



“They are trees planted by streams of water; they bear fruit; their leaves do not wither; in all that they do they prosper.” Ps 1:3

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The Theme for 2012: “FRUIT-BEARING DISCIPLE.” Jn 15:8

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ADVENT
A TIME OF PREPARATION

In the Catholic Church, Advent is a period of preparation, extending over the four Sundays before Christmas. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *advenio*, “to come

to”, and refers to the coming of Christ. This refers, first of all, to our celebration of Christ’s birth at Christmas; second, to the coming of Christ in our lives through grace and the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and finally, to His Second Coming at the end of time.

Our preparations, therefore, should have all three comings in mind. We need to prepare our souls to receive Christ worthily. That’s why Advent has traditionally been known as “little Lent”. As in **Lent**, Advent should be

marked by increased **prayer, fasting,** and good deeds. Traditionally, all great feasts have been preceded by a time of fasting, which makes the feast itself more joyful. Sadly, Advent today has been supplanted by “the Christmas shopping, feasting, and partying”. Advent ends, of course, with Christmas Eve. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”. (*Isaiah 9:6 KJV*)

“True Meaning of Christmas”

This is how it happened...I had just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room and to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out from behind the Christmas tree. He placed his finger over his mouth so I would not cry out. “What are you doing?” I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat, and I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know.

He then answered me with a simple statement, “**TEACH THE CHILDREN!**” I was puzzled; what did he mean? He anticipated my question, and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood bewildered, Santa said, “Teach the children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that now-a-days Christmas has forgotten”

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **FIR TREE** and placed it before the mantle. “Teach the children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind - all the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of man's thoughts turning toward heaven.” He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant **STAR**. “Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of His promise.”

He then reached into his bag and pulled out a **CANDLE**. “Teach the

children that the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness.”Once again he reached into his bag and removed a **WREATH** and placed it on the tree. “Teach the children that the wreath symbolizes the real nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection.”He then pulled from his bag an ornament of himself. “Teach the children that I, **Santa Claus** symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December.”

He then brought out a **HOLLY LEAF**. “Teach the children that the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly represents the bloodshed by Him.”Next he pulled from his bag a **GIFT** and said, “Teach the children that God so loved the world that HE gave HIS only begotten SON...Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Teach the children that the wise men bowed before the Holy BABE and presented HIM with gold, frankincense and myrrh. We should always give gifts in the same spirit of the wise men.”

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **CANDY CANE** and hung it on the tree. “Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds' crook. The crook on the staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper.”He reached in again and pulled out an **ANGEL**. “Teach the children that it was the angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will towards men.”

Suddenly I heard a soft twinkling sound, and from his bag he pulled out a **BELL**. “Teach the children that as the lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring mankind to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return.”Santa looked back and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, “Remember, teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is, and I bow down to worship HIM, our LORD, our GOD.”

“Compiled by” *Mario Alvares*

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE THROUGH GOD'S LENSES.

Our lives are like a jig-saw puzzle. We will never always know the reasons why many things happen in our lives. But the important part is to know WHO is holding our lives. Is it we who are making decisions or are we allowing God to guide us. Do we involve God in our decision-making or seek His wisdom and discernment? Things make sense when we look at our life's situations from God's perspective. Our heavenly father has a plan and He orchestrates all events/situations in our lives in order to achieve that plan.

In the Old Testament, Moses was separated from his parents, when he was born, but the Heavenly Father always kept a watch over him. His mother put him in a basket in the water for his safety, but the Lord led him to the palace. A foster child became the man to save the nation of Israel.

- **God is our Deliverer:** We do feel rejected or abandoned due to various trials/situations/people in our lives, but God uses our very rejection for His glory. We need to surrender the rejection and ask him to take control, forgive others and allow healing to take place. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all (Ps 34:18). You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good (Gen 50:20).*

Moses went through a training program in the palace as a growing child; however, his training never ended there. His father-in-law taught Moses how to deal with and manage the huge number of people (*Ex 18:17-27*).

