

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

An historical Ordination ceremony in Bangalore Archdiocese!

Who expected 14 deacons would be ordained to priesthood in one year? Yes it is a fact! Do you think this is a mass production of priests?! But it is a mass formation of priests! It used to be maximum 4 or 5 priests in a year in the past years. But this year the Archdiocese boasts with 14 deacons ordained to the Holy Order by the Archbishop Bernard Moras who encourages vocation to priesthood, on 18.5.2011 at St.Francis Xavier Cathedral here at



Bangalore

1. Frs. Adrian F.C Mascarenhas,
2. Anand Gnana Xavier,
3. Anthony Mahendran G,
4. Antony Peter J,
5. Anthony Pravin Rajan G,
6. Benedict Rajesh A,
7. Gabriel Christy,
8. Justin Durairaj,
9. Lourdu Xavier Santhosh,
10. Maria Louis,
11. Peter C,
12. Pius Arun Kumar N,
13. Pradeep Kumar Z and
14. Sebastian R.

We wish them fruitful PRIESTLY ministry and happy life.

Do you know on what basis or criteria young men are ordained to priesthood?

This concept differs from seminary to seminary. In some formation houses, intellectual formation is given prominence, in some other seminaries, spirituality of the candidates is taken into consideration, in few others, spirituality of the religious congregation for which seminarians are preparing for priesthood is taken. However, the Church demands overall formation of candidates to the priesthood. I would rather emphasise on the attitudinal and spiritual formation based on good conduct more than intellectual formation.

But it is startling and shocking to know in some dioceses and congregations, caste, language and rite of the candidates are taken as criteria for seminarians to be ordained. Favouritism, nepotism, parochialism, regionalism were found in the medieval times. But the Church today is now getting reversed to the modern times as well. The consequence of this sort of system leads to negative result in the Church. Hence, the newly ordained priests all over the world need to be cautious not to give in to hero worship, groupism, materialistic attitude, desire for temporal mobility of life, pleasure seeking mentality, pride of aristocratic priesthood, priestly jealousy etc. Would you agree to the fact the Father John Maria Vianny priesthood is almost totally forgotten?

Some years ago, during an annual feast of one of my previous parishes, I was receiving many priests who came for the feast. I met one young priest who was not in his cassock. I asked him, "Are you not joining us for the con-celebration?" He replied, "No". I asked him "why"? That nursery priest of 2 years said casually, "Father, this is the time to enjoy, I am young, I came just to see, we must enjoy".

This shook me for a minute. I began to think, what is enjoyment for priest? Dressing? Eating and drinking with friends? Sensual pleasures? Gathering new gadgets? Touring with friends? Playing about? Joining sensational groups? No, certainly not. For new priests, the great entertainment is *parish ministry*. To be with parish flock along with parish priest in the spirit of obedience, prayer and service is the real enjoyment. People expect great things (creativity, activeness, zealous service, kindness, sobriety, gentleness, humility, role model for youth and so on) from new priests. They must understand that they are called for all people in line humility of St.Paul, "I become all for all". When one is ordained to the priesthood, he must remember, he is anointed, he is to heal and to sanctify souls by his living examples. Avoiding parochial groups both of people and priests will bring joy to him. Standing for the Mission of the Church must be his top priority. He is meant for everybody. (*This priesthood is ministerial...which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in strict sense of the term a service. It has been instituted entirely for the good of men and communion of the Church... The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all...* **CCCNo.1551 Pg 298**)

The new priests must delete from their minds the attitude of falling at feet of elders just for the sake of post, power and property. They must be very objective in their dealings with elders, people and friends. Today, Church requires priests with respect for senior priests, service conscience, and prayerful zeal for souls. Bangalore archdiocese for example, is a huge diocese with 4,10,000 Catholics. The faith is still alive today just because our forefathers have nurtured our faithful with great zeal for souls in this archdiocese (leave alone the fact that thousands have left for protestant sects in big number in the last 10 years for the reason they have found un-exemplary life of priests and laity and that they were alienated in their own parishes) But the vast majority who are of Tamil speaking people often are neglected and denied their spiritual and cultural rights. In many new and old parishes in Bangalore city, Tamil service is out rightly and wilfully denied by authorities and by other language people

of those parishes. This is not pastoral. Penetrating into reality will bear witness to this fact. God of Israel heard the cry of His people and liberated them through the loving and zealous leadership of Moses. The same God of Israel is watching and listening to the cry of His people all over the world. Hence we need priests with real zeal for Christ and Christian faithful must be taught the right values. Dalit Christians in TN, AP, Kerala and other States are least respected not only by lay Christians but even by priests-pastors and bishops.

We are sure the newly ordained priests not only in Bangalore but all over the catholic Christendom would be zealous enough to love all language and sect of people equally with the mind of Christ in order to transform the human society. The whole Church relies on them for the salvation of souls.

Prayer of Our Beloved Holy Father for priests

"To the Most Holy Virgin I entrust this Year for Priests. I ask her to awaken in the heart of every priest a generous and renewed commitment to the ideal of complete self-oblation to Christ and the Church which inspired the thoughts and actions of the saintly Curé of Ars. It was his fervent prayer life and his impassioned love of Christ Crucified that enabled John Mary Vianney to grow daily in his total self-oblation to God and the Church. May his example lead all priests to offer that witness of unity with their Bishop, with one another and with the lay faithful, which today, as ever, is so necessary. Despite all the evil present in our world, the words which Christ spoke to his Apostles in the Upper Room continue to inspire us: "In the world you have tribulation; but take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Our faith in the Divine Master gives us the strength to look to the future with confidence. Dear priests, Christ is counting on you. In the footsteps of the Curé of Ars, let yourselves be enthralled by him. In this way you too will be, for the world in our time, heralds of hope, reconciliation and peace!"



