



“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 2013: “LIVE BY FAITH” *Romans 1:17*

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OUR DEVOTION TO MARY

Mary is comparable to the Queen Mother in the days of the Israelite Kings in the Old Testament. The Queen Mother had two interrelated roles. First, she was the King’s counsellor. She would advise him about administrative matters (*Prov 31:8-9; 2 Chron. 22:2-4*). Secondly, she had the role of an advocate. People would approach her with their needs and she would present them to her son, the King. The relationship that existed between King Solomon and his mother Bathsheba illustrates the intercessory role of Mary with her son, Jesus.

In the New Testament Mary is our model intercessor who enjoys the same special status of the Queen Mother. The intercessory power of Mary is revealed at the wedding feast at Cana (*Jn 2:1-11*). Mary herself was not

reluctant to be an intercessor when she realized that there was no more wine at the marriage feast. Whom did she ask for help? Her son, Jesus. And she did not ask in vain. When the shortage of wine was noticed, Mary interceded with a confidence greater than that of Queen Bathsheba. “When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever He tells you’” (*Jn 2:3-5*). At a word from his mother, Jesus performed the miracle, changing water into very delicious wine. She had the trust and confidence that He would not reject her prayer. And He did not.

Although, up to that moment, Jesus had no reason to believe that the Father was authorizing Him to perform deeds of power, He discerned in Mary’s request that the hour had finally arrived. He recognized that her spontaneous impulse of loving concern was inspired by the Spirit and, therefore, an expression of the Father’s will. Just as she had given birth to Jesus as a result of her obedient faith at the Annunciation, so now she was giving birth to His public ministry, as a result of the same docile trust. So great is the authority that a mother possesses over her son, that even if He is the Monarch and has absolute dominion over every person in His kingdom, the mother can never be a subject of her son. Now in heaven, Mary can no longer command her son; nevertheless her prayers are always the prayers of a Mother, and consequently most powerful to obtain whatever she asks.

The Genesis of the Holy Rosary

In the year 1214 the Rosary in its present form was given to the Church by St. Dominic who received it from the Blessed Virgin as a powerful means to convert the heretics and other sinners. Mary appeared to him several times and urged him to practice and preach the Rosary. Since then the devotion spread around the world with incredible and miraculous results. In numerous apparitions and private revelations Mary has again and again asked her children to pray the Rosary. In 1858 at Lourdes, Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous with a shining Rosary in her hand and both recited the Rosary together. On the occasion of the first apparition in Fatima on

13th May, 1917; Mary, who manifested herself carrying the beads in her right hand, requested that the Rosary be said every day and during the next four apparitions she repeated the request.

What is the Rosary after all? The Rosary is a Biblical Prayer. It is not only a Marian Prayer, but is Christological Prayer covering from Annunciation to Ascension. The Rosary is made up of two things: mental prayer and vocal prayer. In the Holy Rosary, mental prayer is none other than meditation of the chief mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ and of His Blessed Mother.

The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary

There have been numerous occasions in the history when people had recourse to the prayer of Rosary especially in difficult times. In the year 1571, the Turks under the leadership of Emperor Salim attacked the European countries. The Christian countries at that time suffered a lot due to the attack of the Turks. Finding no other way of defense, Pope Pious V declared a crusade against them. But the response was not encouraging. The war was between the mighty belligerent Turks and the weak Christian soldiers led by Emperor Don Juan of Austria supported by some Spanish and Venetian warriors. The papal army was too weak to do anything against their enemies. Those were moments of despair and impending failure. Pope Pious V belonged to the Dominican Order. Dominicans are particularly devoted to Holy Mary and the Rosary. While the crusade was drifting towards utter failure, the Pope announced the war of the Rosary against the enemies. The people gave whole hearted co-operation and support to his request. Several thousands of people recited the Rosary with great faith. The papal army that was about to retreat, got invigorated miraculously by the prayers. On 7th October, 1571 the weak papal army won an incredible victory over the mighty Turks at the creek of Lepanto in Greece.

