

PROCLAIM

A Magazine for Missionary Animation

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**Hope That Builds Bridges
Mary, Nation and Mission in
a Synodal Asia**



FABC
Federation of
Asian Bishops'
Conferences

“ YOU WILL SEE GREATER THINGS...”

XII Plenary Assembly of the FABC | Jakarta, Indonesia | 20–26 July 2026

*Bishops, delegates, partners, and friends gathered in prayer,
listening, silence, and Conversations in the Spirit.*



1 A SYNODAL CONVERSION



- Synodality is more than a method.



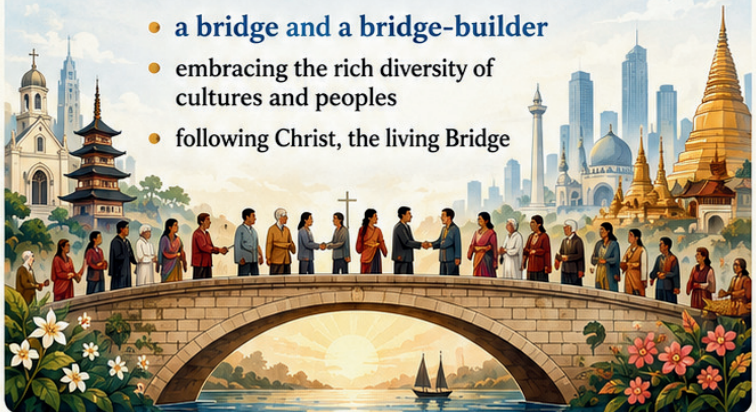
- It is a path of conversion directed toward mission.



- It renews hearts, relationships, and structures.

2 THE CHURCH IN ASIA IS CALLED TO BE...

- a bridge and a bridge-builder
- embracing the rich diversity of cultures and peoples
- following Christ, the living Bridge



3 TODAY'S CHALLENGES



polarization



migration



technological
change



ecological
degradation



shrinking
democratic
spaces



social and
economic
inequalities



clericalism

4 MISSIONARY RESPONSE



education



interreligious
dialogue



hospitality



care for our
common home



human dignity
and solidarity



Christ himself is the living Bridge.

Based on the Final Message of the XII Plenary Assembly of the FABC, 26 July 2026.



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Hope That Builds Bridges Mary, Nation and Mission in a Synodal Asia

We live in a time when building walls often seems easier than building bridges. Differences of religion, language, caste, culture and political conviction can quickly become reasons for suspicion and division. Hope, here, is not a luxury; it is a responsibility.

This issue of Proclaim, "Hope That Builds Bridges: Mary, Nation and Mission in a Synodal Asia," invites us to understand Christian hope not as mere expectation of a better future, but as a force that transforms relationships in the present.

Saint Paul reminds us that "hope does not disappoint us" because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). Christian hope does not ignore suffering or conflict; it enables us to face them without letting them define our future. A bridge is a fitting image of such hope. It recognizes a distance to be crossed, yet does not deny differences — it connects people across them, so that others may meet and journey together. This is also the missionary vocation of the Church.

Mary: A Woman of Hope

The Assumption presents Mary as a woman of hope. At the Annunciation she trusted God without knowing where her "yes" would lead. At Cana she noticed the need of others; at Calvary she remained faithful when all seemed lost. In the Upper Room she waited with the disciples for the Holy Spirit. Mary teaches us that hope is not passive waiting but faithful presence.

Her Magnificat proclaims a world where the lowly are lifted up, the hungry are filled and God remembers his mercy. Her hope is deeply spiritual yet attentive to human suffering. In her Assumption, the Church sees the fulfilment of Christian hope: the whole person destined for communion with God.

Nation: Freedom as Responsibility

In India, the Assumption coincides with Independence Day, giving Christians a special opportunity to unite faith with responsible citizenship.

Independence is not only a memory from 1947; every generation must give freedom new meaning.

Political freedom must grow into freedom from poverty, discrimination, violence, ignorance and fear. The ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity call us to protect the dignity of every citizen.

For Christians, love of country is expressed through service — education, healthcare, care for the vulnerable, empowerment of the poor, and efforts towards peace are all forms of nation-building.

In a society where identities can divide, Christians are called to show that deep faith and genuine respect can walk together. The Gospel's question remains decisive: Who is my neighbour?

Mission: Becoming Bridges

Asia's religious, cultural and linguistic diversity means mission cannot be separated from dialogue. Dialogue does not weaken Christian identity; it allows us to witness to Christ with humility, respect and friendship.

A missionary Church must become a bridge-building Church: between religions, cultures, generations, rich and poor, migrants and locals, and those who feel distant from her. Synodality strengthens this mission. A synodal Church listens to the Word of God, to the Spirit, to its members and to the world around it — especially to those whose voices are easily ignored. Mission becomes not something we do for others, but a journey undertaken with others.

Every generation chooses whether to build walls or bridges. Our families, parishes, schools and missionary institutions can become places where differences are transformed into encounter.

As we celebrate Mary's Assumption, India's freedom and the missionary renewal of the Church in Asia, may our hope become visible in listening, service, dialogue and reconciliation.

May our hope cross boundaries, heal divisions and build bridges.

+ Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

Bishop of Vellore Diocese

Director, PMO - India

Proclaim. Jul - Aug 2026

Church in India

A Mission of Service and Nation-Building

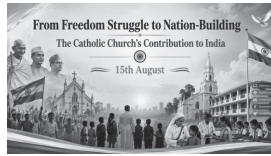
Fr Dr Antony Lawrence*

Everyone knows the major challenges affecting the nation and, consequently, the Church's evangelising mission in India today. Despite the economic growth brought about by the new liberalization policy — a claim some still debate — extensive evidence shows that the gulf between the rich and the poor keeps widening in our country. India's failure to recognize the foundational connection between economic growth and human development has contributed, as Amartya Sen would rightly contend, to the slow reduction of India's dreadful poverty levels. Social disparities persist in large parts of India. Untouchability persists, and one could even say that, from a certain point of view, it is thriving despite modern technologies. Indian society continues to be unfriendly toward women. Though some traditional forms of oppression against women are disappearing, new ones have taken their place.

The nation also continues to witness a growing number of interreligious conflicts. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, minority communities, their places of worship, and their institutions have become targets of attack by fundamentalist groups in this country. Not a day passes without news of an attack on Christian churches and institutions. Today, ecology, perhaps as never before, is at the forefront of global concern. Gone are the days when Indians thought that ecological issues were a luxury of the rich — a view rooted in ignorance of the close link between the ecological crisis and socio-economic and political justice. India's democracy remains largely formal in many respects and has therefore failed to remove injustices and caste inequalities. What paradigm of mission could the Church in India envisage against such a backdrop?

The Church's Mission for the Nation Envisaged

The future of the Church in India depends on the extent to which it engages in building a just human society — one where the poor, the marginalized, and women feel respected,



recognized, and able to enjoy their full dignity — and in upholding the diversity and collaboration of different religions and cultures. Such a mission of service to our nation is indeed the new paradigm for the Church's mission in India today. Already in 1964, Pope Paul VI made this appeal to the representatives of various religions gathered in Mumbai:

We must meet not merely as tourists but as pilgrims who set out to find God – not in buildings of stone but in human hearts... In this mutual understanding and friendship, in this sacred communion, we must also begin to work together to build the common future of the human race. We must find the concrete ways of organization and co-operation, so that all resources can be pooled, and efforts united towards achieving a true communion among all nations. Such a union cannot be built on universal terror or the fear of mutual destruction: it must be built on the common love that embraces all and has its roots in God, who is Love.



The entire Bible mirrors God's predilection for the weak and those on the peripheries. The biblical God is a loving God: He stands by the poor, His covenant partners, whenever they call out to Him, as the Psalms attest. He identifies Himself with the poor, His covenant partners, and His loyalty to them means that He does justice by them. Pope Francis states that "the kerygma has a social content" (EG 177). The option for the poor means an option for justice, not merely a preferential gesture. Pope Benedict XVI says, in *Deus Caritas Est*, that the option for the poor remains essential to the Church.

The Church of the poor? The Church in India needs to become a Church of the poor, not merely a Church for the poor. In the Church of the poor, the poor become its centre and its theological and foundational source; they become the Church's organizational — and even missional — source.

The noted South American liberation theologian Jon Sobrino observes that in a church for the poor, "the poor would not yet constitute a historical principle for the configuration of the Church, even though they may very well be principal recipients of the mission of that Church." Such activities may benefit them only in the moment but will keep them mere recipients of our social service. They would not help the poor become agents of their own empowerment, nor would they help the poor regain their dignity. The Pope puts it well: "This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives" (EG 192). Hence, according to Sobrino, the Church of the poor is "a Church that arises in solidarity with the poor, protests against their material poverty as being an expression of the world's sin, engages in a struggle against this poverty as a form of liberation, and allows itself to be affected by this poverty and its consequences as an expression of its own kenosis."