~~ From the Letter of Pope Benedict XVI Proclaiming the Year for Priests during the 150th Anniversary of the death of Saint John Vianney

Fr.J.A.Nathan

Editor

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IMPORTANT FEASTS IN JUNE 2011

1. Feast of Ascension of Our Lord 5.6.2011



The **Ascension of Jesus** is the Christian teaching found in the [New Testament](#) when the [resurrected](#) Jesus was taken up to [heaven](#) in his resurrected body (Act.1:2-11) in the presence of eleven of his [Apostles](#), occurring 40 days after the resurrection. Jesus ascended to his Father and his heavenly throne, and [now sits](#) at the right hand of [God the Father](#) in heaven. An [angel](#) told the watching [disciples](#) that Jesus' [second coming](#) would take place in the same manner as his ascension, that is, He would descend in bodily form. This is also described in other Biblical passages.

Biblical accounts

- [Epistle to the Romans](#) 10:5-7 (c. 56-57)
- [Acts of the Apostles](#) 1:1-11
- [Gospel of John](#) 20:12 Refers to Jesus returning to the Father.
- Some interpret 'Receive the Spirit' of [John 20:22](#) as a possibly meaning that Jesus was then already ascended and glorified on the late Sunday of resurrection.
- [First Epistle of Peter](#) 3:21-22 Jesus has ascended to heaven and is at God's right side.\
- [Epistle to the Ephesians](#) 4:7-13 refers to Jesus ascending higher than all the heavens.
- The [First Epistle to Timothy](#) 3:16 describes Jesus as taken up in glory.
- Mark 16:19 describes Jesus as being taken up into heaven and sitting at God's right hand. The Gospel of Luke 24:50-51 is even briefer in its description. Jesus led the eleven to [Bethany](#), not far from [Jerusalem](#). While in the act of blessing them, Jesus was carried up to heaven. Since Luke was once the first part of [Luke-Acts](#), scholars surmise that this Ascension, less detailed than that in [Acts 1:9-12](#), is from a different hand, perhaps created when [Luke-Acts](#) was divided into Luke and Acts.^[5]
- The Acts of the Apostles^[1:9-12] reports that for forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus continued to teach his followers. Jesus and the eleven were gathered near [Mount Olivet](#), to the northeast of Bethany. Jesus tells his apostles that they will receive the power of the [Holy Spirit](#), the "Comforter," see also [Paraclete](#), and that they will spread his message the world over, i.e., the [Great Commission](#). Jesus is taken up and received by a cloud. Two men clothed in white (i.e., [angels](#)) appear and tell the apostles that [Jesus will return](#) in the same manner as he was taken.

Jn.6:62 Christ asks the Jews: "What if then you shall see the [Son of Man](#) ascend up where He was before?"

Jn. 20:17 [Mary Magdalene](#) Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

[liturgical year](#) commemorating the descent of the [Holy Spirit](#) upon the [disciples](#) of Christ after the [Resurrection](#). Pentecost is celebrated seven weeks (50 days) after [Easter](#) Sunday, hence its name.^[2] Pentecost falls on the tenth day after [Ascension Thursday](#).

Pentecost is historically and symbolically related to the Jewish [harvest festival](#) of [Shavuot](#), which commemorates God giving the [Ten Commandments](#) at [Mount Sinai](#) fifty days after the [Exodus](#). Among Christians, Pentecost commemorates the descent of the [Holy Spirit](#) upon the [Apostles](#) and other followers of [Jesus](#) as described in the [New Testament Acts of the Apostles](#) 2:1-31.^[3] For this reason, Pentecost is sometimes described as the "Birthday of the Church".

- The [Pentecostal](#) movement of Christianity derives its name from this biblical event.

The biblical narrative of Pentecost is given in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. As recounted in Acts 2:1-6:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language"

While those on whom the Spirit had descended were speaking in tongues, the disciple [Peter](#) stood up with the [eleven](#) and proclaimed to the crowd that this event was the fulfillment of the prophecy ("I will pour out my spirit") in [Joel 2:28-29](#). [Acts 2:41](#) reports: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Location of the first Pentecost



The [Cenacle](#) on [Mount Zion](#), claimed to be the location of the [Last Supper](#) and Pentecost. [Bargil Pixner](#)^[6] claims the original [Church of the Apostles](#) is located under the current structure.

Eastern churches

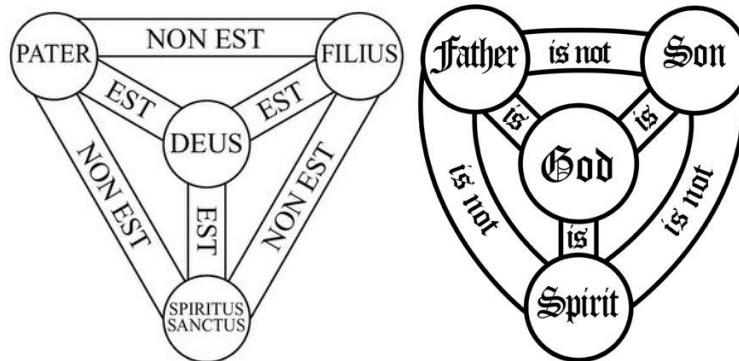
[St. Andrew's Cathedral, St. Petersburg](#), decorated for Pentecost.

In the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#), Pentecost is one of the Orthodox [Great Feasts](#) and is considered to be the highest ranking Great Feast of the Lord, second in rank only to [Pascha](#) (Easter). The service is celebrated with an [All-night Vigil](#) on the [eve](#) of the [feast day](#), and the [Divine Liturgy](#) on the day of the feast itself. [Orthodox temples](#) are often decorated with greenery and flowers on this feast day, and the celebration is intentionally similar to the Jewish holiday of [Shavuot](#), which celebrates the giving of the [Mosaic Law](#).



Western depiction of the Pentecost, painted by [Jean Restout](#), 1732

3. Feast of Most Blessed TRINITY (SUNDAY 19.6.2011)



Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost to honor the Holy Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although the word “trinity” does not appear in Scripture, it is taught in [Matthew 28:18-20](#) and [2 Corinthians 13:14](#) (and many other biblical passages). The concept of the trinity can never be completely understood or rationalized, but it is clearly taught in Scripture. Understanding of all scriptural doctrine is by faith which comes through the work of the Holy Spirit; therefore, it is appropriate that this mystery is celebrated the first Sunday after the Pentecost, when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit first occurred.