In 1572, Pope Saint Pius V directed that an annual commemoration of Our Lady of Victory be observed on the first Sunday of October in remembrance and thanksgiving for the victory on that day over the Turkish

fleet. Pope Gregory XIII changed the name of the Feast to Our Lady of the Rosary, now celebrated on 7th October, the date of the battle. Referring to this, Pope Pius XII said, “We put great confidence in the Holy Rosary for the healing of evils which afflict our times. Not with force, not with arms, not with human power, but with Divine help obtained through the means of this prayer, strong like David with his sling, the Church undaunted shall be able to confront the infernal enemy.” (*Ingruentium Malorum*, 1951, # 15)

(To be continued...)

- *Cyril John*

“OF FAITH”

O the Faith of our Fathers handed down to us,
For it was they who taught us to know and love Jesus.
What would life be without our Saviour
We may have lost out on the greatest treasure!

Being nurtured from birth into a life of prayer,
And also how our faith to share.....

We are fortunate to possess that ‘Pearl ‘ most rare
That Christ our master spoke of, not to spare.

It is now our moral obligation
To spread ‘The Word’, let’s make a firm resolution.
So plant the seed where ‘ere we go
For some to water and Faith to grow.

Then God His abundance will let flow without measure,
If we share that ‘treasure’ with pleasure.
Be alert! now is the time, deter not to labour,
For the Lord is waiting to fill your cup, till it runneth over!!!

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- *Charmaine D’Souza*

LORD, HELP ME KEEP MY FAITH IN LINE

In good times it's easy to talk about faith. It's easy to see why we believe and encourage others to "keep the faith" when they're feeling down. But what about the times when we go through periods of prolonged suffering or surprise sickness and anxiety? During times of snares and deception that surrounds us? How do we keep the faith in all those tough times?

It is then, that we all find ourselves begging God to speak to us. Nothing happens. We pray over and over for Him to bring relief and change the scene. Nothing happens. We feel discouraged, depressed... and impatient. Why is He not answering our prayers? Why is He not showing Himself? We all have experienced this and may even be going through this situation right now. But those who have passed through these times and have emerged victorious will remember something: We grow in our faith, and it takes time. But the struggle strengthens us.

Our faith is not tested in the good times; our faith is tested during trials and times of challenge. When we ask, "Where are you, God?" and do not receive any reply, except to hear dogs barking or birds chirping, that's when we are left to decide. We can believe with all our heart, mind and soul that God is present with us in those moments - cultivating a more mature faith? Or we can decide He is not there, falling back on all the negative voices we have heard in the past? Or fall prey to the temptations that are at work in those moments. We take forward steps and backward steps (and side steps and missteps), but we keep growing when our number of forward steps become greater. And we learn to keep our faith in line – towards God.

3 Ways to Keep the Faith in Line

1. Lean into the Faith You Have

We need to choose to remain faithful and trusting when there is no visible finish line and no feeling of relief or joy. Lean into it and bear through the discomfort that comes from trusting in what you cannot see. This helps us strengthen our faith. To get to the next level requires a time of discomfort

while pushing forward. We will feel (and eventually see) the difference through patient endurance. “Here is what sustains the holy ones who keep God’s commandments and their faith in Jesus.”(Rev 14:12)

2. Pray for Strength and Guidance

During the discomfort, pray that God guides your steps and keeps you strong. Temptation will be very strong, swaying in and out, misleading us and falsely condemning us to give up, but pray right through it. “Watch and pray, that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt 26:41) And if you fall for it... which we all do at times... start again. Keep choosing God over and over and over.

3. Remain Planted in Good Soil

When you feel the struggle heavy on your back, bury yourself in more good soil. Go to church, celebrate the Eucharist, visit the Blessed Sacrament, read the Bible, put some encouraging messages where you can see them, attend the prayer service, pray with others and meditate on positive thoughts. **Stay in the Word.** The tough times will hit us, but we will emerge victorious in Christ. “But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit through perseverance.” (Lk 8:15)

Faith is a safety net in a challenging and stressful world. The absence of faith blinds us from the truth. Faith is the light at the end of the tunnel that we need to see and experience. It is very real, it fires up our whole being. It brings with it a new hope and a sense of trust in God. Faith keeps us connected to God and to one another and prayer is our communication line to heaven. We all have a light inside us, it is how we nurture that light that matters, and our faith is like that, it needs nurturing and then that little wavering light will become a blazing fire inside our heart.