Towards Enhancement of Human Capabilities

In a powerful diagnosis, Rabindranath Tagore said: "In my view, the imposing tower of misery which today rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education." The role of education in the development and social progress of any nation is extremely critical. The absence of education muffles the political voice of the poor, leaving them unable to assert themselves or climb the social ladder. Feminist challenges loom larger today, given the rising incidence of violence, high rates of rape, and higher female mortality. The main culprit seems to be the gross neglect of female education and of women's health and nutrition. According to Amartya Sen, education in India is plagued by two major deficiencies: low coverage and poor quality. Most of our institutions, honestly, are concentrated in urban centres; the Indian educational system is thus astonishingly diverse yet tremendously negligent, both in its coverage and its quality. Another central necessity in alleviating poverty in India is health care. India's health care suffers from two problems: massive

inadequacy, and the near-absence of this issue from public reasoning.



The performance of the public sector in these two areas is far from satisfactory. The public sector suffers from corruption and accountability problems, which are the most basic reasons for the malfunctioning of public services in this country. Consequently, India has had to rely heavily on the private provision of education and health care. But we must recognize that privatization is an alluring shortcut — one that merely replaces one serious problem with another, no less grave.

Realizing, then, that education and health care play a foundational role in the lives of the poor and the underprivileged — alongside ensuring their political empowerment, helping them escape the traditional, stigmatized occupations that enslave them, and upholding their legal rights — the Church needs to re-examine its commitment to the education and health care of the underdogs of



society in rural areas. From the time of the foreign missionaries, the Church in India has rendered yeoman service to the nation in the fields of education and health care. It must continue this mission with even greater vigour, focusing strictly on rural areas rather than gravitating toward

urban centres to open institutions. The Church's education and health care institutions should never be profit-oriented; rather, their central focus should be the empowerment of the downtrodden and the abused of human history.

Joint Mission of All Religions for Nation-Building

Religious pluralism must be viewed as part of God's universal, mysterious saving plan, which escapes human understanding. Ample evidence in the Old Testament (Gen 12:6, 8; 14:18–20) points to the fact that the Jewish religion did not develop in isolation but was significantly influenced by Canaanite forms of worship. Israel's very conception of God, along with its religious worship and practices, evolved very much within the context of earlier religious traditions. The New Testament, too, contains a number of references showing the openness of Jesus of Nazareth toward other faiths (Mt 8:10; 15:28; Jn 4:23–24). With the

Second Vatican Council came a highly significant development in the Church's approach to other religions and cultures, recognizing the presence and action of the Spirit within them. This understandably calls for crossing borders in ways that enrich the mutual fulfilment of all religions and cultures in their efforts at peacemaking. To this end, the different religious traditions should be willing to set aside any absolute claim to possessing the full truth.

Even more urgent today is the shared mission of all religions toward the creation of a new humanity and the flourishing of nature — the New Humanism. Gone are the days when it was thought that a search for doctrinal commonalities among different religions would ensure harmonious and peaceful coexistence; experience has taught us that such an approach does not take interfaith dialogue very far. Pope Francis therefore calls our attention to the common issues affecting humanity today, which for him should be a point of convergence for believers of different religious traditions.



As he exhorts: "Sincere and humble worship of God bears fruit not in discrimination, hatred and violence, but in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and loving commitment to the welfare of all" (FT 283).

The Church's Engagement in the Public Space

None of this will be possible unless the Church in India is prepared to involve itself in the public sphere — in socio-political questions — toward building a new community of freedom, fellowship, and justice. The Indian Christian community should transcend its narrow concerns and turn its attention to the common plight of all citizens of the country in the pursuit of the common good. Because this pursuit does not rest solely with the state but also with religion, it is absolutely indispensable for the Church to engage in politics. Jesus' solidarity with the victims of socio-economic and political oppression was not passive; it led to confrontation with the religious and political establishment. His words and deeds denounced their oppressive structures, leaving them deeply disturbed.

How true, then, are the words of Pope John Paul II: "I am not the evangelizer of democracy: I am the evangelizer of the Gospel. To the Gospel message, of course, belong all the problems of human rights; and if democracy means human rights, it also belongs to the message of the Church." Pope Benedict XVI affirms categorically that although "the just ordering of society and the State is the central responsibility of politics," the Church "cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice... she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper." Despite such rich magisterial teaching, a sincere introspection tells us that the Church's involvement in politics has so far been limited, as Ambedkar rightly pointed out:

Missionaries feel they have done their duty when they convert an untouchable to Christianity. They do not look after their political rights. I find this is a big fault in Christians, because they have not entered into politics up till now. It is difficult for any institution to survive without political support.

Conclusion

In the larger interest of the national community — particularly its weaker sections — and in keeping with its self-understanding as a sacrament in service to all humanity, Christianity in India should rise above narrow religious margins and think seriously about the extent to which it can intervene in the political process with a broader mindset, following the example of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Bishop Belo, Nobel Peace Prize laureates who were moved by the plight of their respective nations and, inspired by Christian faith and vision, involved themselves in the political process. But before that can happen, a "culture of participation" in the political process needs to be cultivated among Christians, for which appropriate political education and formation are urgently required, right from the beginning. We need to motivate our youth and laity toward active involvement in politics, which Pope Francis calls a "lofty vocation."

*** The writer, a priest of the diocese of Kumbakonam, is the president of St Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, and teaches Missiology and Systematic Theology. ♦**

Bridges, Not Barriers

The Missionary Call of the Asian Church

*Fr Merlin Rengith Ambrose**

1. Introduction: The Identity and Imperative of the Asian Church

The Christian faith was born on Asian soil. From the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee, the early disciples ventured forth and disseminated the faith across the world. Yet, across much of modern Asia, Christianity is often perceived as an alien institution.

To fulfil her divine mandate in the third millennium, the Church in Asia, and specifically the Church in India, is called to undergo a profound missionary conversion. She must transition from being an isolated fortress or self-preserving minority to becoming a dynamic bridge of encounter, dialogue, and reconciliation. The imperative to build "bridges, not barriers" is grounded in the foundational nature of the Church, enshrined in canonical tradition, and articulated in magisterial documents from the Second Vatican Council to the present day.

Barriers to Overcome

Colonial suspicion & "foreignness"
Internal caste & rite divisions
Socio-political polarization

Bridges to Build

Dialogue with the Poor (Justice)
Dialogue with Cultures (Inculturation)
Dialogue with Religions (Peace)

2. Canonical and Magisterial Foundations for Mission

Mission is not an optional activity appended to the Church's pastoral routine; it is the core expression of her inner life.

2.1. Canonical Imperatives: The Duty of the Faithful

The Code of Canon Law (1983) codifies this ontological reality.

Canon 781 prescribes: "Since the whole Church is by its nature missionary and the work of evangelisation must be held as a fundamental duty of

the people of God, all the Christian faithful, conscious of their responsibility, are to assume their part in missionary work." This universal duty is anchored in baptism. Canon 211 reinforces this obligation for every believer, stating that "all the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in the whole world." Furthermore, Canon 786 defines the specific aim of missionary action: "to implant the Church among peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root." In the context of India, where Christians comprise approximately 2.3% of a population exceeding 1.4 billion, the canonical requirement for missionary action (Canons 781–792) remains a living priority.

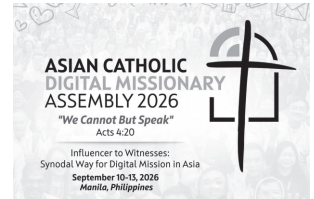
2.2. Conciliar and Papal Teaching

This canonical framework reflects the teachings of the Second Vatican Council:

i) Ad Gentes (1965): Asserted that the Church on earth is "missionary by its very nature," deriving its mission from the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

ii) Redemptoris Missio (1990): St. John Paul II re-energised this commitment, emphasising that "mission renews the Church, revitalises faith and Christian identity, and offers new enthusiasm and new incentive," while warning against an internal, inward-looking posture.

iii) Ecclesia in Asia (1999): Promulgated by St. John Paul II in New Delhi, India, this document serves as a blueprint for the continent. It envisions Asia as the primary horizon of God's saving work in the third millennium, calling for a proclamation of Jesus Christ that respects the intuitive, symbolic, and relational richness of Asian minds.



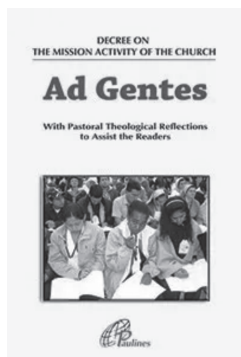
iv) Evangelii Gaudium (2013): Pope Francis called for a Church that goes forth, a Church with "open doors" that acts as a field hospital, breaking down walls of self-referentiality and clericalism.