On Trinity Sunday, the Christian Church ponders with joy and thanksgiving what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done to accomplish the salvation of sinful humanity. It is brought to remembrance how Christians should respond to the love God has shown us, praising Him and giving Him glory. We remember the Father as our Creator, the Son as our Savior and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. Scriptural readings for the Trinity Sunday ceremony may include Psalm 8, beginning and ending with, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.” [Second Corinthians 13:11-13](#) appeals to believers to aim for perfection and live in peace, ending with the prayer that the grace of Christ Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all, including again the commission Jesus left for believers in [Matthew 28:16-20](#).

Today, Trinity Sunday is to explain, to the best of man’s ability, the clues written in Scripture to guide us to a fuller understanding of our triune God. The Father is God from the beginning ([John 1:1](#)); Jesus revealed Himself as equal to the Father in [John 10:30](#), “I and the Father are one.” Together, they sent the Holy Spirit ([John 14:26](#)). “For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” ([1 John 5:7-11](#)).

4. FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI- PRECIOUS BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (26.6.2011)



History:

The Feast of Corpus Christi, or the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ (as it is often called today), goes back to the 13th century, but it celebrates something far older: the institution of the [Sacrament of Holy Communion](#) at the Last Supper. While Holy Thursday is also a celebration of this mystery, the solemn nature of Holy Week, and the focus on Christ's Passion on [Good Friday](#), overshadows that aspect of Holy Thursday.

Thus, in 1246, Bishop Robert de Thorete of the Belgina diocese of Liège, at the suggestion of St. Juliana of Mont Cornillon (also in Belgium), convened a synod and instituted the celebration of the feast. From Liège, the celebration began to spread, and, on September 8, 1264, Pope Urban IV issued the papal bull "Transiturus," which established the Feast of Corpus Christi as a universal feast of the Church, to be celebrated on the Thursday following [Trinity Sunday](#).

At the request of Pope Urban IV, St. Thomas Aquinas composed the office (the official prayers of the Church) for the feast. This office is widely considered one of the most beautiful in the traditional Roman Breviary (the official prayer book of the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours), and it is the source of the famous Eucharistic hymns "[Pange Lingua Gloriosi](#)" and "[Tantum Ergo Sacramentum](#)."

For centuries after the celebration was extended to the universal Church, the feast was also celebrated with a eucharistic procession, in which the Sacred Host was carried throughout the town, accompanied by hymns and litanies. The faithful would venerate the Body of Christ as the procession passed by. In recent years, this practice has almost disappeared, though some parishes still hold a brief procession around the outside of the parish church.

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A BRIEF REPORT ON ONE-DAY SEMINAR ON LITURGY @ RUSTAMBAGH

By: Francis Antony

A one day seminar on Catholic Liturgy with stress on increased laity participation was held in our church on 15th May 2011. The proceedings were led by Rev. Fr. Dr. Rolington, from Thoothukkudi diocese who holds doctorate on the subject. At present he works at TNBCLC (Thindivanam) as secretary for the Regional Commission for Liturgy.

The thirty odd participants from St. Peter's Church, Rustambagh, were divided into five groups of by random selection. There was a very lively quiz competition on the meaning of each aspect of the liturgy. This was followed by group wise discussion on the following subjects and the secretaries of individual groups read out the minutes. Given below is a gist of the responses against individual issues.

1. What is the present level of laity participation in services in our parish? What are the hurdles?

Although the present level can be rated Good, the desirable height is not reached due to plethora of reasons. Half the congregation comes late and have to stand outside due to paucity of space. The real problem appears to be that the congregation belong to different linguistic and cultural milieu. Some pointed out the traffic snarls on old airport road and lack of parking facilities.

2. How to increase participation by overcoming these obstacles?

The first problem is likely to disappear once we have the new church built on the top of the present church. The second one would disappear only if we continually strive to develop as a community. Bettering our body language, mental outlook, and concerted efforts to meaningfully participate in the liturgy can help. More seminars on liturgy with greater participation would be called for. But we need not wait for the completion of the church construction for this.

3. Does education in liturgy help?

There was unanimity in the view that higher level of education in liturgy would lead to more meaningful participation of laity in the rites. Without proper knowledge, participation can become mechanical, lifeless and lacking in spirit.

4. Community singing to be encouraged during Mass?

The general idea was that it is better that the entire community sing along with the choir. At times this may result in mismatch of tunes. This can be avoided if the parishioners who reach early, practice for ten minutes ahead of Mass along with the choir.

5. Does the choir help in community singing?

The choir of St Peters is rated high. They sing well, and encourage all to sing along by printing and distributing the hymn sheets. One problem pointed out was that the mikes provided now are unidirectional, that is it takes the voice of one singer. Others are not heard. This can be improved by changing the mike. But they would strive to bring in more life by using the mike for prayers in response, and involving others also in singing.

At the end of the Seminar, four people from each of the five groups, ie. a total of 20 formed a LITURGICAL COMMITTEE to help the celebrations to be more laity-involved. The parish priest would endeavour to induct some more volunteers (who could not attend the Seminar due to summer vacation etc) ., to strengthen this new initiative.

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Our Beloved Pope Benedict XVI celebrates

60th Ordination anniversary on 29.5.2011

LET US SUBMIT A PRAYER TO THE LORD

FOR HIS HEALTH AND MINISTRY



Lord, source of eternal life and truth, give to Your shepherd, Pope Benedict XVI, a spirit of courage and right judgement, a spirit of knowledge and love. By governing with fidelity those entrusted to his care may he, as successor to the apostle Peter and Vicar of Christ, build Your church into a sacrament of unity, love, and peace for all the world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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Why is Dowry Wrong?- A Biblical Perspective

By Stephen David.

Most of us pay lip service to condemn dowry as a contemporary social evil, however, this ancient Indian custom continues to destroy families in our present age as well.

Before bringing up this issue to the whole world, I believe that this must first be addressed to the professed people of God who are called to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). It is for Christians to confront this issue and explore fully to know whether dowry is acceptable or despicable.