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”

- *Roman Almeida*

TESTIMONIES - HOW WE LIVED THE THEME

This year's theme for MIPC is somewhat aligned with our Church theme - "Year of Faith". I do believe, help my unbelief. (*Mk 9:24*).

Like anyone else in the community, our theme for the year 2013 is like any other theme for previous years and sometimes even I forget to remember the theme and connecting scripture. Many of us who work in offices, factories or run own business may well understand about rules, regulations, targets, achievements and results in commercial terms. If we can understand so easily, why can we not understand our spiritual business, rules, regulations, targets, achievements and results to see how well we have fared on a month to month and year to year basis. I'm sure God would be more interested to see what we do, how do we do it and the net result of our actions, since He has blessed each one of us immensely with not just spiritual gifts and talents, but also material gifts and talents as well. These gifts and talents are not given to show others about our possessions, but rather, as we all know very well, they are given for good use and to yield fruits and benefits to others. So as we are almost at the end of this year, what did we do with the "theme" our Lord gave us for this year? It may be encouraging to know that almost all of us would have remembered the theme throughout the year, prayed and put into practice in some way or the other knowingly or unknowingly.

To live by faith was something rather strange as I thought being a Christian, am I not living by faith itself? Is not my faith in Christ a proof of living by faith? Well, it is all fine I thought, when I think to myself. But how do others knows that I live by faith and my faith is alive? What are the signs and proof of my faith? This I know is rather difficult as faith is something that we just cannot explain, discuss or tell others that we live, but it needs to be witnessed and seen by people around us with our actions of faith. One of the ways others can see my faith is my spiritual growth, the way I conduct myself, speech, behaviour, attitude to different life situations, family, community, work place and society. It is rather difficult, yet not impossible, to display some form of faith in action.

One of the ways I was helped by the Lord was to remain faithful to my personal prayer life throughout the year, come what may, though I might have missed on some occasions. Personal prayer helped me to have a stronger faith in the Lord, to trust the Lord for my day to day situations at home, work, society etc and led me to take appropriate decisions (sometimes decisions have gone wrong too).

Secondly, as we read in Romans, that Faith comes from what is heard (*Rom 10:17*). Not anything that is heard, but God's Living Word. This verse helped me to realize that if I have to have more faith, great faith, greater faith, it is important that I read God's Word daily and also ensure that I read the entire Bible in one year, as insisted by one of my Christian friends. As I started reading the Bible from Genesis, there were lot of obstacles, negative feelings, time constraints, etc. etc. However, the Grace of God helped me to persist. Sometimes, I used to sit late in the night to read the scriptures for an hour. Most of the year, I spent my afternoon lunch break under a neem tree, praying and reading the scripture for over 45 minutes and thus was able to catch up. On weekend's I spent little extra time and read little more. I've almost finished reading the whole Bible for the first time in my life in a systematic matter, only because of God's grace. In reading the Bible, I have been made aware of so much of my life in God and also warnings, discipline, correction, etc.

Thirdly, God's grace further helped me in spending lot of time in prayer. Prayer is something that one cannot just restrict to either morning or evening and forget for the rest of the day. Prayer is a lifeline and one needs to be online all the time with the Lord. Of course after my personal prayer in the morning, I used my travel time in the morning and evening and during the day (as I'm on outdoor duty) praying for others, family, world needs and for the Church, and especially our dear community members. As we all know of the traffic situation during the last several months, I never felt bored in any traffic jam, but rather used that time to pray for people in need and others, which gave me such a joy. Pray for others, and I assure you, others will pray for you. Don't expect anything in return, don't even mention to the person that you are praying, but you will see results, fruits, new life, joy and salvation in their lives. Now I continue to pray,

even while bathing, washing, cleaning, cooking, walking and during any free time. Why waste time, invest it in God's kingdom! As we read in the scriptures, Jesus is seated at the right of the Father and prays continuously for all of us especially for our Salvation.