3. The "Triple Dialogue": FABC's Framework

To build effective bridges in a continent marked by multi-religious reality, vast cultural diversity, and deep socio-economic disparities, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) formulated a foundational methodology: the "Triple Dialogue." This core pastoral approach consists of dialogue with the poor, dialogue with Asian cultures (inculturation), and dialogue with religions (interreligious dialogue). The Church in Asia carries out her missionary calling not through aggressive proselytisation but through continuous, humble dialogue with Asian realities.

3.1. Dialogue with the Poor (Integral Human Development)

Asia is home to billions of people who live under conditions of systemic poverty, marginalisation, and economic exploitation. A



Church that seeks to build bridges must stand with the marginalised. Mission here takes the form of diakonia, education, healthcare, rural development, human rights advocacy, and environmental stewardship. The Church witnesses to Christ by defending human dignity and promoting integral

human development.

3.2. Dialogue with Asian Cultures (Inculturation)

Faith must become culture if it is to be fully received and lived. As the FABC noted, if Asian Churches do not discover their authentic identity — expressing the Christ-experience through Asian ways of thinking, praying, and living — they will



remain alien institutions. Inculturation is the incarnation of the Gospel in indigenous cultures and, simultaneously, the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church; however, it must never go against the magisterial teachings of the Church.

3.3. Dialogue with Asian Religions (Interreligious Harmony)

Asia is the birthplace of the world's major religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Confucianism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Building bridges requires recognising the seeds of the Word (*Semina Verbi*) present in these venerable traditions (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). Dialogue does not mean compromising one's faith or abandoning the proclamation of Christ; rather, it is a mutual journey toward truth, marked by deep respect, shared ethical commitments, and collaborative peacebuilding.

4. Contextualising the Mission in the Indian Church

India offers a vital testing ground for this missionary vision. The Church in India possesses a rich heritage, an intricate multi-ritual structure, and an environment of acute socio-religious dynamics.

Dimension:

Ritual Heritage

Realities in the Indian Context

Co-existence of three *Sui Iuris* Churches: Latin, Syro-Malabar, and Syro-Malankara.

Missionary Bridge-Building Mandate

Fostering inter-ritual harmony, mutual respect, and collaborative mission.

Socio-Economic

Realities in the Indian Context

Substantial presence of Dalit, Adivasi (Tribal), and economically marginalised communities.

Missionary Bridge-Building Mandate

Standing as a prophetic voice against caste discrimination, empowering the exploited through education and social justice.

Cultural & Religious

Realities in the Indian Context

Deeply religious ethos (Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Tribal faiths).

Missionary Bridge-Building Mandate

Fostering a Christian theology that resonates with Indian culture, incorporating indigenous liturgical art expressions, and embracing ashram-style reflective spirituality, without departing from magisterial teachings.

Socio-Political

Realities in the Indian Context

Rising communal tensions, anti-conversion laws, and polarisation.

Missionary Bridge-Building Mandate

Acting as peacemakers, defending the secular and constitutional framework of India, and promoting fraternal citizenship.

5. Overcoming Barriers: Challenges and Pastoral Orientations

The call to build bridges inevitably encounters formidable obstacles, both from external socio-political realities and from internal institutional inertia.

External Challenges

Anti-conversion legislation
Communal polarization

Pastoral Responses

Transparency & genuine charity
Neighbourhood interfaith forums

Internal Challenges

Institutional self-preservation
Clericalism & exclusion of laity

Pastoral Responses

Shift from maintenance to mission
Synodality (Canons 208; 211)

5.1. Countering Misconceptions and Anti-Conversion Narratives

In contemporary India, the Church often faces suspicion regarding her intentions. Anti-conversion laws in several states and hyper-nationalist narratives frequently accuse Christian educational and medical institutions of using social services as a front for forced or fraudulent conversions.

To dismantle these barriers, the Church can:

i) practice complete transparency in her humanitarian work, emphasising that Christian charity (*caritas*) is driven by the love of Christ, offered unconditionally to all, regardless of creed or caste;



ii) emphasise the distinction between "proselytisation" (coercive or manipulative inducement) and authentic evangelisation through "attraction" (witnessing to the Gospel through love, service, and respectful dialogue). The idea that "the Church grows by attraction, not proselytising" was notably emphasised by Pope Benedict XVI and later echoed by Pope Francis to distinguish respectful spiritual sharing from aggressive conversion tactics;

iii) foster interreligious platforms at the grassroots level, such as neighbourhood dialogue groups where Christians and their neighbours of other faiths address common social issues — pollution, poverty, youth addiction, and civic infrastructure — together.

5.2. Overcoming Clericalism and Empowering the Laity

Missionary action cannot be restricted to priests and religious brothers or sisters. Canon 785 §1 explicitly highlights the critical role of catechists and lay leaders in missionary work. Furthermore, Canon 208 affirms the fundamental equality of all Christ's faithful regarding their dignity and action in building up the Body of Christ.



...Continued on Page 19

Hope That Builds Bridges

Fr Dr Yesu Karunanidhi*

Hope is one of the most needed words of our time, but also one of the most misunderstood. It is often reduced to positive thinking, emotional consolation, or confidence that circumstances will improve. Christian hope is deeper. It is the courage to face reality without surrendering to despair, and a grace that enables us to enter history with responsibility and love. True hope does not isolate people within private dreams. It brings them together. It creates pathways where walls have been erected. It listens across differences, restores trust, and makes reconciliation possible. It is hope that builds bridges.

The Bible is a long testimony to this kind of hope. Its stories unfold amid slavery, exile, conflict, failure, occupation, persecution, and death. Yet biblical faith insists that suffering does not have the final word. God remains faithful, creates new beginnings, and opens a future even when human beings see only closed doors.



I. The Biblical Journey of Hope

The Exodus is one of Scripture's foundational narratives of hope. Israel cries out under oppression, and God hears the cry of the people (Ex 3:7-8). Their hope becomes a journey from bondage to freedom, from fear to covenant, and from slaves to a community with a shared vocation.

Biblical freedom is therefore never merely freedom from oppression; it is freedom for communion, justice, worship, and responsibility. At Sinai, a liberated people are taught how to live together. Hope becomes social. It creates a community in which the stranger, widow, orphan, and poor are not forgotten.

The prophets carry this hope into periods of national collapse. Jeremiah buys a field while Jerusalem is under siege, a symbolic act declaring that "houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land" (Jer 32:15). Isaiah speaks to an exiled people of a highway in the wilderness



and streams in the desert (Isa 40:3; 43:19). Ezekiel sees a valley of dry bones rising into life (Ezek 37:1-14).

These visions declare that God can generate possibility within devastation. Prophetic hope is truthful, demanding, and public. It exposes injustice, calls for conversion, and announces restoration.



The Psalms give this hope the language of prayer: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? Hope in God" (Ps 42:5). The psalmist speaks from within anguish. Biblical hope permits lament. Indeed, lament is one of hope's most honest forms, because it refuses both denial and resignation. To lament before God is to believe that suffering deserves an answer, and that the present condition need not remain permanent.

In the New Testament, hope receives its decisive centre in Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus is God's future entering the present. The blind see, the excluded are welcomed, sinners receive mercy, the hungry are fed, and enemies are called into reconciliation.

Every act of healing and every shared meal becomes a bridge — between God and humanity, the righteous and sinners, Jews and Samaritans, the powerful and the forgotten.

The cross seems to destroy this hope. Yet the resurrection reveals that God's fidelity is stronger than violence, sin, and death. Christian hope is therefore paschal: it passes through the cross; it does not go around it.

Saint Peter speaks of a "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3). Saint Paul writes that "hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). Hope is trustworthy because it rests not on our strength but on the faithfulness of God.

II. Hope as a Theological Virtue

This is why the Church calls hope a

theological virtue. Together with faith and charity, hope is given by God and directs the human person towards God. Faith receives God's promise; hope waits for its fulfilment; charity begins to embody it.

Hope desires the Kingdom of heaven and eternal life, placing confidence in the promises of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Yet this orientation towards eternity does not diminish earthly responsibility. On the contrary, it gives believers the freedom to work for justice without turning any political system, ideology, leader, or institution into an absolute.



Christian hope differs from mere optimism. Optimism expects favourable outcomes because circumstances appear promising. Hope remains possible when circumstances are dark. Optimism

depends on temperament; hope depends on grace.

Optimism says, "Things will probably improve." Hope says, "God is faithful, and therefore love, truth, and goodness are never wasted." Such hope produces endurance. Paul links suffering, endurance, character, and hope (Rom 5:3-5). Hope is not fragile enthusiasm; it is disciplined trust.

Hope also protects us from two temptations: presumption and despair. Presumption expects salvation without conversion or responsibility. Despair concludes that neither the self nor the world can change.

