomenon has arisen. Until now the essential principle of religious worship has been physical presence in a bricks and mortar place of worship. Canon Law required Catholics to attend Mass on Sundays and other days of obligation. The sacrament of communion had always been the receiving of the Holy Eucharist and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. All this has changed. Religion and spirituality has entered the 'Netflix' and 'Youtube' era. Bricks and mortar religious practices have entered the online era.

COVID-19 has perhaps brought about a permanent change to our spiritual lives. For good reason the faithful were not able to attend Mass and other religious services in the usual manner of attending a particular parish church and having to listen to the same member of the clergy whom they have listened to week after week preaching a particular flavour of Jesus' message. A myriad of opportunities opened up online. People began to discover celebrant priests who had gifts of preaching a message that appealed to them and are now continuing to 'virtually' attend their services. Others were able to participate in Holy Week services with His Holiness Pope Francis or Sydney Archbishop Rev. Anthony Fischer.

Spiritual Communion replaced the physical version with the realisation that as long as one receives the Body of Christ in faith then the Lord will look upon him or her with favour.

Perhaps this disruptive change will see a larger number of the next generation turn to religion. Only time will tell.

This article is only the opinion of the author- Aubrey Joachim and not the SLNSWCA.

A New Beginningmajor changes to the SLNSWCA

The Sri Lanka New South Wales Catholic Association (SLNSWCA) has been in existence for nearly two decades. It was the brainchild of a few ardent Sri Lankan migrant Catholics who considered it a good idea to be able to incorporate some traditional Catholic practices that they had grown up with into their spiritual and social lives in their new country. It was an opportunity to bring across at least some of the values that many of them had grown up with.

The 'Association' was mainly administered and managed by a relatively small group of dedicated individuals who sacrificed their time and effort in providing the Sri Lankan Catholic community in New South Wales with a number of religious services as well as the occasional social event. At a point in time it was thought that the presence of a Catholic priest from Sri Lanka would be ideal to serve as a Chaplain to the community in order to provide much needed spiritual, counselling and other forms of support. In this venture the SLNSWCA engaged with the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney to play a sponsoring role. Thus far four Sri Lankan priests have served in the role of Chaplain although with their remit changing from the original intent.

Twenty years on the demographic of the community has changed. The offspring of the migrants of that time have grown into the Australian culture. The recent migrant families are more progressive, professional and aspire to a different outlook to life in their new country. Therefore it is imperative that we maintain the relevance of the Association to the changing demographic and current context

To this end the current Executive Committee is working on developing a more structured framework of membership to attract a larger proportion of the approximately 10,000 Sri Lankan Catholics in New South Wales and the ACT, as well as providing an enhanced portfolio of services to meet the ever changing needs of our vibrant community. Besides the normal monthly celebration of a Holy Mass by the resident Sri Lankan Chaplain nominated by the Sydney Archdiocese, there is the growing need for spiritual guidance in other areas such as Children, Youth and Young Adults, Aged Care and Counselling Services, Bereavement Services, Family Counselling, Prayer, Reflection and Retreats as well as other emerging needs. If all these needs are to be met then the need for greater and committed involvement of the wider community is required.

Wider community participation through a structured model

Until now, there has not been the formal participation of the wider community in the affairs of the Association. Whatever involvement has been passive participation in the various religious services and social events. If the SLNSWCA is to continue as a viable, vibrant and growing body into the future, then there needs to be community decision making as well as a succession plan that will see it continue into the future. To this end the current Executive Committee has developed a revised constitution for the Association.

The fundamental change as it impacts the community is to invite ***their active and committed participation through a formal membership structure***. Such formal members will demonstrate financial commitment through a relatively small annual membership fee and have the opportunity of participation in the decision making process of the Association through voting rights at the Annual General Meetings as well as Special General Meetings. Moreover, such members will be able to contest for office bearer positions as well as other committee positions. There is also the need to attract members to become involved in various ministry groups such as Prayer group, Youth and young children's group, Counselling group etc. These are the opportunities to make the Association a vibrant community.