- **God is our Teacher:** Learning is constant. Learning is a good healthy sign of maturity. For example: a baby learning to walk doesn't give up when it falls, but keeps getting up and trying to walk till it succeeds. When we go through difficult situations, we need to ask the Lord "**what are you trying to teach me**" rather than complaining "Why is this happening to me Lord?" "*We are not meant to remain as children but to grow up in every way into Christ (Eph 4:14-15). That you may become mature Christians and that you may fulfil God's will for you*" (*Col 4:12*).

Moses was accused by his people in the wilderness that he had brought them to die. But, God was on his side. God never let His people perish but instead provided for them miraculously.

- **God is with us all the time:** People can accuse us and hurt us. But remember God will be on our side at all times. *"If God is with us, who can be against us" (Rom 8: 31).*

Moses knew his God; he was in constant connection with Him. When God told him to stretch his rod over the sea, he did it without doubting whether it would work or not.

- **God is trustworthy:** We doubt those whom we don't know. *"You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt 14:31). The New Testament further encourages us to "Be strong in the lord, to be empowered through your UNION with him, Draw your Strength from Him" (Eph 6:10)*

Conclusion: Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the one who is leading. So rest in the Lord and trust God who works ALL THINGS for our good (Rom 8:28). GOD is with you when you go through pain and He will turn your sorrow and pain into joy (Jn 16:20).

- Sarah Sachin Paul

LOST AND FOUND....IN CHRIST, WE ARE ALWAYS FOUND!

Just about 10 days ago, my son Andrew and I were getting all paperwork, attestation, bank draft etc ready for his college entrance exam.

Upon collecting the attested documents from the school, I took all other documents along with the bank draft to my office as I wanted to scan all documents as well as courier the documents. In the afternoon, when I looked into my laptop bag, I could not find the draft inside. I thought I had forgotten it at home, so I called home to check. However, my wife Angela was pretty sure that it was not at home as she had seen me carrying it along with other documents. I checked my bag couple of times, but to no avail. I went around where I had parked my car, assuming I would have dropped it on the ground, but it was of no use. I walked back to the office, a bit dejected.

However, heart of hearts, I never lost hope, knowing that even if I had made a mistake, my God would find the draft for me. Just then, I remember my wife testifying to me a couple of weeks ago how she found some lost money when she interceded to St. Anthony. Generally, I don't pray to any saints. I thought, St. Anthony could help my wife, why not intercede to him. I prayed to the Lord and also sought St. Anthony's intercession.

Within minutes, I got a call from State Bank of India - Muscat (from where I got the draft) asking whether I lost my draft. When I said yes, he gave me the name and number of the person who found it near my office. The bank manager said, he would speak to the person who found the draft and provide my contact details before I call him within the next 10 minutes. I hardly kept the phone down and there comes a man with the original draft in his hand and hands it over to me. The finder of the draft happened to be an Omani, who took the trouble of calling the bank and advising about the draft as there was no clue about me.

Surely, it was God's grace and mercy which prompted the finder to call the bank and I'm confident St. Anthony would have inspired him to call the bank and finally to get the draft on my table without me having to go anywhere. All Glory and honour to God almighty and thanks to St. Anthony.

- *Felix Menezes*

WINDOW THROUGH THE PAST WEEKS!

07 Nov. 2012 – Bro. Harry (Bro. Victor Pereira's talk - 4th day)

After the Praise and Worship, Harry did the re-cap of Bro. Victor Pereira's talk of the 4th day of the Seminar on Fruit Bearing Disciple.

The main emphasis was on Holiness because God is interested in our holiness along with our happiness. Therefore, often, whenever we get something for our happiness we also get something (without even asking), to purify and make us holy.

The difficult persons we come across in our life (so-called crazy-makers) or the difficult situations we have to endure (situations that make us crazy) are to be better termed as God's angels of blessings. Through these persons/situations God brings out something good in our life just as he brought out in the life of Joseph in the Old Testament. God allows these people/situations to come into our lives so that we come to know where we need to change ourselves and bear fruit even in difficult situations. When we depend on the Lord, we can achieve the best in the seemingly worst situations.