Authentic hope stands between them. It trusts grace and accepts responsibility. It prays and it works. It waits and it acts. It knows that the Kingdom is God's gift, yet also hears Christ's command to become peacemakers, servants, and neighbours.

III. The Secular Meaning of Hope

The secular meaning of hope is also vital today. Even outside explicit religious faith, hope names the human capacity to imagine a future different from the present and to act towards it.

Societies cannot survive by law, administration, technology, or economic growth alone. They need a shared confidence that justice is possible, that dialogue is meaningful, and that cooperation can overcome division.

A society without hope becomes suspicious and fragmented. Communities retreat into fear. Political differences become personal enmity. Religious identity becomes defensive. Digital culture often rewards outrage rather than understanding. The vulnerable are treated as burdens, and public life becomes a contest for domination.

In such a climate, bridge-building is not sentimental. It is a civic necessity.

A bridge does not erase the distance between two sides. It acknowledges the distance and creates a way across it. Hopeful bridge-building therefore does not deny disagreement; it makes disagreement human. It allows people to speak truthfully without humiliating one another. It creates spaces where memories can be heard, wounds can be named, and trust can gradually be rebuilt.

IV. Practicing Hope

Ultimately, hope is not a slogan but a way of living. It sees the world's wounds clearly and still chooses communion. It refuses to let fear define identity or hostility determine the future.

For Christians, this hope is grounded in the risen Christ, nourished by the Holy Spirit, and exemplified by Mary. For society, it becomes the courage to imagine and construct a more just common life.

The task before us, therefore, is not merely to possess hope but to practise it. Hope must become a bridge between faith and public responsibility, between communities and cultures, between generations, between memory and possibility, and between suffering and action.

When hope takes flesh in listening, service, justice, and reconciliation, it becomes more than an interior virtue. It becomes a social force.

In a divided world, the most convincing proclamation may be a bridge patiently built. And every bridge built in truth and love becomes a sign that another future is possible.

*** The writer is a priest of the Archdiocese of Madurai, currently serving at the Pontifical Academy of Theology, Vatican City. ♦**



Mary: Mother of Hope and Companion of Missionaries

*Fr Dr I Raymond Joseph**

Introduction

The history of our Church reveals with crystal clarity that Mary, the mother of Jesus, holds a unique place in the salvation history initiated by God from the time of Creation. She can be called not only the mother of God — as Elizabeth proclaimed (cf. Lk 1:43), the blessed woman from Ein Karim — but also the mother of Hope for all who believe in the values of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. She is also the faithful companion of missionaries who proclaim the Gospel and are engaged in the mission of evangelization throughout the world. Scripture and the teachings of the Church consistently present Mary as a model of hope and a guiding presence for all who dedicate themselves to the ministry of evangelization. In this article, let us explore the various indicators that enable us to call Mary the mother of Hope and companion of Missionaries.

Mary's Role in Fulfilling the Proto-Evangelium of the Book of Genesis

After the fall of the first parents, the Creator God pronounced punishments on each of them. At that moment He declared to Eve, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15). The Hebrew text of this verse speaks of "the seed of the woman" bruising the head of the serpent. The Septuagint (Greek) text speaks of "he (the descendant of the woman)" bruising the head of the serpent. Interestingly, the Vulgate (Latin) translation of the verse speaks of "the woman" bruising the head of the serpent. My choice in this article is the Vulgate translation, and the purpose of bringing "the woman" into view here is to point to the hope that God decided to give to all humanity through a woman who might represent Eve after the fall of the first parents. This woman stands not only for the

destruction and annihilation of the serpent — the personification of evil and satanic powers — but also for the future hope of salvation. This is the Proto-Evangelium

(the First Gospel) declared by God to the first parents. The Gospel writers, especially John, saw the fulfilment of this Proto-Evangelium in Mary, when she accepted to be the mother of the Redeemer, who could save humanity from its sins (cf. Mt 1:21). In order to stress the role played by Mary in God's plan of salvation, John seems to place the word "woman" in the mouth of Jesus instead of the word "mother," both at the beginning (cf. Jn 2:4) and at the end (cf. Jn 19:26) of his Gospel. This choice — Jesus calling his mother "woman" — can be seen in connection with the Proto-Evangelium, "the woman will crush your head" (Gen 3:15), uttered by God at the beginning of the Book of Genesis and fulfilled in Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was the one who participated in the struggle of Jesus for the salvation of humanity, from the beginning to the end of his ministry.

Mary, the Collaborator in the Salvific Work of Jesus

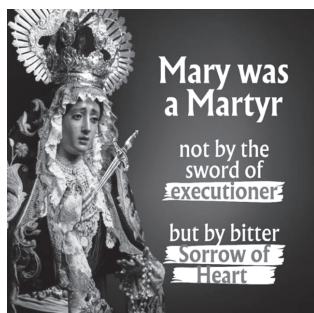
The first information we find in the New Testament regarding the role of Mary in the redemptive work of Jesus appears in Paul's letter to the Galatians. This letter was likely written around AD 54–56 — ten years before the first Gospel came to exist. In it, Paul says: "When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). Interestingly, instead of naming the mother of Jesus, Paul simply says that "Jesus was born of a woman." The word "woman" here, referring to the mother of



Jesus, can without hesitation be connected with the Proto-Evangelium of Genesis. Paul speaks of God sending Jesus at the time of fulfilment, which points to the promise of salvation that God gave to Eve at the beginning of creation. According to the Gospel of Matthew, the angel of the Lord, appearing to Joseph, likewise informed him that Mary would give birth to a son who was to be named Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins (cf. Mt 1:21). In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel, appearing to Mary, instructed her that she would conceive and give birth to a son, and that she was to call him Jesus, meaning "redeemer" or "saviour." In all these instances, we find the undisputable role that Mary, the mother of Jesus, plays in the salvation of the world. God destined Mary to be a collaborator in his plan of salvation by giving her the esteemed role of mother of the Redeemer.

Mary, the Mother of Hope for Salvation

Hope is one of the three theological virtues that shape and motivate every Christian toward salvation, both in this present life and in the life to come. Mary's entire life was shaped by her hope in God, for she not only trusted completely in God's promises but also cooperated fully with the salvific plan entrusted to her. When the angel Gabriel announced that Mary would conceive the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:26–38), even without fully understanding God's plan of salvation, she responded with remarkable faith: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). This response demonstrates hope rooted in absolute confidence in God's faithfulness. Mary's hope was



also strengthened by her belief that "nothing will be impossible with God" (Lk 1:37). Her trust became the foundation of her discipleship. Even when God's plan for the salvation of the



world seemed difficult or mysterious, she never abandoned hope. The supreme expression of Mary's hope appears at the foot of the Cross. While many disciples fled in fear, Mary stood beside Jesus (cf. Jn 19:25–27). Watching her innocent Son suffer and die, she continued to believe in God's promise of salvation. Paul's words to the Romans — "hope does not disappoint us" (Rom 5:5) — can be understood through the very example of Mary.

Mary, Model of Salvation through Suffering

Mary's hymn of praise, the Magnificat (cf. Lk 1:46–55), is a declaration of hope in God's salvific plan. She rejoices because God fulfils his promises to save the people of Israel — scattering the proud, bringing down the powerful, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry, and sending the rich away empty. Her song reflects the hope of the poor, who place their complete trust in the mercy of God that will make their salvation possible. The presentation of Jesus in the Temple also reveals Mary's hope in God's salvation. Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul (cf. Lk 2:34–35). Instead of losing faith in God, Mary accepted suffering as part of God's saving plan. Her acceptance echoes Simeon's own proclamation as he held the child Jesus in his hands and declared that he had seen in him the salvation that was a light to the Gentiles and the glory of the people Israel. Her hope for salvation endured despite the sorrow she would experience throughout her life. Mary's hope did not collapse even at Calvary. Standing beneath the Cross, she shared in Christ's redemptive suffering (cf. Jn 19:26–27). Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, explains that Mary's hope reached its highest point at Calvary, where she participated through faith in the mystery of redemption (RM Nos. 9, 18). Her perseverance teaches Christians to remain hopeful even during suffering, persecution, and apparent failure.

Mary, the First Missionary

Mary — who fulfils the promise of salvation given by God in the Proto-Evangelium of Genesis,

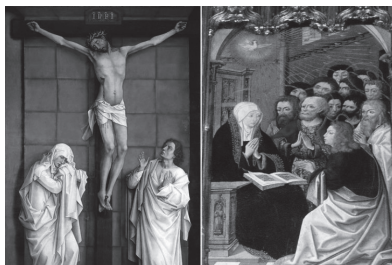
who collaborates in the salvific work of Jesus, and who models salvation through suffering — can also be called the first missionary of the Gospel of Jesus. She was the first person to carry Christ to others. After accepting the call of the angel Gabriel to conceive Jesus in her womb, she immediately travelled to the Judean hill country to visit her relative Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39–45). This



journey is often described as the first missionary journey, because Mary brought Christ's presence to another person. Every missionary work begins with an encounter with Christ, and then with bringing him to others. When Elizabeth met Mary with the child in her womb, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and acclaimed Mary as the mother of the Lord. Even John the Baptist, from his mother's womb, leapt with joy at Mary's arrival with the baby in her womb. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth demonstrates that authentic evangelization is rooted in the love and humility Mary was ready to show, and in the service she was eager to render to her relative in her time of need.