Any public association needs the support of its members if it is to remain viable. This support is not only in voluntary time and effort but also through financial support. There has always been a financial burden in keeping the SLNSWCA afloat. While the Sydney Archdiocese sponsors a Chaplain to support the Association, there is the requirement to subsidise the financial cost of maintaining a nominated Sri Lankan priest. In addition there is cost involved in conducting services in venues such as Mulgoa, Quakers Hill Polish church etc. Such funds come via the meagre contributions at the Masses as well as donations. These collections are insufficient. In addition the Association needs funds for the operational costs such as maintaining a website, providing online services, supporting social activities, public liability insurances etc. It is through the occasional social events - dances and food fairs.

It is hoped that this proposed new formal structured model will see a resurgence and revival of the SLNSWCA. More information and details will be made available to the community in the weeks ahead.

YOU ARE INVITED TO BE A FORMAL ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE SLNSWCA

The Executive Committee of the SLNSWCA is intending to involve the wider Sri Lankan Catholic community of NSW & ACT in the affairs of the Association through formal membership.

We invite you to seriously consider becoming an **Associate Member** and participate in the decision making in respect of the future of the Association. Various membership categories are available:

Family Membership	\$20 per year
Individual membership	\$10 per year
Pensioner / seniors	\$5 per year
Family life membership	\$200 one off payment
Pensioner/ senior life m'ship	\$50 one off payment

Those interested may obtain further information by contacting the Association President - Mr Flavian Silva on 0413484805 or Mr. Claude Perera on 0415163268

A copy of the revised constitution of the Association can be obtained by emailing the Association Secretary Mr. Rukshan Anthony on info@slnswcath.com

The future of the Association is in your hands
The AGM will be held in the near future

Continued from page 1....Very early in the stage of lockdown the SLCANSW committee decided to take advantage of the technology to offer our members the opportunity of 'virtual' community prayer and worship. It commenced with daily Prayer meetings which included the Rosary, hymns as well as reflections from invited guest clergy. Holy Mass was ZOOMed into our homes every Sunday. In fact the levels of participation were more than expected and certainly more than the actual church services. We hope the level of interest in the services offered by the SLCANSW will be appreciated in future. COVID has brought our Sri Lankan Catholic community together. Let us stay together.
The Editor

Holy Humour.....

Religion and spirituality need not always be serious. Priests often make their homilies interesting by adding aspects of humour. Here are a few jokes that will bring about a smile on your face.

Too Much Praise:

A Christian guy named Bill saw an ad online for a Christian horse, so he went to check it out. The horse's owner said, "It's easy to ride him. Just say 'Praise the Lord!' to make him go and 'Amen!' to make him stop." Bill got on the horse and said, "Praise the Lord!" Sure enough, the horse started to walk. "Praise the Lord!" he said again, and the horse began to trot. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" he yelled, and the horse broke into a gallop. Bill was enjoying his ride so much that he almost didn't notice the cliff he and the horse were about to go over. Bill shouted "AMEN!" at the top of his lungs, and the horse stopped right at the edge of the cliff. Relieved, Bill said, "Phew! Praise the Lord!"

A healing touch:

Our fourth grader celebrated his birthday on crutches, so he couldn't carry the cupcakes into school without help. I asked our sixth-grader, Noah, to help his brother carry them in. "I could," he said, "but I'd prefer not to." Spotting a teaching moment, my husband asked Noah, "What would Jesus do?" Noah answered, "Jesus would heal him so he could carry his own cupcakes."

Editor's note:

Jokes have been sourced from various platforms. They are in no way intended to offend or ridicule and any such perception is unintended.

Please send in your funny contributions.....

You are welcome to submit any humorous jokes, quotations or sayings as long as they are in good taste. Such submissions will be published along with your name. You may send in your contributions addressed to:

The Editor - *LanCatholic* at email - aubreyjoachim@hotmail.com

Youth and Young Adults

We live in a VUCA world - *Vulnerable, Uncertain, Challenging and Uncertain*. More than at any time in the past youth and young adults are feeling insecure and vulnerable. Janika Shani Fernando a young member of our community provides a beacon of hope in her opinion piece below.