Let us reason, examine and find out - Is demanding dowry a perverted practice?

Do we have any biblical proofs in order to come to this conclusion? Is requiring dowry in marriage unbiblical, or to say further, an anti-biblical practice?

This message might be offensive and discomfoting to many money-loving readers.

However, the fact remains – truth is bitter but makes our lives better. Therefore, I encourage you to read this message with an open mind and a humble attitude.



What is Dowry?

Dowry is a kind of gift given by the bride's family to the bridegroom's family along with the giving away of the bride. The terms and conditions of dowry often match those of a regular business or a financial agreement. Dowry negotiations are an essential prerequisite to marital bond. It can range from furniture, land, cash and consumer goods, to paying the husband's study fees and the expenses of the marriage. Though it is claimed this has no religious sanction, the practice of dowry (Katnam or Dahej) has originated from Hindu social custom in India, and is an important part of Hindu marital rites. It is suspected that dowry originated in the upper caste Hindu families who could not provide for themselves sufficiently and therefore had to accept the material support along with the bride, who was another responsibility.

It soon became an outlet of greed while masking itself as a privilege of the strictly patriarchal society. The Indian law recognised the dire outcomes of this practice in 1961 and has officially prohibited by pronouncing the dowry system as illegal.

Nevertheless, this practice is actively continued by Hindus, and has even crept into other religious communities like Islam and Christianity. These days, a dowry is no more a deliberate gift given by the bride's family – it has become a mandatory act.



And shamefully, it is rampant even among Christians.

The Consequences of Dowry

i) The practice of dowry has demeaned the value of a woman in our society. To have a daughter means to lose money and material goods, but to have a son translates to gaining more. Since the world weighs everything materially, women have come to be considered less valuable to the parents than sons. The joy of the birth of a girl child is lost by the immediate realization of added responsibility of the father to start storing up wealth for her dowry.

ii) Most families prefer a male child either because they can capitalise on him to bring in dowry or to prevent the giving of it. The wife is held accountable and faces a lot of disgrace and mistreatment by her husband and in-laws, if the baby conceived is not male (though the XY chromosome that determines the baby's sex comes from the husband and he is to be held accountable, if at all).



iii) Probably the most depraved consequences are feticide (abortion of female babies in the mother's womb) and infanticide (killing an infant). Research points out that dowry is a direct cause for these horrible crimes. Though the law prevents pre-natal sex determination, greed and fear make people ignore it and deny life. It hasn't been long since magazines had hit the stands with cover photos of female babies' corpses unearthed over a large stretch of land, with the headline screaming: Killing Fields.

iv) Numerous women are undergoing harassment and physical abuse, compelling some of them either to commit suicide or ruthlessly be killed by their husbands and/or in-laws who lust for dowry. It is a sad statistical commentary of our times that 18 women are killed every day in India because of dowry.

v) Broken marriages and families are the saddest thing in our society today. The wretched illegal practice of dowry is responsible for this plight.

vi) Many women's marriages have been delayed because their parents could not afford sufficient dowry and even worse, many women have remained unmarried just because they are unable to pay their dowry! The huge debts that a bride's family undertakes in order to pay for the dowry puts them into severe financial crisis and depression.

vii) A number of marriage negotiations break down if there is no consensus between the families on dowry. Groom's families are even known to seek alliances that offers a better bargain. (I came to know of a failed marriage alliance because the dowry negotiation was not up to the expectations. Ironically, these were Christian parties and the mediator was none other than pastor himself)

Disgrace

Secular researchers have found a surprising fact:

"A major new survey involving 10,000 respondents reports that the practice of dowry is becoming prevalent amongst dalit, backward caste, Muslim and Christian communities, which never had a tradition of dowry in the past."

Are you getting this? Dowry which was unheard of in the church before has become widely prevalent among Christians these days.

How sad it is to witness Christians becoming equal with the world!

Dear reader, where is your saltiness (good testimony before the world) today? Do you remember hearing these words of someone called Jesus,

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?"

It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (Matt. 5:12)?

Jesus wanted those that partake of His blood and body to maintain such a moral standard so that the world would be influenced through their godliness and praise our Father in heaven. Are we Christians truly shining in darkness or have we allowed the darkness (the evil systems of the world) to creep in?

"This is what the LORD Almighty says, 'Turn from your evil ways and from your evil practices'" (Zec. 1:4).

May we repent and turn to the Lord with brokenness and allow Him to represent Himself through us to the hopeless world!

"O Lord, forgive us for bringing disgrace to your Name and for the worldliness in the church."

As one of your servants prayed, "Bend the church and bless the world."

Is Dowry Anti-Biblical?

"Where in the Bible is it specifically written that we should not take dowry?", some Christians ask ignorantly, or to justify their love of dowry.

It is interesting to notice that, in the Biblical times, it was the bridegroom's family who used to offer gifts to the bride and to her family!

Abraham sent gifts to Rebecca and to her family as a token of acceptance for his son Isaac (Gen. 24:53). Jacob served his father-in-law for seven years to get Rachel (Gen. 29:18-20).

Ah, the bride is highly valued in the Holy Bible!

Daughters were a great asset to their parents, not a liability. So, what exactly should the Biblical tradition be, if at all (again provided that it is done under no obligation)?

Let us not forget that there is a world of difference between the deliberate offering of gifts from the bridegroom's side in the Biblical times and the demand of dowry from the bridegroom's side in our nation now. The Holy Bible sternly condemns the pagan Hindu practice of the bride's parents being compelled to pay the bridegroom to marry their daughter.

The following are some of the reasons regarding how the lust for dowry violates God's word.

i) Dowry desecrates the sacred institution of God in marriage. It violates the glorious purpose of God for marriage. Biblically, marriage is a holy institution of God where holy vows of love, faithfulness and commitment are exchanged unconditionally. Unfortunately, because of dowry, money has become a primary issue in marriage instead of God's will and His sacred union. Even before printing Holy Matrimony on the marriage cards, dowry has become the unholy practice behind the screen.

ii) The requirement of dowry violates the very first commandment given by God, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk. 12:33). What is love? Though the term 'love' has many descriptions, the apparent description of love given by most biblical teachers is that it is a selfless act of giving and helping others. Jesus taught us to be generous givers out of love and

not greedy seekers for money (Matt. 6:3; 6:19-24; Lu. 10:25-37). Is this loving principle practised in Christian marriages? Answer for yourself.

iii) Seeking dowry evidently proves lust for money. "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil," is a truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures (1 Tim. 6:10).