Mary, a Companion to the Early Missionaries

Besides being the first missionary, Mary can also be called a companion of missionaries. At the wedding feast of Cana (cf. Jn 2:1–11), Mary accompanied Jesus in his mission. Though many guests attended the wedding, it was Mary who noticed the needs of the new couple and interceded on their behalf. Her words to the servants — "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5) — remain a timeless missionary message. Every missionary is called to lead people to obedience to Christ rather than to themselves. Mary truly collaborated with Jesus in his mission. It is in this sense that we should understand the words of the woman in the crowd: "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you" (Lk 11:27). The Acts of the Apostles reports Mary's presence with the apostles, praying with them before Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14). This shows her continued interest in the mission of Jesus, even after his death,



resurrection, and ascension. Mary's first mission after the Ascension was to gather the disciples of Jesus, who had scattered after his death, and bring them to the upper room. Her next mission was to accompany the disciples and the infant Church in the upper room, praying with them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Her presence reminds missionaries that evangelization must always begin

with prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit. Mary's accompaniment of the disciples — the Church's early missionaries — was a great encouragement for their kerygmatic mission.

Mary's Accompaniment in the Evangelical Mission of the Church

The Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* presents Mary as the model of the Church in faith, charity, hope, and perfect union with Christ (LG No. 63). As the Church continues Christ's mission, Mary accompanies the Church with her maternal care. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN No. 82), called Mary the "Star of Evangelization." Just as a star guides travellers through the darkness of night, Mary guides missionaries toward Christ and strengthens them in proclaiming the Gospel. Pope Francis speaks of Mary as the mother who accompanies the Church on its missionary journey. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG No. 286), he writes that Mary is "the mother of the evangelizing Church" and accompanies missionary disciples with tenderness and love. She encourages Christians to go forth joyfully and

courageously to share the Good News. St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, a zealous devotee of Mary, taught that devotion to her always leads believers closer to Jesus. In his book *True Devotion to Mary*, he explains that Mary forms authentic disciples who become effective apostles, because she continually directs them to Christ.

St. Teresa of Calcutta entrusted her entire missionary work to Mary, believing that Mary's humility, silence, and love enabled missionaries to become instruments of God's compassionate love among the poor.

...Continued on Page 17

The Assumption and the Dignity of the Human Person

Sr Dr Metti Amirtham, SCC*

Some memories settle quietly into us and never leave. One such memory returns to me often.

A Memory That Stays

I remember standing in a hospice ward where an elderly woman lay dying. Cancer had reduced her once-strong body to frailty. Tubes and monitors surrounded her, keeping silent watch like a strange metallic liturgy. Beside her sat her daughter, gently cradling a hand that felt like little more than bone.

Leaning close, she whispered, "Amma, you are still beautiful to me."



It was not a sentimental attempt to comfort a dying mother. It was something deeper—a confession of faith. In that simple whisper lay a profound truth: suffering may wound the body, but it can never erase its dignity.

Since that day I have listened to countless lectures on theology, read books, and reflected on many doctrines of the Church. Yet none has helped me understand the mystery of the Assumption more profoundly than that whispered sentence in a hospice room.

What Makes a Body Beautiful?

What makes a human body beautiful? Is it youth, strength, health, or physical perfection? Or is there a beauty that survives illness, ageing, and even death?

The Feast of the Assumption

Every year, on 15 August, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At first glance, it appears to be a feast centred entirely on Mary. Yet, if we listen carefully, it speaks not only about her destiny but also about ours. It proclaims that the human body is not an accident of nature or a temporary shell to be discarded, but an integral part of the person whom God has created,



redeemed, and destined for eternal glory.

The Assumption answers a question every generation continues to ask: What is a human being worth?

The World's Measure of Worth

Our world often measures worth by appearance, productivity, intelligence, or success. Bodies that are young and attractive are celebrated, while those marked by age, illness, or disability are easily overlooked. Human dignity becomes subtly linked to usefulness. Once usefulness disappears, dignity itself seems negotiable.

The Gospel offers a radically different vision.

God's Yes to the Flesh

Christianity begins not with what human beings achieve but with what God chooses. In the mystery of the Incarnation, the eternal Word became flesh. God embraced our humanity completely. In Jesus Christ, He accepted a body that experienced hunger and fatigue, friendship and rejection, tears and suffering. If God Himself chose to dwell in human flesh, then every human body possesses a dignity beyond calculation. The Assumption of Mary is inseparable from this mystery.

Body and Soul into Glory

In 1950, Pope Pius XII solemnly defined what the Church had believed and celebrated for centuries: that Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (*Munificentissimus Deus*). The Church proclaims not merely that Mary's soul entered heaven, but that her whole person was glorified.



Think for a moment about that body. It welcomed the eternal Word into history. It carried Jesus in her womb, stood faithfully beneath His Cross, and shared the ordinary joys and



hardships of human life. It was this same body that God welcomed into heavenly glory.

The Assumption tells us that heaven does not reject our humanity; it fulfils it.

Rooted in Scripture

This conviction is deeply rooted in Scripture. Genesis tells us that God formed the human person from the dust of the earth and breathed into that body the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). We are not souls imprisoned within bodies but an inseparable unity of body and spirit. St Paul develops this vision when he reminds us that our bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) and proclaims the hope of bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44). Christian salvation is not the escape of the soul from the body but the redemption of the whole person.

Mary's Assumption is the first flowering of that promise. What Christ accomplished through His Resurrection and Ascension has already borne fruit in His Mother. The Second Vatican Council therefore calls her "a sign of sure hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God" (Lumen Gentium, 68). She stands before us as a living sign of the destiny God prepares for all who belong to Christ.

Pastoral and Practical Implications: Looking with New Eyes

If Mary's glorified body is God's answer to a culture that measures worth by appearance or utility, then the Assumption is profoundly practical. It demands that we look at every human being—and ourselves—with the reverence of that daughter in the hospice room.

1. Reclaiming Pastoral Presence

Pastoral care cannot be reduced to administrative efficiency or spiritual abstractions. It is deeply incarnational:

- **In Hospitals and Nursing Homes:** It means sitting beside bodies marked by illness, stroke, or dementia, acknowledging that these frail hands and weary faces remain sacred temples of the Spirit.



- **In Vulnerable Communities:** It compels us to stand beside persons with disabilities, the elderly who fear being a burden, refugees, migrants, the transgender, and the poor. Defending their dignity from conception to natural death is an act of theology, proclaiming that no one's body is disposable.

2. Making Peace with Our Own Bodies

Many people struggle under impossible standards of physical perfection or grieve the gradual loss of youth and health. The Assumption invites a gentle self-reconciliation:

- **Grace Lived in Frailty:** Our bodies—with their scars, grey hair, chronic pain, or physical limitations—are not obstacles to holiness, but the exact place where grace is lived out day by day.



- **Instruments of Communion:** As St. John Paul II emphasised in his Theology of the Body, it is through these concrete, imperfect bodies that we love, serve, forgive, suffer, and build community.

3. Living as Pilgrims of Hope

Every hospital corridor, maternity ward, classroom, and family home is a holy place where the image of God quietly dwells. When we look past physical breakdown to affirm a person's eternal worth, we echo the truth of the Assumption.

We are reminded of St. Irenaeus's timeless insight: Gloria Dei vivens homo—"The glory of God is the human person fully alive"—and, in Christ, destined to be fully glorified. Until that day, may we learn to whisper over every broken and ageing body the truth revealed in that hospice room: You are still beautiful, because you are loved by God and destined for glory.

*** The writer is a nun of the Cross of Chavanod, belonging to the Province of Trichy. Currently she serves as the animator of her religious community and teaches Systematic Theology. ♦**

Pope Leo XIV on Charismatic Renewal

Charismatic Renewal Must Serve the Local Church

Pope Leo XIV encouraged members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to pursue their mission by placing themselves at the service of dioceses and parishes

In his first meeting with members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), Pope Leo XIV focused on five "key aspects" of the spirituality that characterizes the movement.

"God has indeed blessed your communities with so many gifts, including spiritual vitality," Leo declared before thousands of charismatic Catholics who gathered with him on May 30 in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican.