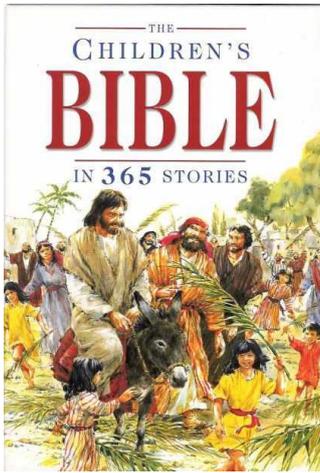


Things Fall Apart - Janika Shani Fernando

In the early months of 2020, the air has held an ominous weight that seems to grow heavier, day after day. It crackles with uncertainty; at every news headline that races across the screen - Coronavirus infections spreading like wildfire, a mum and three children set on fire because of domestic violence, police shooting a man and innocent children dying in a car accident. The world left buried beneath the rubble. Souls shattered by such terrors and traumas to make minds crumble as readily as the cardboard buildings. So the air continues to crackle with uncertainty or is that, our nerves? Despite the negative and depressing events of our lives it is important to remember - sometimes good things fall apart so better things can grow. Everything happens for a reason- even if it hurts at first, time heals and we grow stronger as a result. There is nothing we can do to make the situation better or even stop them from falling apart. When that happens, you can either cry over your past, or be unable to forget things that happened years ago, or you can accept the things that happened and have faith that there is a reason behind it. Things fall apart often to teach you, to shape you as a person and make better things come along. By accepting things you can't change, you are in charge of your own destiny, because you learn to not allow bad circumstances to pull you down. Instead, you must just keep moving forward.

In his tragedy, *Hamlet*, Shakespeare quotes, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking that makes it so". What would happen if we simply refrain from making negative judgements about our daily life events? I mean, it's not the big events in life that are going to make us happy or sad in a lasting way but the daily events in which we can choose to find joy or suffering. It's easy to find fault or be the critic, thinking about things in this way can really grind us down. If we can remember Shakespeare's advice and make it a mantra, it can put a lid on our suffering and sometimes, help us find joy in unexpected places. It takes courage to swim through turbulent waters without tensing up. We don't know how to react? How to respond? Who to blame? So who do we turn to? Well, Nelson Mandela is an inspirational example of someone who overcame racial adversity by using his strong character of persistence and faith. He spent 27 years in a South African prison cell writing letters from great isolation to his family but he still didn't give up hope. He wrote, "I learnt that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it". If we have to go up in our lives, we should hit rock bottom. This is enriching as it reaffirms that the human spirit cannot be crushed, despite tragic or inhospitable situations. Every bad circumstance is just a barrier on your way.

As humans, we thrive in ideal conditions and struggle through the chaos. Underneath the pain is our resilience and capability to survive. One need only look to the Holocaust survivors of Nazi Germany, to see what they endured during WWII. Refugees today flee their country from persecution and struggle daily to survive to raise families. This is a testament to the human will to become adaptable no matter what. The challenge is that we might believe we are the masters of our fate, so when the rug is pulled out from under us, it threatens our stability. However, this is a powerful revelation because when we have nothing, our determination transports us to our next journey. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." So we suspend believing our life is falling apart and trust it is coming together better than we imagine. When life is dragging you back with difficulties, it will launch you into something great. Just stay focused. Better times are coming, you just need to be patient enough to get through a storm so the sun can shine again. Accept the good and the bad. Remember, you can't have a rainbow without a little rain.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Scripture Class.....

To Christians the Bible is the most important book which shows us the way we should live our lives. The Bible essentially consists of two parts - the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is a collection of ancient Hebrew writings. The New Testament discusses the teachings and the life of Jesus and the events of Christianity in the first century. There are 66 books in the Bible. Here is an interesting way for children to learn the books of the Bible - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9DodTRI3vU>

My life and future in Australia

When I was nine years old, I migrated to Australia. In Sri Lanka, I attended St Bridget's Convent, Colombo and as I came to Australia, I joined St Joseph's Primary School, in Schofields. I am glad that my parents enrolled me in a Catholic school because I can continue studying in a Catholic environment. When I first joined St Joseph's primary in 2017, I was nervous and afraid, but soon my nervousness went away when I met a group of girls who I am still friends with to this day. Now I am happily studying in high school, St John Paul II Catholic College. There is a big difference between the curriculum I followed in Sri Lanka and what we follow here. I like the Australian curriculum more because I feel the subjects are more practical and we use the latest technology for studies. During the COVID lockdown, I was able to continue my studies online because of the school system, which helped me continue my learning. I also enjoy school excursions and field trips which the school organises and sadly this year our excursions have been postponed due to COVID.

I like Australia because it is a big country and there are so many beautiful places to visit. I enjoy traveling interstate with my family, by road and have visited many nice places since coming here. I have great memories like driving on the Great Ocean road, visiting the Twelve Apostles, Snowy Mountains, Gold Coast, Noosa and the Sea Cliff Bridge.