The requirement of dowry by bridegroom's family does in no way prove love for their neighbour but lust for their possessions.

Br. Zac Poonen, addressed this well:

Dowry is another evil that is found among many believers. No true disciple of Jesus will ever ask for dowry from a girl or from her parents as a condition for marrying the girl. There is nothing wrong in the girl's father giving her a gift after she is married. But there is everything wrong in making money a factor in deciding about a marriage! The present-day dowry system in India is satanic. Yet we find Christians in almost all denominations (evangelical and liberal) receiving it.

The French Philosopher Voltaire, after observing Christians in Europe for many years in the 18th century said that, "In whatever doctrines the many Christian denominations differed, they all had the same doctrine as far as money was concerned – they all loved it." When it comes to dowry too, they all have the same doctrine – they love it.[9]

iv) Dowry violates the command of doing good to others (Jas. 4:17) and to carry each others' burden (Gal. 6:3). Instead, dowry casts the burden on the bride's family and in no way it does good to them.

v) The Holy Bible says just as Christ loved the church unconditionally (which is symbolically His bride) and gave Himself up for her, the husbands must likewise love their wives (Eph. 5:25). The requirement of dowry violates unconditional love. Such marriages are not Christ-centered and I doubt the abundant blessings of the Lord upon them! Oh, without meeting the financial and material agreement, there are many who do not give their sons for marriage or wait to find suitable bride who can meet their expectations!

vi) The Holy Bible warns us not to become a stumbling block to the unbelievers (1 Cor. 8:9).

Christians are called be the light of the world and to set a good example to others. An unbeliever who came to know of a Christian family demanding dowry asked me,

"Being Christians, how do you all still demand dowry?"

What a disgrace and humiliation to defend "Christianity" here! (Interestingly, this unbeliever committed to not demand dowry when his two sons get married. Shame on us greedy Christians!)

vii) Dowry violates one of the ten commandments, "Do not covet your neighbour's property" (Ex. 20:17). This commandment is unashamedly broken by many Christians by requiring dowry in marriages, which is nothing but a sin of covetousness.

viii) Dowry violates the will of God to not oppress anyone (Ezekiel. 18:7). It is painful to know how many brides' families are oppressed under the yoke of dowry. In the Biblical times, God's people were oppressed through bribe and injustice by their own people and these days people are oppressed through dowry by professed God's people. Make no mistake

about it: demanding dowry is a sin of oppression in the sight of the Almighty God whom you worship!

ix) Dowry violates the command of God to submit to the secular authorities (Rom. 13:1; 1 Peter 3:22).

According to the Indian law, "the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, makes it a crime to demand, give or take dowry." Dowry is as serious as bribery. Yet, this has become a common rebellion by people - including Christians - against law.

Excuses

Oh, but aren't we masters of justifying our evil, like the Pharisees and the Sadducees:

i) Some say, "Dowry is just a gift – so, what's wrong?" Well, what is a gift? It is something that is offered deliberately to others, and if it is given under obligation or compulsion it is no longer called a gift. When the bridegroom's family asks for or even demands dowry, how can it still be classified as a gift? Sadly, some bride's parents give dowry fearing that without it, their daughter may not be treated well by the in-laws. By the way, why should the burden of giving gifts fall only the bride's family? It is up to them to give within their ability and deliberately but it is sinful to demand dowry as a prerequisite. However, there is nothing wrong if the bride's and the groom's family together bless the newly-weds within their own abilities.

ii) Even though they know the practice of dowry is evil, some young men give excuses that they had to accept dowry under their parents' compulsion. They even justify themselves:

"Doesn't the Bible say that we have to honour our parents?" What a silly excuse to justify an evil act!

Sometimes, the devil too craftily quotes Scriptures in order to lead us into sin (Read the temptation of Jesus in Matt. 4).

Of course, the Bible does say that we have to honour our parents. But nowhere in the Bible does it say that we have to honour them at the cost of dishonouring the standards of God. Jesus forthrightly said, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37-38). Mark these words: no cross-bearer can be a dowry-seeker. If it is a matter of either obeying God's Word or your parents' wish, which one would you choose?

If your parents insist on dowry, teach them that it is not a good act, and if necessary, rebuke them in love. If we do not obey our parents in matters that are not according to or sometimes against God's will, it does not mean we are dishonouring them.

Br. R Stanley, a wonderful Indian Christian writer, commented:

When money transaction becomes a major factor in marriage, all sorts of evil will creep in. Money does matter but it does not matter for Christ-centered marriages. Many a Christian young man has missed God's best in the choice of his life-partner because he has yielded to the pressure from his parents to make money in the marriage deal. It's not cash or complexion but character that lasts (Pro. 31:30).

Boys must have the backbone to resist parental pressures. Throwing the entire blame on parents is not manliness.

iii) Still others (from the groom's side) say, "You know, the money that we get from dowry can be used to meet some debts we have or to meet the expenses of the marriage or to meet the expenses of our other children's marriage. We have spent a lot educating our son." What a great and ungodly deal! Well, what about the parents who invest in upbringing and educating their daughters? Who will bear their expense? In order to get rid of our burdens is it fair to put burden on the other side? If in crisis, the Bible says to pray and seek God's help (Jas. 5:13) and not to burden others.

Further, I want to suggest, if there are no sufficient finances to have a marriage ceremony grandly, it is good indeed to conduct it modestly.

Final Words

Once I happened to read a newsletter regarding dowry and it was requested, "Dear saints, please say a prayer for the women/girls of India."