It is good to keep before our eyes that

- We need to adjust our expectations in life.
- Life is challenging, hence, expect challenges which may be painful at times.
- Life is routine, therefore we learn to enjoy our daily routine so that we enjoy life by doing everything for the glory of God (*1 Cor 10:31, Col 3:17*).

14 Nov. 2012 – Bro. Manuel Fernandes (Bro. Victor's talk – 5th day)

We were reminded that, to face challenges we have to go through 3 stages in life which are known as **P stages**. The first **P** stands for **Promise**; this is the stage we all go through. At this stage God makes a promise to us when we attend a Retreat or Life in the Spirit Seminar, and God gives us a Word of Knowledge through the Speaker, that he has great plans for us and he wants to use us. The second **P** stands for **Promotion**. Before promotion God puts us in a school of problem, and the formula is Pit + Pot + Prison = Palace. Bro. Victor explained about Joseph (Jacob's Son) how he had to face problems for 13 long years, from his own brothers & Potiphar's wife and after going through this did he finally became the Governor of Egypt. The third **P** stands for **Provision** – Through all the problems that Joseph went through for 13 years, God prepared him through the dreams as he stored grains during the years of plenty to provide for all peoples and for his family during the time of draught.

Through all these stages GOD made Joseph fruitful and blessed with two sons Manasseh & Ephraim. His second son Ephraim - means God has

made him fruitful in the land of afflictions. In the same manner, God allows afflictions in our lives so that, we can go through the afflictions and become Victorious with the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit.

How do we come out of the Challenges that we face:

- Adjust & Adapt to the situation.
- See challenges as opportunities.
- Turn to the right source of help - the best source is God, to trust in Him.
- Human beings – Bro. Victor gave the examples of monkeys in a cage, to be successful we need a support system. We need friends (2 or 3) in whom we can be confident and they can support us in prayer.

Lastly Bro. Victor said we have 3 callings in our life: **Worship** – This is the highest form of calling in our life. We have to set apart our prayer time and allow God into your presence. **Intercession** – Each one of us are called to be Intercessors, to pray for the needs of our Prayer Group, Parish, the Church, our workplace ...etc. **Service** – We have to serve others to build the Kingdom of God.

Bro. Victor said there are two types of people **PILLARS AND CATERPILLARS**. **PILLARS** are those who are blessed by the Lord and they dedicate their time and talent for the service of the Lord. **CATERPILLARS** are those who only want to receive from the Lord and don't want to give anything back to the Lord. We have to try to change ourselves from **CATERPILLARS** to **PILLARS**.

21 Nov. 2012. - Shared Meal

Bro. Renato led the people through a short session of Praise & Worship with some action songs, especially the song; “He called me to the banqueting table” was very apt as the table was being set for the shared meal on that day. A huge thank you to all the members of MIPC who carried their family meal, with great enthusiasm, to the common table to share it with the larger prayer group family. It was truly a time to enjoy a variety of delicious dishes and also an opportunity to move around and get

to know each other better. For the bachelors, it was a privilege to enjoy some lovely home-made food.

29 Nov. 2012 – Bro. Felix (Night Vigil)

In spite of lot of Church activities throughout the week, there were more than 20 faithful members who made it for the night vigil and decided to spend time with the Lord in Praise and Worship and Intercession. Bro. Ryan Louis started the night vigil with hymns, Praise and Worship for about 20 minutes and then bro Felix utilized rest of the time in intercession. The main areas covered were, as members of a prayer community our prayer life, scripture life, renewal of mind, for gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit to be discerned, identified and used for God's Glory. Also spent time in praying for the Ruler of Oman and prayed for various possible areas why road traffic accidents are on rise in Oman and reckoned the Lord to take control so that it may be brought under control.

5 Dec. 2012 – Testimonies

5th. Dec was the time for testimonies on the theme of the year "Fruit Bearing Disciple". Many shared their experiences and testified how they were able to bear fruit in certain areas of their lives where they were weak - areas like un-forgiveness, humility, patience, prayer and faith. It was very encouraging and edifying to hear these testimonies on how faithful our God is when we are faithful to Him, and moreover how He works in our lives when we take the first step to do what He expects from us.