Since coming to Australia, I have also taken part in events organised by the NSW Catholic association and participated for the Sri Lankan masses and the Madu Feast in Berrima. There is a big Sri Lankan community where I live, and they welcomed us in the usual friendly manner which made it easy to settle in Sydney. Having a Sri Lankan food shop close to where I live has been a highlight for me as I can continue to enjoy my favourite "Chicken Koththu".

I am very fortunate that I came to Australia when I am young because I am making friends and can prepare for my future given there are many more options and opportunities in Australia.



Shania Tavarayan

Children..... you can submit your articles for publication

Children up to school year 10 are invited to write any article of interest for publication in the *LanCatholic*. Articles should be between 300 to 400 words and can include pictures or clipart. You may also send in drawings, sketches or cartoons. Articles must be sent to aubreyjoachim@hotmail.com



Young family issues

The largest segment of Sri Lankans in Australia is young families in the prime of their lives. The typical profile would be parents in the mid-thirties to mid-forties age group with between two to four children of school going age. This is undoubtedly the most challenging time of their lives balancing family and professional lives. COVID-19 has added another dimension.

Angelo De Silva a young father of two and a member of our community provides some perspective and important advice to other such parents.

Surviving, reviving & thriving during the Pandemic (with kids)

As the COVID-19 lockdown's started to take effect throughout Australia in March, many of us probably underestimated how it would impact our lives not just in the short term but for the coming months and years. Life as we know it is rapidly changing and adapting to the "new" normal with our family dynamics also rapidly changing. This is a brief summary of how we survived the lock down and what the "new" normal looks like with three kids under 7 years old and 2 dogs.

Surviving the lockdown - As we went into lockdown at the end of March, we found out very quickly just how rapidly we needed to adapt at home. Everything was pre-fixed with "home". Home-working, (both working full time) home-schooling, (for our 7 year old), to day care (for our 3 & 5 year olds). Sometimes the thought that comes to mind is that you may have a better chance surviving COVID-19 than your chances of surviving inside your home!

What did we do to survive?

● **Experiment until it works** It took a week roughly for us to get to some normalcy. We were still getting used to how to juggle work meetings on video with kids in the background, home schooling with full time work and two younger kids ready to distract, logistics around meals, weekends at home with no plans, live streaming church and that was just the start of finding out how everything you do have changed.

● **Put in a routine & predictability** Setting a routine helped keep things predictable. Adjusting work hours and meetings where possible, coordinating both our work schedules to spend time with the kids throughout the day, washing/cleaning, outdoor dog walks/activities, planned dinner times etc. brought in some structure.

● **Make it fun** One of the positives from this is that we got a lot of time back to do fun things. Saving over 6 hours a day between both of us on the road (work, school, day-care) meant more time to spend on things we didn't usually have time for. From board games, trampoline time, hide and seek to more dog walks became a reality.

Reviving & thriving through the "new" normal

As we pass the mid-way point in 2020, it's certain that uncertainty is here to stay. How we adapt to continuous change that COVID-19 brings to our day-to-day life is key to not only surviving this but to thriving during and after the pandemic. Here are some family friendly tips that may come handy and also help maintain your sanity!

Family friendly tips

● **Work spaces** – With many of us working from home along with the blurred sense of work life/home life converging into one, it's a good idea to invest in creating your workspaces to be comfortable and least distracting as possible. More productivity means more family time so finding a place or room that can be converted to become this space will help you but also let the rest of the family know to leave you alone!

● **Family activities** – Planning and doing indoor and outdoor activities as a family is one of the positives to come out of this pandemic. Often times we get caught up in the busy day-to-day life that we don't really get time to do the little memorable things that make a big difference to connecting as a family. From board games, family walks, arts and crafts, science experiments to simply going for a drive together – it's limitless.

● **Prayer time** – Transform your families exposure to the faith with opportunities to connect and participate within the community & globally in more ways than ever via video. Also use day-to-day activities such as grace before dinner, story-time and family movie nights to incorporate the faith.

● **DIY projects** – With more spare time at our hands and with possibly more helping hands, it's never been a better time to start some DIY projects at home.