Fourthly, we were helped by the Lord as a family to spend one hour of intercession every week which we started a few months ago. It is such a joy to see all family members sitting or kneeling together and praying for people that they interact with on a daily basis such as class mates, teachers, employers, colleagues, neighbours, friends, family members, church, priests, our country (both Oman and India), world peace and Salvation, etc and it is so encouraging to see children interceding so innocently and with a pure and contrite heart. Furthermore, we realized that by interceding together as a family, even our children learn to pray at a very early age, and when they grow up, they will surely continue to pray for others.

Fifthly, God's grace helped up to have daily family prayers (surely missed sometimes), reading scripture and interceding. This is another important factor that helped us to realize that if we pray together, we will remain united in spite of our disagreements, different opinions, views, plans and strategies. It is important to note that Lord Jesus, through His Father and the Holy Spirit is always present when two or three meet together in His name and for His Glory and keeps us bound and listens to our prayers.

God's grace also helped us to do things in faith such as surrender each other, our jobs, employers, friends, family, even our enemies to the Lord to be blessed by Him. As a family, we have often gathered together around the dinner table for our meals at least once a day, 3 to 4 times a week, with all electronic gadgets switched off; talking, discussing, and listening to each other. This is a beautiful venue to have a free chat with your spouse and children in a transparent and open way and this will lead our children to do the same when they grow up as what they learn at home, they will seldom forget.

We were helped by the Lord in another area too. Though it was difficult, I

used to try and come back home as early as I could, in order to join my wife for an evening walk, which used to last for about an hour. For over 6 to 7 months in this year, we have managed to do it. Also what we did was spend this time praying mercy rosaries for various intentions which not only helped us to use the time in a fruitful way (walk as well as pray), but also avoid talking about things that do not bring glory to God.

Well, since we still have about 50 days in this year, may we all be further enlightened by the Risen Lord and led by the Holy Spirit to live virtuously and in true Christian faith in whatever way we are called to do it. Let us not get discouraged, but rather be strengthened that we still have time and days this year, where we will have plenty of opportunities to walk in Faith, Live by Faith and tell the Lord that I do believe, help my unbelief.

May the Grace and Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with you all

- *A grateful MIPC member*

During 2008, I had an attack of “Atrial fibrillation” (AF) (my heart beat goes up exceedingly high and the BP drops very low). This can lead to several complications, if not attended to, immediately. Thank God, it was attended to, by efficient doctors. I had a second attack in 2010, again by God’s grace it was taken care of, as on both these occasions, I was with my family and there were people who took care of me late night. These attacks come to me with a warning/indication. I feel breathless, a tightness around my chest, restlessness and a very uneasy feeling (on both the occasions, I had this attack at night).

There was an occasion during this year, when I was alone in the house, I sensed that I was getting an attack of (AF). I always had faith, but was dormant. I had not exercised my faith, like the woman with the flow of blood in the gospel of *Mk 5:25* or like the centurion. I risked taking my car all by myself to see the doctor, I did not want to disturb my friends, as it was late night. The best thing to do was, to exercise my faith, at first I made a sincere prayer of repentance, and then went on claiming healing, by

the Blood and Cross of Jesus. I was saying it audibly, over and over. After 7 – 10 minutes, after continuous claiming of healing, coupled with faith, I felt normal and did not find the need to see the doctor that night.

The next day I saw my doctor, and everything was normal, and I was asked to continue my medicines as usual. I give all Glory to Lord Jesus, who has put me in a situation, and made me claim my healing.

- *Henry Sanjivi*

When the theme was announced, "LIVE BY FAITH", I had to do an introspection of myself and I found that in many areas of my life I lacked faith in God. I took this theme seriously and put it into practice and I realized that I was able to cope better daily in whatever I had to do, also to trust God in everything, it as not being easy. Many a time I used this acronym in my sharing F-Forsaking A-All I T-Take H-Him; now I always put it daily in my life, this has helped me to live the theme.