How can the saints of India pray when they themselves engage in the evil act? Those who did not stain themselves with this evil practice need to really pray, first for their fellow Christians who are caught up in dowry, and then for other unbelievers.

I humbly urge you - dear young men and parents - not to partake in this evil practice of dowry. I urge you dear pastors to teach your congregation to refuse dowry.

I would appreciate your commitment if you vow not to lead a marriage ceremony if there has been a demand for dowry. I came to know that even some pastors do demand dowry for their own marriages!

To quote Br. R Stanley again:

In the repentance messages preached by late Br. N. Daniel of the Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship in the fifties, he often condemned the dowry system. In response many husbands either returned the amount to their in-laws or settled the matter with them in order to get right with God and with men. Modern pulpits hardly address social evils. On the other hand there are pastors who bless the dowry amount so they get one-tenth of it.

Shame! O People of God, repent and change your ways!

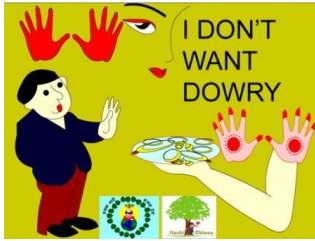
Finally, dear brothers, sisters and elders, since centuries - dowry, sati (self-immolation by a widow) and child marriages - which originated from Hindu social customs, have been prevalent in our nation.

William Carey (1760-1834), who was known to be the father of modern missions, influenced not just missions but also the society. He fought the evil practice of sati in his time along with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and witnessed its abolishment.

Isn't there anyone in our nation today who can stand against dowry which has crept into Christianity?

Will we ever hear messages from the pulpit addressing this major issue? Are the ministers of God willing to teach their congregation regarding dowry? Are we Christians and ministers of

God willing to stand against this evil practice in the church and society and witness its abolishment?



Young men, are you willing to commit yourselves to have selfless and unstained marriage?

Rise up, O children of God, and shine for the glory of the Holy One in this nation!

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ECUMENISM

1. Anglican-Catholic Group Focused on "What Unites Us"

VATICAN CITY, MAY 29, 2011 (Zenit.org).- Anglicans and Catholics are affirming that "what unites us is greater than what divides us" as a joint dialogue commission concluded its work Friday. The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission met at the ecumenical monastic community of Bose, Italy, for a 10-day series of discussions, following a mandate from Benedict XVI and Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams when the two met in November 2009.

ARCIC I dates back to 1966, in response to the Second Vatican Council and as a result of the visit of the then-Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, to Pope Paul VI. The meetings last week began the sessions of ARCIC III. The group was charged with considering the Church as communion, local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal Church comes to discern right ethical teaching. They were also asked to examine how commitment to restoring full visible unity is to be understood and pursued today.

According to a statement Saturday from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, ARCIC III decided to work according to a view of the Church "above all in the light of its rootedness in Christ through the Paschal Mystery." "This focus on Jesus Christ, human and divine, gives the Commission a creative way to view the relationship between the local and universal in communion," the statement proposed.

It added: "The Commission will seek to develop a theological understanding of the human person, human society, and the new life of grace in Christ. This will provide a basis from which to explore how right ethical teaching is determined at universal and local levels." ARCIC will draw from Scripture, tradition and reason for its work, as well as the

advances of previous commissions, the statement announced. And it said that some particular questions will be analyzed "to elucidate how our two Communion approach moral decision making, and how areas of tension for Anglicans and Roman Catholics might be resolved by learning from the other."

Anglicans and Catholics face an ecumenical dialogue rife with difficulties as the Anglican Communion forges ahead on the ordination of women and homosexuals, despite the dismay of some within the Communion. In 2009, Benedict XVI established a new ecclesial structure for Anglicans who wish to enter Catholic communion en masse. The first of these structures, the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, has been established in England and Wales, with a group of Anglican clergy set to be ordained Catholic priests beginning this Saturday.

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VATICAN NEWS

1. Vatican Gives Tool to Prepare for '12 Family Meeting

VATICAN CITY, MAY 26, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The 7th World Meeting of Families is scheduled to begin in almost exactly one year, and the Vatican is offering families a tool to prepare for it.

On Tuesday, a volume released by the Vatican Publishing House was presented by Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

The next family meeting will be held in Milan from May 29 to June 3, 2012. The theme is "The Family: Work and Celebration."

He reflected that the three subjects of the theme -- family, work and celebration -- "form a trinomial that begins with the family to open it to the world: work and celebration are ways that the family lives in the social 'space' and in human 'time.'"

2. Caritas Elects New Secretary-General

ROME, MAY 27, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- On Thursday, Caritas Internationalis approved Michel Roy as its new secretary-general for the next four years.

Roy will succeed Lesley-Anne Knight, who served as the charity's secretary-general from 2007-2011.

Speaking to the assembly in Rome immediately after the vote, Roy said he was "very moved" by his election. "I'd like to thank Lesley-Anne for the work she's done so far, and also all of you for the work that you do for this network which reflects the hopes of the poor to build a better world," he added.

Roy will serve as secretary-general alongside Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, the archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, who was re-elected for a second term as Caritas Internationalis president this week.

3. Church Worried on Both Sides of Sudan's New Border

ROME, MAY 26, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The violence in Abyei has people worried on both sides of Sudan's new border.

For long moments they stood in place -- eyeball to eyeball -- neither one of them moving. Finally the bull grew tired of the stare-down and asked, "What do you want, Bear?"

"I want to fight you," growled the bear.

"Why?" asked the bull "Because, I want to prove that I am a stronger and better fighter than you are."

The bull laughed. "I thought you really wanted something. You can't possibly win against me. I have sharp horns that can cause terrible injuries."

"And my claws are sharp and quick," the bear shot back
. "I have defeated many an enemy -- anyone who would harm my cubs or take away my mate. I am the king of the forest!"

"Then go back to the forest," the bull bluntly advised. "This is the meadow."

The bear blinked in surprise. "I beg your pardon..."

"I mean, what's the point of me fighting with you?" the bull asked.

"What would that prove? We are not enemies. I have not harmed your cubs or taken your mate."

"It would prove that I am the strongest." The bear answered.