"The years following the Second Vatican Council were a time of great expansion and growth," for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Leo continued, as he proceeded to cite several messages from his predecessors, such as St. Paul VI — who, in 1975, encouraged the CCR to bear witness to spiritual renewal in a secularized world — or St. John Paul II, who urged members of the movement to communicate "zeal for the Gospel to those around you."



Leo XIV also cited Benedict XVI, who, in 2008, highlighted that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has reminded the Church of the enduring relevance of the charisms — or gifts — of the Holy Spirit. He concluded with Francis, who regarded the CCR as a "flood of grace."

Five key aspects

1. Baptism in the Spirit: Pope Leo XIV highlighted that the path of faith of the CCR "has its source in the personal experience of the Holy Spirit, which has enabled the grace of baptism to become effective within each of you, leading you to a clear awareness of God's love." "The Holy Spirit has likewise allowed you to taste

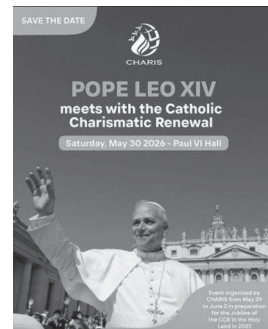
the sweetness of Christ. For you, too, life has changed since that moment. God ceased to be a mere idea and became the real and ultimate expression of fatherhood. His Spirit has brought inner reconciliation, peace, and freedom from worldly attachments and the oppression of sin," which animates one "to be witnesses and heralds of his love, bringing his consolation to people oppressed by a sense of emptiness and loneliness."

2. Prayer of praise: Leo XIV also underscored that it is "from this captivating experience of the Holy Spirit that a new life of prayer began, taking the form of a new capacity for spontaneous and sincere dialogue with God, and a new openness to praise, worship, and offering thanksgiving."

"Worship and praise, which are so characteristic of your gatherings, are essential aspects of Christian prayer, and you have helped them to be rediscovered and brought them back to the forefront in recent years," Leo noted.

3. The Word of God: "The Holy Spirit inspired the revealed word of God and is also the one who keeps it ever alive and active in the Church, causing it to resonate in the hearts of believers, especially in the liturgy," the pope continued. So it is that "Scripture has therefore become for you a wonderful source of spiritual nourishment that enlightens and comforts. It is similarly a source of discernment for guiding your daily choices and gives substance to communal prayer, enabling you to address the Lord with words inspired by God himself."

4. Communion: Leo XIV highlighted that "the Holy Spirit is the wellspring of communion" and recalled that Pope Leo XIII encouraged praying to the Holy Spirit for Christian unity. "You clearly appreciate the significance of this invitation, for



you have seen that unity in the Church is the fruit of the Spirit," Leo XIV emphasized.

"It is the Spirit who creates harmony among the various charisms and components of the charismatic renewal, as well as with our brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations," Leo observed.

5. Charity: "The renewed presence of the Spirit has awakened in you a new capacity to love, inspired by divine charity itself. This love is directed toward God and toward your brothers and sisters, and inspires closeness and compassion, especially for those who are suffering," he added.

"Many works of charity for those in need, both in spirit and in body, have sprung from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I invite you, then, to keep alive this love for the poor, which reveals the true face of God," he continued.

Concluding exhortation

After thanking them, Pope Leo XIV encouraged the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to pursue their mission by placing themselves "at the service of the dioceses and parishes, offering your experience and methods of evangelization. Faithfully follow the guidance of your priests and, in your communal discernment, listen to the voices of wise people, even if they do not belong to your groups," Leo exhorted.

In his final exhortation, Pope Leo called upon the members of the movement to "cultivate harmony and cooperation among the communities to which you belong, taking care to never give way to the desire for self-promotion, or the pursuit of power or personal prestige."

--- **Walter Sancez Silva: www.ewtnnews.com** ♦

Continued from Page 13: Mary: Mother of Hope and Companion of Missionaries

Mary's Relevance for Missionaries Today

Modern missionaries face innumerable challenges — secularism, religious intolerance, political persecution, social untouchability, cultural diversity, and more. Mary's example provides strength for these challenges. Like Mary, missionaries are called to listen attentively to God's Word, to say "amen" to God's call, to trust his providence, to serve the children of God with humility, and to persevere through suffering. Mary reminds missionaries that success is measured not by numbers but by faithfulness to God's call. Her hidden life in Nazareth demonstrates that quiet service and daily fidelity are precious in God's eyes. Missionaries who cultivate devotion to Mary discover in her a loving mother who intercedes for them and strengthens their resolve in mission. Through the imitation of her virtues, they deepen their relationship with Christ and become more effective witnesses of the Gospel.

Conclusion

Mary is truly the mother of Hope, because her entire life reflects unwavering trust in God's promises. From her birth to her death, from the

cave in Bethlehem to the cave of Calvary, from the Annunciation to Pentecost, Mary's life reveals unwavering faith, hope, and total surrender to God's call and plan, despite uncertainty and suffering. From the moment she gathered the disciples in the upper room to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit, she has continued to inspire the mission of the Church. As the first disciple of Christ, Mary is relentless and untiring in teaching the disciples of her Son, Jesus, to trust in the impregnable and undisputable love of God. As a faithful companion, she accompanies missionaries in their work of evangelization. The Bible presents Mary as a woman of profound faith, hope, obedience, and charity. The Church's theologians and Magisterium consistently affirm her indispensable role in the life and mission of the Church. By following Mary's example, missionaries today can proclaim Christ with courage, humility, and joyful hope, confident that the same God who guided Mary continues to guide his Church until the end of time.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Sivagangai, is a professor of Scripture, Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai. ♦**

Law to Give Vatican City State Constitutional Identity

Leo XIV promulgates a new Fundamental Law replacing the 2023 text in order to address the need "to take account of new requirements of governance and of several important legislative changes introduced in recent years." The new law incorporates into a single legislative text the amendment already introduced by the Motu Proprio of November 2025, under which the presidency of the Pontifical Commission is no longer reserved exclusively to cardinals.

On Thursday, 31 July, the Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Pope Leo XIV signed the new Fundamental Law of Vatican City State, which, as explained in its preamble, responds to the need "to take account of new requirements of governance and of several important legislative changes introduced in recent years." The law enters into force immediately, replacing the previous Fundamental Law, which had been in effect since 13 May 2023.

New provision regarding the presidency of the Pontifical Commission

Promulgated by Pope Leo XIV at the beginning of his pontificate, the new Fundamental Law confirms and incorporates these amendments, which concern the legislative, executive, and judicial functions of the State. With regard in particular to the legislative function, it brings together in a single legislative text the amendment introduced by the Motu Proprio of 19 November 2025 concerning the presidency of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, the body that exercises both the legislative and executive functions.

The 2025 Motu Proprio and the new Fundamental Law

On that occasion, the Pope repealed Article 8, paragraph 1, of the previous Fundamental Law of Vatican City State, which had provided that only cardinals could serve



as President of the Pontifical Commission. That office is now held by Sister Raffaella Petrini, who also serves as President of the Governorate. Article 8 of the new Fundamental Law now states that: "The Pontifical Commission is composed of Cardinals and other Members, including the President, appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for a five-year term."

Executive and judicial functions

Concerning the executive function, the new law confirms the role of the Governorate, whose organisational structure contributes to the proper mission of the State and serves the Successor of Peter, to whom it is directly accountable. At the same time, it further clarifies the responsibilities of the President and the Secretary General, as well as their collaborative relationship. It also underscores the institutional nature of the office of the Secretary General, thereby indicating that the role may be entrusted to more than one person.

As regards the judicial function, Article 22, paragraph 1, expressly reaffirms that the Law establishes the legal framework governing the judicial bodies on the Judicial System. Thanks to the significant reforms introduced in recent years, that law fully guarantees the proper administration of justice.

A law that gives the State its "constitutional identity"

With this carefully structured approach, the new Fundamental Law—which, like its predecessors, is intended, as stated in the preamble, "to give constitutional identity to Vatican City State," its powers, and the exercise of the functions deriving from them—remains the foundation and point of reference for all other legislation of the State, while reaffirming the unique character and autonomy of the Vatican legal order.



The mission of the Governorate

The preamble also reiterates "the role of the Governorate, which contributes to the proper mission of the State and is at the service of the Successor of Peter, to whom it is directly accountable."

As in the past, the preamble concludes, "the governing bodies and all those who, in positions of responsibility and animated by a true ecclesial

spirit, carry out their stable service for the State, are entrusted with the exercise of all the powers pertaining to the territory defined by the Lateran Treaty and to the buildings and areas where institutions of the State or of the Holy See operate and where, by virtue of international law, personal and functional guarantees and immunities are in force."