- *Philip Balfour*

WINDOW THROUGH THE PAST WEEKS

5th Sep 2013 - Bro. Vernon - 'The Armour of God'

'Put on the full armour of God' (*Eph 6:10-24*)- Verse 11 says, 'Put on the whole armour of God..'

Putting on means to wear on... we did not just stand in front of our wardrobe and the clothes fell on us...Verse 13 says, "Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the days of evil come, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." This is a real battle, and God provides help for us. How are we to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power? Paul says that we need God's armour. In

the physical battle, we have soldiers who put on the full armour of high tech weapons to fight against the enemies. In the same way, we need the full armour of God. Why? Because it is a spiritual battle against the devil. We are soldiers of Christ. We need weapons provided by God.

What are the armours of God we need to stand the ground? Paul is simply highlighting the characteristics of the armour we will need to survive in such a spiritual battle. If we want to be a good soldier of Christ in the world, then we need six weapons - truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation and the word.

19th Sep 2013 - Bro Godfrey - 'Our Walk of Faith'

Bro. Godfrey jogged our minds on recollecting how we have fared in the Walk of Faith that the members of the MIPC have been called to. Have we taken risks to bring our friends to Jesus, like the friends of the palsied man who let him down from the roof (*Mk 2:1-5*)? Faith is the essence of our Christian life, for it brings purification and sanctification to enable us to walk the walk, and talk the talk. Explicit faith is the key to our effectiveness in prayer and ministry. Faith helps increase our trust in God and brings about deep peace and obedience thereby making us a source of blessing to others like an overflowing stream. In this year of faith, we have been called to renew the gift of faith and testify to those around us. Faith inspires us to new initiatives and is the foundation on which we build, so that we can be safe in the day of tempest.

The members were then split into nine “workshop” groups where each one was given an opportunity to share on their experiences and lessons learnt during the past nine months as they made a determined effort to Walk in Faith. Everyone was enriched, and a brief synopsis of the testimonies and miracles, as a result of faith, was given by the group leader. Bro. Philip then led us into a time of worship with hearts full of gratitude to the Lord Jesus for His faithfulness to us.

26th Sep 2013 - Bro. Manuel Fernandes - 'Being a donkey for the Lord'

Just like God has a wonderful plan for each one of us for our prosperity, in

the same way, God is looking for people who will flow with His plans and purposes. He is searching for people who will make His purposes a top priority. He is looking for people who He can use, who submit under His authority and become useful for building his Kingdom. 'Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a "donkey."' (*Zec 9:9*) Why did he call for a "donkey"? He was the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords", the Savior of the world, didn't he deserve the best? Yes, but Jesus rather chose to identify with the common person. He took pride in being a humble servant.

Each one of us is called to be an ambassador for Christ, to bear true witness and proclaim the good news. **The donkey carried Christ's presence into the city.** We too are called to become bearers of God's Presence. We should submit unto God so that he could use us to access certain places, certain areas. He's looking for that desire within us. To be a donkey for Jesus simply means being a, "**BEARER OF GOD'S PRESENCE**".

17th Oct 2013 - Bro. Roman - 'Son of Man came to seek and save'

The Samaritan women at the well (*Jn 4:1-42*), the woman suffering from bleeding for 12 years (*Mk 5:25-34*), and the woman who searches for a lost coin (*Lk 15:8-10*) - these women in the Bible have so much that we can identify with.

The two deepest wounds of the human heart are Rejection and Shame. Just as Jesus encountered the Samaritan women, who was broken-hearted and rejected by society, to heal her and set her free; the same JESUS wants to set you and me free, today.

We too, many a time could get confused about Jesus as the Samaritan women did. She thought He was a Jew – she didn't know that He was the Savior of the world. She thought He was a thirsty pilgrim – she didn't know that He had come to quench the world's thirst and give eternal life. She thought that He was a tired traveller – she didn't know that He had come to give rest to the weary souls. (*Lk 19:10*) "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

24th Oct 2013 - Bro. Xavier – Healing & Conversion of Naaman

The story of Naaman, the army commander of King Aram, gives us an insight into the physical and spiritual healing of Naaman. Having failed with all options of getting healed from the dreaded disease of leprosy, though reluctant, he went to a distant land; to a place, belief and prophet he knew not. The need was to get healed. The physical healing he received opened his eyes to the greatness of the God he knew not before, which led to his total conversion, and giving up of a false God, turning to the 'True God of Life' he encountered through his healing.