"Okay," said the bull, smiling. "I'll buy that. You are strongest. Now leave and let me graze in peace."

"Just one cotton-pickin' minute. What do you mean by that?" The bear raised a club-like paw.

"I will tear you to shreds. Defend yourself."

"What you do is up to you," the bull answered calmly. "But if you do, what will all your friends -- the ones who are watching us right now -- think about you?"

"They will think that I am the strongest," yelled the frustrated bear.

"I don't think so. I do not choose to fight you just because you choose to fight with me. I would only fight to defend one of the cows in my care. If you attack one of them, then I'd be obliged to give you a good lashing."

"I can't attack them," protested the bear. "They can't fight back. There would be no victory to it."

"Exactly," answered the bull. "But what if you did? And what if I should try to defend them? What if something should happen to me? Who would protect them then? You?

Would you trust me to protect your cubs if something happened to you? What would happen to your family if you lose the fight?"

"I never thought of that," said the bear.

"Go back into the woods, Bear," said the bull as he turned to walk away. "Live in peace. And I will stay in the meadow and do the same."

The bear turned toward the woods. He had come spoiling for a fight -- to prove which one was the strongest. But he had learned an important lesson from a very wise bull.

In peace, there are no losers.

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out. (Proverbs 17:14 NIV)

செல்லும் கணவருக்கு உணவு சமைத்து வழியனுப்பியப்பின் காலை 6.45க்கு நிகழும் திருப்பலிக்கு 2 கி.மீ நடந்தே செல்லும் பழக்கம் கொண்டிருந்த ஒரு சிறந்த கத்தோலிக்கப் பெண்மணி. இதனால் அக்கம் பக்கத்தார் இவரை ‘கோவிலம்மாள்’ என்று செல்லமாக அழைப்பதுண்டு. எல்லா பிள்ளைகளையும் ஏறக்குறைய நல்ல நிலையில் உயர்த்திய நேரத்தில் தனது கணவர் நுரையீரல் பிரச்சினைக் கண்டு ஆண்டவருடைய மலர்பாதம் சென்றுவிட்டார். மரியின் ஊழியர் சபையில் சேர்ந்து பணியாற்றினார். எவ்வளவு காலம் வீட்டில் தனித்து இருப்பது? கடைசி மகன் சாமுவேல் குரு என்ற புனிதமான வாழ்க்கையைத் தேர்ந்துகொண்டுவிட்டார். அவருக்குப் பணிவிடை செய்து அருகிலேயே இருந்தால் துணையாக இருக்குமே என்று நினைத்திருந்த நேரத்தில் ஒரு நாள். “அம்மா, நீங்க ஏன் என்னுடன் வந்து தங்கிவிடக்கூடாது?” என்று கேட்டார். “மக்கள் என்னச் சொல்வார்களோ?” என்று கவலையுடன் கேட்டார். “தந்தையையோ தாயையோ ஒரு குருவார் தனக்குத் துணையாக தன்னுடன் வைத்துக்கொள்ளலாம் என்ற பாரியம்பரியம் இருந்துவருகிறது அம்மா” என்றார் மகன். இவ்வாறு சிலகாலமாகத்தான் தந்தை சாமுவேலின் தாயார் அவர் இல்லத்திலேயே ஒரு தனிஅறையில் தங்கி மகனுடைய பல்வேறு தேவைகளை நிறைவேற்றிவருகிறார்.

‘காலையிலிருந்து மாலை வரைக்கும், வீடுகள் மந்திரிப்பு, பள்ளிவேலை, ஊராட்சியத்தில் சிறப்புக் கூட்டம், பங்கு அலுவலகத்தில் மக்களுடன் சந்திப்பு என ஓயாம வேலை வேலைன்னு மக்களுக்காகவே தியாகம் செஞ்சிட்டு வர மகனுக்கு ஓய்வு வேண்டாமா? இப்பத்தான் தூங்கப்போனார் இதற்குள்ளேயே இங்குள்ள மக்கள் அவரைத் தொந்தரை செய்கிறார்களே’ நினைத்துக்கொண்டே சமையலறையில் சில கடன்களை முடித்துகொண்டு கதவைத் திறந்தார். “தோத்திரம்மா!” “தோத்திரம், யார் நீங்க? உங்களுக்கு என்ன வேணும்?” கதவருகே ஒரு இளம் தம்பதியினர் நிற்குகொண்டிருந்தனர். அற்புதராஜியின் உறவினர்கள் என்று கூறினர். மருத்துவமனையில் சிகிச்சைப் பெற்றுவரும் அற்புதராஜியின் ஒன்றுவிட்ட சகோதரியின் மகன் என்றும் அற்புதராஜிக்கு நிகழ்ந்ததுபற்றி கேள்விபட்டு வந்திருப்பதாகவும் கூறிகொண்டனர்.

“அம்மா, மாமாவின் (அற்புதராஜி) நிலைமை சரியில்லை, மிகவும் கவலைக்கிடமாக இருக்கின்றார், சாமி சாமி என்று கூப்பிடுகிறார், தந்தை அவர்கள் நோயில் பூசுதல் கொடுத்தா நன்றாக இருக்கும், மருத்துவர்கள், ‘இவருடைய உறவினர்களுக்கும் பங்குத் தந்தைக்கும் சொல்லிவிடுங்கள்னு சொல்லியிருக்கிறாங்க, நாங்க அப்போதுதான் அங்கே வந்தோம். இதைச் சொல்லலாம்னுதான் இங்கே வந்திருக்கோம், அப்படியே கனிமொழி இங்கேதான் இருப்பதாகக் கேள்விபட்டோம். அவளையும் பார்க்கலாம்னு வந்திருக்கிறோம் ” என்றார்கள் அந்தத் தம்பதியினர்.