- - - **Alessandro Di Bussolo :**
<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news> ♦

Continued from Page 08: The Missionary Call of the Asian Church

There should be a move from an over-institutionalised, priest-centric model to a truly synodal one. Lay men and women, especially youth, must be formed, empowered, and entrusted with leadership in: i) public life, politics, and advocacy for social justice; ii) the digital continent, utilising modern media to share the Gospel and foster dialogue; and iii) professional sectors such as law, medicine, technology, and journalism, serving as ethical witnesses to Christ in secular spaces.

5.3. Institutional Renewal: From Maintenance to Mission

Centuries of operating elite schools, colleges, and hospitals have sometimes led to a risk of "institutional self-preservation," prioritising administrative maintenance over apostolic zeal. While these institutions have rendered immense service to the nation and the Catholic Church, they must continually re-examine their core orientation. Our educational institutions need to produce courageous agents of social transformation and ethical integrity. Our healthcare facilities must be accessible to the poorest of the poor. The Church must regularly prune her institutional structures to ensure they remain dynamic instruments of mission.

6. Conclusion: The Pilgrim Church as a Bridge of Hope

In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, St. John Paul II made a prophetic assertion: "Just as in the first millennium the

Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent of Asia" (EA, 1). This vision is not an invitation to triumphalist expansion, but a summons to incarnational presence and loving service. For the Church in India, being a missionary Church means being a bridge-builder. It means standing at the intersections of caste, creed, language, and economic class, reflecting the reconciling love of Jesus Christ. By embracing the canonical duty of mission (Canon 781), living out the FABC's Triple Dialogue, and engaging Indian culture with humility and depth, the Indian Church fulfils her high calling.

The Church becomes what she is called to be in the light of Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*, 1): a sacrament — a sign and instrument — of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. In a world increasingly fragmented by walls of division, the Asian Church stands as a beacon of hope, testifying that Christ came not to erect barriers, but to tear down the dividing walls of hostility and build a single family of faith, justice, and peace.

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SAINT OF THE MONTH – I

Pier Giorgio Frassati

06 April 1901 – 04 July 1925

Feast day: 04 July

Pier Giorgio Frassati was born on 6 April 1901 to Adelaide Ametis and Alfredo Frassati in Turin, in northern Italy — also home to another saint, Don Bosco, patron of young people. His father founded and directed the influential newspaper *La Stampa* and later served as a senator and Italian ambassador to Germany; his mother was a painter. Despite growing up in a prominent, well-off family, Pier Giorgio's religious faith developed quietly but deeply throughout his childhood and youth, and he was drawn early on toward simplicity and service rather than privilege.

At an early age, Pier Giorgio joined the Marian Sodality and the Apostleship of Prayer, and obtained permission to receive daily Communion — a rare privilege at the time. He developed a deep spiritual life which he never hesitated to share with his friends; the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin were the two poles of his world of prayer. At age 17, he joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society and dedicated much of his spare time to serving the sick and needy, caring for orphans, and assisting demobilized servicemen returning from World War I. He often gave away his bus fare, coat, or shoes to those he met in need, walking home rather than admit what he'd done.

He decided to become a mining engineer, studying at the Royal Polytechnic University of Turin, so he could "serve Christ better among the miners," as he told a friend.

Although he treated his studies as his first duty, they did not keep him from social and political activism. In 1919, he joined the Catholic

Student Foundation and Catholic Action, and became an active member of the People's Party, which promoted the Church's social teaching based on the principles of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. He was also a professed member of the Third Order of St. Dominic and, on 28 May 1922, was formally received into the Dominican Order as a layman, taking the name Girolamo in honor of Savonarola. The Dominican way — prayer, study, and the preaching of the Gospel — shaped his life in the world.



Pier Giorgio was a strong athlete and skilled mountaineer, and he loved bringing friends along on his adventures. He helped found a lighthearted group of companions who called themselves the "Tipi Loschi" ("Shady Characters"), with whom he hiked, skied, and played practical jokes late into the night. On mountain treks he would contemplate the mysteries of God and the beauty of creation; his motto, scrawled on the back of a photograph shortly before his death, was "Verso l'alto!" — "To the heights!" He spent hours at Mass and in Eucharistic adoration, but just as many in the company of the less fortunate, often summing up his faith in a single line: "Jesus comes to me every morning in Communion, and I return the visit

by going to serve the poor."

Service was just one expression of his faith in action — he also marched and worked for justice. Echoing *Rerum Novarum*, he would often say, "Charity is not enough; we need social reform." Throughout his late teens and early twenties he advocated for religious liberty, human dignity, and workers' rights, and he was twice roughed up by fascist Blackshirts for his outspoken opposition to their movement.

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Proclaim. Jul - Aug 2026

Teresa of Jesus Jornet Ibars

09 January 1843 – 27 August 1897

Feast Day: 26 August

Imagine a cold, snowy day in the heart of Spain. An elderly woman stumbles, and with no one nearby to help, her life seems to hang in the balance. Suddenly, a young woman full of passion and compassion rushes forward and catches her mid-fall. This young woman is none other than Teresa Jornet Ibars.



have ended her aspirations altogether. Instead, it redirected them. Her spiritual director, the Venerable Saturnino López i Novoa — whom she met through the introduction of Father Pedro Llacera — encouraged her to turn her attention to the elderly of the region, who were often left without proper care or companionship in their final years.

Teresa Jornet Ibars was born on 9 January 1843 in a small town in Lleida to farmers Francisco José Jornet and Antonieta Ibars. She had two sisters, María and Josefa — the latter became a Vincentian religious in Havana — and a brother, Juan, whose three daughters later joined the congregation Teresa would found. Her great-uncle was Blessed Francisco Palau, brother of her maternal grandmother, whose own example of religious life likely shaped her early spiritual formation.

From childhood, Teresa showed a strong concern for the poor of her area, often bringing them to her maternal aunt Rosa's home so they could receive proper care. She later moved elsewhere in Lleida to live with another aunt. Trained as a teacher, she devoted herself to educating disadvantaged children, yet she felt a deeper calling stirring within her — one that reached beyond minds to hearts and souls.

At nineteen, feeling drawn to monastic life, Teresa applied for admission to the Poor Clares near Burgos in 1868, but the anti-clerical laws of the period barred her from entering religious life. She instead became a member of the Secular Carmelites in 1870.

The death of her father, followed by a severe illness that confined her to her home for a prolonged period, might

Acting on this call, Teresa opened her first house in Barbastro in 1872, aided by her sister María. On 11 October of that year, she and María moved to Barbastro together with their friend Mercedes Calzada i Senan. On 27 January 1873, Teresa was formally vested in the religious habit, taking a new name in honor of St. Teresa of Ávila — the official founding date of her congregation, the Little Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly. She was appointed the order's first superior. The home she established offered the elderly not just shelter, but genuine care, comfort, and companionship — a radical commitment at a time when the aged poor were often left to fend for themselves.

The congregation's motherhouse opened in Valencia on 8 May 1873. Teresa was formally confirmed as superior in 1875 and made her perpetual profession on 8 December 1877. Her zeal for the mission never wavered: she traveled tirelessly across Spain and beyond to establish new houses, and in 1887 she was named superior general of the entire order. By the time of her death, she had founded more than fifty houses dedicated to the care of the abandoned elderly — an extraordinary institutional legacy built in barely a quarter-century.



In 1897, a cholera epidemic swept across Spain. Despite her own failing

health, Teresa personally tended to the sick and dying, refusing to spare herself even as exhaustion overtook her. She eventually retired to the order's house in Liria, where she spent her final months. She met with her spiritual director, Novoa, for the last time on 15 July 1897. Weakened further by tuberculosis, Teresa died on 26 August 1897 in Liria, leaving behind a congregation that would go on to serve the elderly across multiple continents. Her remains stayed in Liria until they were transferred to Valencia on 1 June 1904, and were reinterred at the same site on 25 August 1913.

In recognition of her extraordinary life of charity, Teresa was beatified by Pope Pius XII in 1958 and canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1974. She became known to the world as Saint Teresa Jornet

Ibars, an enduring inspiration for anyone drawn to serve society's most overlooked members. Her life stands as a profound testament to the power of love and compassion in action, and her commitment to providing care and dignity to the elderly captures the very essence of Christian charity.

So the next time you come across an elderly person in need, remember the selfless work of Teresa Jornet Ibars. Be the hand that reaches out in aid, the shoulder upon which one can lean, and the heart that understands.

Sources:

<https://catholicsaints.day>;
www.smp.org/resourcecenter;
www.fatherlawrence.com

Continued from Page 20: Pier Giorgio Frassati

He balanced joyful outings with friends, family obligations, and religious commitments with his greatest passion: charitable service to the poor and marginalized, much of which he carried out in secret, often depleting his own allowance to help those he visited in Turin's poorest neighborhoods.