Who brought him to know the true God? It was the servant girl, a person of probably least importance who was actually captured from the land of Israel, but proved to be a worthy instrument of the Lord. It was her faith and her conviction that her God can heal Naaman of his disease, and her willingness or fearless witnessing that ultimately brought about the conversion of this unbeliever.

What about us? Do we seize the opportunities that come our way to bear witness to our faith or do we simply speak our faith and cease to live?

31st Oct 2013 - Bro. Philip Balfour – Video of Lizzie Velasquez

Bro Philip showed a video of Lizzie Velasquez who was tagged on You Tube by millions of cyber bullies as the 'World's Most Ugly Woman' because of a birth defect which marred her physical features. Actually Lizzie happens to be a very beautiful, strong woman and because of her faith and trust in God, she was also able to overcome all the millions of negative remarks and forgave all of them.

Inner beauty is what counts, being beautiful on the outside is accepted, looking ugly because of a horrendous personality, and not being accepted, that's what ugliness truly looks like. Physical beauty always fades away, but it's our inner strength and beauty which truly transcends and always stays by our side and this can only come about with our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Bullies reflect what they have in their heart, so if

you feel like hating others for any reason, look at yourself first it may be you who is the problem. Our God looks at our heart and what lies within. Let us work towards our inner beauty which will count when we meet God face to face.

Late Bishop Fulton Sheen said "How different is the soul that has built for itself a sanctuary within, where his or her strength is God, regardless of what may happen on the outside".

CHILDREN'S BIBLE QUIZ – WHO AM I??

We just celebrated **All Saints Day**, so it's time for our MIPC children to test their knowledge, by answering the 12 questions as follows:

1. I am the apostle to the Gentiles whose letters you read in the Bible.
2. I am the Carmelite saint whose "Little Way" shows us how offering joys and sorrows daily can make us a great saint.
3. I am the woman who offered my veil to wipe Jesus' face when He was carrying His cross.
4. I am the missionary who made Ireland famous for its piety and learning.
5. I am the patron saint of music because I sang the praises of God while I was cruelly put to death.
6. I am the modern day saint who chose martyrdom rather than to be impure.
7. I am the valiant young girl who led France to victory over England and then suffered death by being burned at the stake.
8. I am the 'Little Poverino' whose order is now the largest in the world and who so resembled Christ in my life that I was privileged to bear His sacred wounds in my own body.

9. I am the 'Wonder Worker' of Padua and a Doctor of the Church.
10. I am the Patron saint of schools who was once called the Dumb Ox by my classmates but who wrote many treatises on the faith. My teacher was St. Albert the Great.
11. I am the saint who reformed the Carmelite Order and who became the first woman Doctor of the Church.
12. I am the simple parish priest who was tormented by the devil because my great sanctity brought my people closer to God.

Please send in your answers numbered 1-12 to oasis@mipcmuscat.org by 30th Nov 2013 or you may just drop it in our MIPC "All Purpose Box".

(It was disappointing to note that we did not receive any entries for the last Marian quiz and we do hope to see a lot of participation from our children for the current quiz above)

Pope Francis on love in the family (Oct 2013)

"The life of a family is filled with beautiful moments: rest, meals together, walks in the park or the countryside, visits to grandparents or to a sick person... But if love is missing, joy is missing, nothing is fun.

Jesus always gives us that love: He is its endless source. In the sacrament He gives us his word and He gives us the bread of life, so that our joy may be complete."



MIPC Prayer Meeting: Every Thursday at 8:00 pm in the Parish Hall, except on the second week of the month.

General Intercessory Meeting: Last Monday of every month at 8:00 pm.

Community Mass: Every Saturday at 9.00 a.m.