தந்தை சாமுவேலின் தாய்க்கு என்ன சொல்வதென்றே தெரியவில்லை. தனக்கு இவர்கள் யாரென்றும் தெரியாது. மகன் சாமுவேல் அடிகளாருக்குத் தெரியுமோ என்னமோ, இந்த நேரத்தில், களைப்புடன் உறங்கிக்கொண்டிருக்கும் அவரை எழுப்பி தூக்கத்தைக் கெடுப்பது அவ்வளவு விவேகமானது அல்ல இருப்பினும் இது அவசரமான நேரமல்லவா! உயிருக்குப்போராடக்கொண்டிருக்கும் அந்தச் சகோதரருடை ஆன்மா அருள்பெறவேண்டுமே என்று நினைத்தவராய், “கொஞ்சம் காத்திருங்கள், இதோ வருகிறேன் என்று தந்தை சாமுவேல் அறைக்குள் எட்டிப்பார்த்தார். தந்தையவர்கள் அன்றைய இறைபணியை முடித்துக்கொண்டு ஓய்வில் இருப்பது நன்றாக தெரிந்தது. சரி, அவரை கேட்கவேண்டுமா என்ன? நாமே ஏதாவது செய்வோம், வந்தவர்களை வெகுநேரம் வெளியே காக்க வைப்பது கிறிஸ்தவ பண்பாடல்ல என்ற நல்ல உள்ளத்தோடு வந்திருக்கும் தம்பதியினரை உபசரித்து உணவளித்தார். ஆலய வளாகத்தில் உள்ள ஓர் அறையில் தங்குவதற்கான ஏற்பாடுகளை செய்துகொடுத்தார். இதற்கிடையில் தந்தை சாமுவேலின் தூக்கம் களைந்தது. வெளியே வந்து, “யாரம்மா வந்தது இந்த நேரத்திலே?” என்று கேட்டார். “அது வந்து, அற்புதராஜியின் நிலைமை சரியில்லையாம் நோயில்பூசுதல் கொடுக்கனுமாம், அவருடைய உறவினர்கள்னு கணவன் மனைவி இரண்டு பேர் வந்திருக்காங்க, உட்காரச் சொல்லி சாப்பிட கொடுத்தேன்,

ஏன் சாமி, கனிமொழி தூங்கிகிட்டு இருக்கா எழுப்பிடவா?" என்று வினவினார். "சரிமமா, நான் ஐந்து நிமிடத்தில் வந்துவிடுகிறேன்" என்று அறைக்குள் சென்றார். அற்புதராஜியை நினைத்து பரிதாபம் கொண்டார் சாமுவேல் அடிகளார்..(தொடரும்)

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தமிழ்ச் செய்திகள் Brief News in Tamil

1. பாகிஸ்தான் பைசலாபாத் பகுதியில் கிறிஸ்தவர்களுக்கு எதிரான வன்முறைகள்

மே 27,2011. பாகிஸ்தான் பைசலாபாத் பகுதியில் உள்ள ஒரு கிறிஸ்தவ கல்லறை பூமியை டிராக்டர்களைக் கொண்டு தகர்த்து அந்நிலத்திற்கு உரிமைக் கொண்டாட ஒரு சில இஸ்லாமியர்கள் அண்மையில் முயன்றுள்ளனர். இதற்கிடையே, Afshan Sabir என்ற 29 வயதுடைய ஓர் இளம் கிறிஸ்தவத் தாயைப் போதைக்குள்ளாக்கி, ஒரு குழுவினர் அவரைப் பாலியல் பலாத்காரம் செய்தனர் என்ற செய்தியும் அண்மையில் வெளியாகியுள்ளது.

2. கம்யூனிச சீனாவில் கிறிஸ்தவர்களின் எண்ணிக்கை அதிகரித்து வருகிறது

மே 28, 2011. சீனாவில் நாத்தீக கம்யூனிச ஆட்சி இடம்பெறுகின்ற போதிலும், அந்நாட்டில் கிறிஸ்தவர்களின் எண்ணிக்கைப் பெருகிவருவதும், சமூகத்தில் கிறிஸ்தவத்தின் தாக்கம் அதிகரித்து வருவதும் குறிப்பிடக்கூடிய ஒரு கூறாக உள்ளது என்கிறார் சீனாவின் எழுத்தாளர் ஜியாங் யுவான்லாய். சீனாவில் இன்றைய கிறிஸ்தவத்தின் நிலை குறித்து தாய்வானில் இடம்பெற்ற கருத்தரங்கில் உரையாற்றிய சீன கிறிஸ்தவ எழுத்தாளர் யுவான்லாய், சீனாவில் தற்போது 10 கோடி கிறிஸ்தவர்கள் வாழ்வதாகவும் அதில் 1கோடி பேர் கத்தோலிக்கர்கள் எனவும் தெரிவித்தார்.

3. இவ்வுலகில் படிப்பறிவில்லாத மக்களில் மூன்றில் இரு பகுதியினர் பெண்கள் - UNESCO அறிக்கை

மே 28,2011. கல்வியின் மூலமே பெண்களுக்கு தன்னம்பிக்கையைத் தர முடியும் என்றும் , பெண்களின் தன்னம்பிக்கையால் இந்த உலகம் இன்னும் பெருமளவு முன்னேறும் என்றும் ஐ.நா.பொதுச் செயலர் பான் கி மூன் கூறினார். ஐ.நா.வின் கல்வி, அறிவியல் மற்றும் கலாச்சார அமைப்பான UNESCO 'பெண்கள் கல்வியில் உலகத்தின் பங்களிப்பு' என்ற கருத்தில் பாரிசில் இவ்வியாழன் நடத்திய ஒரு கருத்தரங்கில் உரையாற்றிய பான் கி மூன் இவ்வாறு கூறினார். UNESCOவின் அண்மைய கணக்கெடுப்பின்படி, இவ்வுலகில் படிப்பறிவில்லாத 79 கோடியே 60 இலட்சம் மக்களில் மூன்றில் இரு பகுதியினர் பெண்கள் என்றும், உலகின் அனைத்து நாடுகளிலும் மூன்றில் ஒரு பகுதி நாடுகளிலேயே கல்விக் கூடங்களில் ஆண் பெண் இருபாலரும் சமமான அளவு பயின்று வருகின்றனர் என்றும் தெரிய வந்துள்ளது.

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Catholic Enquiry Center (CEC)

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