His faithful engagement on behalf of the poor ultimately cost him his life. While nursing his ailing grandmother, he likely contracted poliomyelitis from one of the sick people he regularly visited. Symptoms appeared suddenly, and though his family initially mistook his exhaustion for a passing illness, his condition worsened rapidly. He died on 4 July 1925, at the age of 24, less than a week after falling ill. Because he had done so much of his charitable work in secret, his wealthy family was astonished when his funeral procession drew not only the elite of northern Italy but thousands of homeless, sick,

and impoverished people lining the streets of Turin — many of whom the Frassati family had never known their son had helped.

To many, Pier Giorgio seemed to live an "ordinary" life — an average student, a devoted churchgoer, a loyal son, a healthy sportsman, a good and happy friend. Yet the way he lived that ordinary life was truly extraordinary.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified him on 20 May 1990, calling him the "Man of the Beatitudes." On Sunday, 7 September 2025, Pope Leo XIV canonized him. His canonization affirms what his life already showed: holiness is possible in youth, in friendship, in

study, and in service to the poor.

Sources:

www.eucharisticrevival.org;
<https://frassatiusa.org>;
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www.vaticannews.va



STORY

What the Windshield Wipers Taught

One rainy afternoon I was driving along one of the main streets of town, taking those extra precautions necessary when the roads are wet and slick. The wipers beat back and forth in a steady rhythm, and the tires hissed softly against the pavement. Outside, the world had turned the color of pewter — gray sky, gray road, gray puddles gathering at every curb. I gripped the wheel a little tighter and slowed for a yellow light.

Suddenly, my son, Matthew, spoke up from his relaxed position in the back seat. "Mom, I'm thinking of something."

This announcement usually meant he had been pondering some fact for a while, turning it over quietly the way children do, and was now ready to expound all that his six-year-old mind had discovered. I smiled to myself and adjusted the rearview mirror so I could catch a glimpse of his thoughtful little face. I was eager to hear.

"What are you thinking?" I asked.

"The rain," he began, watching the drops race sideways across his window, "is like sin, and the windshield wipers are like God wiping our sins away."

I felt chill bumps race up my arms. For a moment I couldn't respond — I just kept driving, letting his words settle over me like the rain settling over the windshield. Where had this come from? He was six. He didn't know theology, didn't know the words "atonement" or "grace." And yet here he was, watching wipers clear a windshield and seeing, somehow, the whole gospel in miniature.

"That's really good, Matthew," I finally managed.

Then my curiosity broke in. How far would this little boy take this revelation? I glanced at the



wipers again, still sweeping steadily left and right, and decided to press a little further.

"Do you notice how the rain keeps on coming?" I asked. "What does that tell you?"

Matthew didn't hesitate one moment with his answer. He said it as simply as if he were telling me his favorite color: "We keep on sinning, and God just keeps on forgiving us."

I don't think I said anything else for a while. I just drove, and let the wipers do their quiet work, back and forth, back and forth, clearing the glass again and again no matter how much rain fell. It never seemed to grow tired of the task. It never refused. Drop after drop came down, and every single time, it was wiped away.

I will always remember this whenever I turn my wipers on. What struck me most wasn't just the cleverness of a child's comparison — it was the truth underneath it. We are so quick to assume that our repeated failures will eventually exhaust God's patience, that there must be some limit to His mercy. But Scripture tells us otherwise. His mercies are new every morning. He does not grow weary of forgiving those who come to Him with honest, repentant hearts.

In order to see the rainbow, you must first endure some rain. Sin will come, again and again, like storm clouds we cannot always control. But grace comes just as faithfully — sweeping across the glass of our hearts, clearing our view, making it possible to see clearly again.

We must continually come to the Lord and seek His forgiveness. And just as surely as the wipers answer the rain, He will answer us.

Source:

[www.christiansgod@com]

(<https://www.christiansgod@com>)



News Roundup

Zayed Fraternity Award Nominations Open

Nominations are now open for the eighth Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, which recognizes people and groups advancing peaceful coexistence. The prize traces its roots to the 2019 Abu Dhabi meeting between Al-Azhar's Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb and Pope Francis, where the two signed the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. Entries can be submitted through the award's website until October 1, 2026. Named for UAE founder Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the honor carries a \$1 million prize and celebrates his legacy of humanitarian work and inclusivity across religion, gender, race, and nationality. Each year it spotlights contributors to interfaith dialogue and global solidarity. (Vatican News, 21/08/26)

Pope Taps Notre Dame Experts as Advisors

The first American-born pope has appointed three scholars linked to the University of Notre Dame as consultors to the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, part of a broader shake-up at the social-justice-focused office. The new advisors are Clemens Sedmak, an Austrian social ethics professor who directs Notre Dame's Nanovic Institute; Fr. Emmanuel Katongole, a Ugandan theology professor specializing in African theology; and Kathryn Koch, CEO of asset manager TCW and a Notre Dame trustee. They join eight other consultors named August 18, including four from Italy and others from Burkina Faso, Switzerland, Australia, and India, all tasked with advising the dicastery

within their fields of expertise. (National Catholic Reporter, 18/08/2026)

Manipur Violence Injures Ten Amid Unrest

Fresh clashes broke out in Manipur after police used tear gas and sound grenades to disperse Naga Christian protesters demanding arrests over the killing of six Naga men. At least ten people, including three security officers, were hurt when the crowd threw stones and bricks. The six Naga men were reportedly abducted in May by Kuki militants, allegedly in retaliation for the earlier killing of three Kuki Baptist leaders; their bodies were discovered in June, reigniting tensions between the two Christian-majority communities. (UCA News, 21/08/2026)

Karnataka Church Demands Probe Into Deaths

Catholic leaders in Karnataka are calling for an independent judicial inquiry after Forest Department personnel shot and killed three men — Antony Swamy, John Rose Peter, and Anthony Kumar — in a protected forest in Chamarajanagar district. Officials say the men were suspected poachers found with a firearm and animal meat, but their families dispute this, pointing to forensic evidence suggesting close-range shots. The killings sparked protests in Hanur, with one victim's wife filing a murder complaint against the forest staff. While the state has ordered a magisterial inquiry and the human rights commission is investigating, church leaders argue only a judge-led inquiry can ensure accountability. (UCA News, 21/08/2026)

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

July 2026: *For respect for human life*

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

August 2026: *For evangelization in the city*

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.



FABC
Federation of
Asian Bishops'
Conferences

“ BRIDGES OF HOPE FOR ASIA ”

Final Message of the XII Plenary Assembly of the FABC | Jakarta, Indonesia | 20–26 July 2026

*The Church in Asia returns home inspired to listen deeply,
open doors, cross boundaries, and accompany all people
with humility and hope.*



1 BRIDGES WE ARE CALLED TO BUILD



trust and dialogue



peace amid conflict

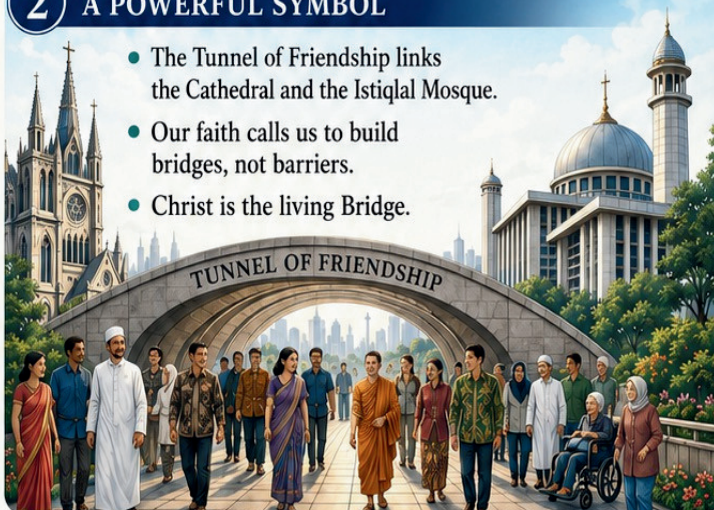


compassion for the
poor and excluded



hope for
young people

2 A POWERFUL SYMBOL



- The Tunnel of Friendship links the Cathedral and the Istiqlal Mosque.
- Our faith calls us to build bridges, not barriers.
- Christ is the living Bridge.

3 OUR COMMITMENTS



stronger communion
among local
Churches



walk with
neighbor-religions
and cultures



listen to the
wisdom of
Asia's peoples



walk with the
poor and
vulnerable



embrace
ecological
conversion

4 HOW WE RETURN HOME



listen
deeply



open
doors



cross
boundaries



accompany
all people



serve with
humility
and hope

*Let us walk together with the sure hope
of seeing greater things.*

Based on the Final Message of the XII Plenary Assembly of the FABC. 26 July 2026.





In Mary's Assumption, the Church sees the Fulfilment of Christian Hope

MARY A SIGN
OF HOPE,
CONSOLATION
FOR ALL

POPE LEO XIV
ANGELUS, 15 AUG 2026



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