INCREASE OUR FAITH

The apostles said to the Lord, "Make our faith greater." The Lord answered, "If you had faith as big as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Pull yourself up by the roots and plant yourself in the sea! and it would obey you" (*Luke 17:5*)

There is much work to be done in our family, in our community, work place. Do you think this is enough? You need to step out in faith and

expect God to work through me. The biggest block the people have is their own mindset. We think that God can use others only but not me. God is challenging each one of you today to step out in faith. You will never experience breakthrough unless each one of us steps out in faith. The best example was Peter who got out of the boat and walked towards Jesus. (*Mathew 14:22-32*)

A priest was once asked why we do not see miracles today as we used to see in last 10-15 yrs. The priest replied it was because people today don't want to take risks and remain where they are. I believe what the priest said had a point. The question we need to ask ourselves is if we are ready to take risks and get out of the boat as Peter did.

Another example is Jesus healing the blind Bartimaeus. Jesus asks the blind Bartimaeus "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man answered, "I want to see again." Jesus said to him, "Your faith has made you well." (*Mark 10:46-52*). You cannot let outside forces stifle your faith. You need to cultivate your faith. The enemy does not want you to grow.

So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ. (*Romans 10:17*) Your ears will hear your mouth.

Four Stages of Catholic Faith Development

1. **Inherited faith:** born into a Catholic family. Is anyone born a Catholic? No we are not.
2. **Conventional faith:** growing up faith – Sacraments, devotion, spiritual experience.
3. **Seeking faith:** God's experience – reasoning, seeking explanation and spiritual search leads to conversion.
4. **Owned faith:** Accepted Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour – Faith is a reality, internal experience

How important is faith?

"For whatever is not from faith is **sin**." (*Romans 14:23*)

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him." (*Hebrews 11:6*)

As these scriptures show, for a Christian **faith** is an absolute requirement.

What is this faith we are required to have? We usually turn to (*Hebrews 11:1*) for a definition of faith, but another verse, (*Romans 4:3*) may provide an even sharper focus. What does scripture say? Abraham took God at His word, and that act of faith was accepted as putting him into a right relationship with God. Faith is to believe where it does not exist. God has the power to do what He has promised through you.

Abraham's "act of faith" was to believe the words of God. Simply, **faith is believing what God says** (*Romans 4:16-22*). That belief, that faith, is what pleases God, putting us in a position to have a right relationship with Him. A right relationship, even on a human level, must have trust as its foundations. Abraham's example also shows us that this belief, this faith, is not just intellectual agreement but rather a deep conviction that motivates our core and changes how we think. The evidence of this change is an action. (*James 2:20*)

FAITH is acting on God's word

Faith is Believing, Listening & Acting.

Praise & Worship and Thanksgiving is a means of appropriating God's blessings and a gateway into the presence of God.

"Mary on hearing the message from the angel soon afterwards got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judaea." (*Luke 1:39*)
"How happy you are to believe that the Lord's message to you will come true"! (*Luke 1:45*)

From the first verse, just as Mary got **out** we also need to go **out** and profess our faith. We need to let go of all that is holding us back. We need to step out and minister and take total ownership of our faith and profess it. Jesus Christ is the pioneer and a perfecter of faith. The question to ask is do we have the desire to talk about Jesus to our family, friends etc.?

Remember Faith is not taught, Faith is caught.

We need to keep our minds open to the word of God, be open and welcome

the Holy Spirit.

1. Be audacious or have the audacity to profess Jesus to the young.
2. Open yourself to the charisms to flow and open in your life.
(1 Cor 12) (9 gifts)
3. Allow the Holy Spirit to set your life on fire.

Today's modern man needs to see the power of God.

- *Bro. Jude Antoine*

**Wishing every member of
The Mary Immaculate Praise Community (MIPC)
& Your Families**



**THE CORE TEAM
&
THE OASIS MINISTRY**

***MIPC Prayer Meeting: Every Wednesday at 8:00 pm in the Parish Hall.
General Intercessory Meeting: Last Monday of every month at 8:00 pm.
Community Mass: Every Friday at 9.00 a.m. except the last Friday of the month.***