● **Screen time** – Too much of screen time on your TV, mobile or tablet used to be anti-social few months ago, but the pandemic has blurred this thinking with screen time playing a critical role in communicating with our friends, family and the outside world. What's becoming more important is to control passive screen time with the myriad of streaming networks such as Netflix, Disney+ etc. Plan and schedule video catch up's & take the opportunity to connect with friends and family that you wouldn't normally connect with due to geographic barriers.



Senior citizens - Down memory lane.....

It is said that 60 is the new 50, in one's outlook to life - not in physical age! Yet it is the next chapter in the life of a group that is referred to as 'baby-boomers'. To many Sri Lankans in this category it is a time to ponder and reminisce the halcyon days in their country of birth - Sri Lanka.

Most Sri Lankan 'seniors' reading this article would have migrated to Australia in excess of 25 years ago. While many of them - including parents of principle migrants - would have come here directly from Sri Lanka some have arrived here from other countries where they lived or worked in order to make this country home for the rest of their lives.

The reasons for their move to a Christian, Western oriented and prosperous country like Australia could be many. During the sixties and seventies those who left Sri Lanka were mainly those impacted by the nationalistic shift of a once colonial English speaking 'Ceylon', who were increasingly feeling alienated. More recent Sri Lankan migrants have seen the economic benefits

for themselves and their children while still keeping the umbilical connection to Sri Lanka. It is this differentiation that has resulted in two segments of the Sri Lankan diaspora - those who have recognised and appreciate their choice of an Australian lifestyle and those who still yearn for what they have left behind.

This does not mean that 'seniors' have forgotten their motherland. It is just that they pine for and reminisce in a different way. Rice and curry and bails will always be their connection to Sri Lanka.

Send in your contributions

Seniors are requested to send in their contributions on any topic of interest. Please email your articles to: aubreyjoachim@hotmail.com

Praying the Rosary

Reciting the Rosary is perhaps the most important form of devotion practiced by Catholics across the world. The Rosary is being recited continuously somewhere across the world 24/7 every second of the day. It is recited in hundreds of languages and dialects.

The prayers of the Rosary are the first prayers that every Catholic child learns from his or her parents at a very young age. The prayers of the Rosary are also the prayers that are on the lips of every elderly dying Catholic. The physical Rosary is always one of the religious artefacts placed on the coffin of every good Catholic before the final farewell.

According to Catholic tradition the praying of the rosary was instituted by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself who appeared to St. Dominic - the founder of the Dominicans in the 13th Century. She gave him a Rosary and asked him to pray the **Our Father**, **Hail Mary** and **Glory Be** prayers. In addition the praying of the Rosary begins with the profession of our faith with the recitation of the **I Believe**. Pope Pius V introduced 15 mysteries in the 15th century and in 2002 Pope John Paul II introduced the Luminous mysteries. The Mysteries serve to recount the lives of Jesus and Mary. Therefore when praying the Rosary we not only venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary but also remember and meditate upon the entire life of Jesus - from his birth until his agony and death on the cross. This is why the recitation the Rosary encompasses our entire Catholic faith.

The following gives us a very good understanding and appreciation of the Rosary:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6AmaVaY8-I>

The SLNSWCA has online Rosary prayer groups open to all. The ZOOM links are as follows:

<https://zoom.us/j/261574411?pwd=cUwyaTQvTis3L1VZTDJkTXJWUnRnZz09> - Every Friday at 8 p.m. AEST

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74184297118?pwd=Qmx3cklqeEM1blINSWZDNDBVY2hGdz09>

Devotional Rosary in English at 7.30 p.m. daily except Fridays and Sundays



Letters to the Editor

Members of the Sri Lankan Catholic community are invited to write to the editor with any suggestions, views or even criticisms with respect to this newsletter or general matters relating to the SLNSWCA and its affairs. Letters must not be libellous or defamatory of any individual. The editor reserves the right to not publish any letter. Send contributions to aubreyjoachim@hotmail.com



Sri Lankan Chaplain completes first year in Sydney



Sri Lankan Catholic Chaplain Fr. Ruwan Pradeep completed one year of his term in July. His first year has been 'hijacked' by the COVID-19 pandemic which unfortunately impacted upon the most important period of the Catholic liturgical year when the Sri Lankan Catholic Community would have seen Fr. Ruwan celebrate his first Lent and Easter with them. The usual Palm Sunday outdoor Way of the Cross had to be cancelled as well as the other Easter Triduum services. However this was no impediment to Fr. Ruwan stepping up to the challenge of moving up the technology scale to provide his ministry online. He was open to the SLNSWCA initiative to participate in prayer meetings and deliver his engaging reflections to the community. The pandemic has also seen the cancellation of the regular Sri Lankan Catholics monthly Mass which he is also continuing online.

Fr. Ruwan arrived to take up his role at a time when participation levels in the SLNSWCA were at low ebb. Numbers at Masses had significantly dropped since the early years of the Association. There were indications he had the potential to attract the community and bring them together.

Although a man of few words away from the pulpit, Fr Ruwan's trilingual competency enables him to reach out to the three language groups of the Sri Lankan community be it in celebrating the Mass or preaching a reflection. He also brings the very Sri Lankan 'flavour' to his homilies, which is appreciated by those who miss mother Lanka. Despite his heavy workload as an assistant parish priest in the Sydney Archdiocese Fr. Ruwan does his best to serve his flock. He would be wise to take every opportunity to reach out and engage with the wider Sri Lankan Catholics in order to extend his influence.



LanCatholic, the Exco of the SLNSWCA along with the community wish Fr. Ruwan a successful and productive stay for the rest of his term as the Sri Lankan Chaplain in Sydney.

Feature: *Researched and written by Aubrey Joachim*

Sri Lanka's Catholic heritage - a short history of Catholicism in Sri Lanka

Although Sri Lanka is now a predominantly Buddhist country, its Christian roots date back many centuries. The early history of the church refers to St Thomas preaching in the island of Taprobane (Ceylon). There is evidence that St. Thomas' Christians lived in the country in the first century and churches existed in some cities. Early Christian artefacts have been discovered in various parts of the country and are now in museums. However, the introduction of Catholicism to Ceylon is associated with the relatively more recent Portuguese colonization of the country since 1505. Churches were built in the military forts and Catholic priests arrived to look after the spiritual needs of the soldiers and other Portuguese officials and families. With the increase in trade and commerce - essentially spices, between Portugal and Ceylon Catholicism also rapidly spread and even the King of Kotte (now the administrative capital Sri Jayawardenapura) and his household converted to Catholicism. His effigy was sent to Portugal to be baptised. Catholicism flourished for the next century and a half.

In the mid-sixteen hundreds the Dutch, in their quest for trade with the East arrived in Ceylon and wrested control from the Portuguese. Roman Catholicism was the established religion in Ceylon. The Dutch who were Calvinists and adhered to the Christian Reformation introduced their version of Christianity and the Dutch Reformed Churches took over. Some of these magnificent architectural buildings are still prominent across the country. The Dutch persecuted the Catholics however they remained steadfast and eventually the Dutch gave up. In the 1800's the British displaced the Dutch and ruled the entire country for 152 years until it granted independence to the locals in 1948. Of course the British introduced their version of Christianity - the Church of England. Today Christians are a small minority in Sri Lanka and constitute Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Reformists and Baptists. Roman Catholics are the majority of the Christians.

The Portuguese established the connection between education and Catholicism - a connection that lasts to this day with major education institutions in the country still being Catholic colleges for boys and convents for girls. Until recently Sri Lanka's Prime Ministers and Presidents both male and female were educated in Catholic institutions.

It is also a historical fact that the first printed document in Ceylon was a prayer book in Sinhalese (1737) and the Gospels (1739) as well as catechism books for schools and churches.

Sri Lanka has also produced spiritual achievers. In January 2015 Joseph Vaz - a Goan Portuguese Catholic priest who lived and died in Sri Lanka in the sixteenth century and revived Catholicism in the face of Dutch opposition was canonized by Pope Francis as Sri Lanka's first saint. Sri Lanka's Christian roots certainly run deep and strong.

Research material: *Being a Christian in Sri Lanka- Dr. Leonard Pinto (2015)*
A History of Sri Lanka - K.M. de Silva (2005)

Table and plate.... Man does not live on bread alone....

We invite readers of this newsletter to submit their original recipes for publication in future editions of this newsletter. You may include pictures if you wish. Please send them in to aubreyjoachim@hotmail.com

Any publication is only as good as the content. The Editor invites literary contributions for any category from readers.

It is hoped that you and your family enjoyed reading this first edition of *SanCatholic*. Please feel free to provide your comments and feedback to aubreyjoachim@hotmail.com