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**Topic: CATECHISM, small, small ...** (JANUARY – MARCH 2010)

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Lesson One: The Dogma of the Most Blessed Trinity

What is a Dogma? A doctrine is an official teaching of the Catholic Church. A dogma is a doctrine that every Catholic must accept because it is part of what makes us Catholic. A dogma is a doctrine that cannot be changed because it is a ‘definitive’ and ‘infallible’ teaching of the Church. This does not mean that the form of the dogma cannot be improved or developed. Every dogma is a doctrine but not every doctrine is a dogma.

The Dogma of the Most Blessed Trinity refers to the Church’s doctrine that speaks of God as a triune God: one God having three distinct and co-equal persons: God the Father (the Creator), God the Son (the Redeemer) and God the Holy Spirit (sanctifier). Each is God and yet all three form one God and not three Gods. This mystery is a core teaching of the Catholic Church.

Although each of the divine persons has a distinct responsibility, they all work together. For example, when God the Father was creating the world, he invited the other persons of the Most Blessed Trinity to participate in his work of creation:

God said: “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (Genesis 1:26).

During the baptism of Jesus Christ (God the Son), God the Father spoke and God the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove.

As soon as he was baptized, Jesus came up from the water. At once, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God come down like a dove and rest upon him. At the same time a voice from heaven was heard, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; he is my Chosen One’ (Matthew 3:16-17; also found in Mark 1:10-11 and Luke 3:21-22).

Catholics address their prayers to God the Father, through Jesus Christ (God the Son) by the power (or under the influence) of God the Holy Spirit.

**ASSIGNMENT:**
Reflect on how the Dogma of the Most Blessed Trinity helps you to understand individual responsibilities and community life.
Lesson Two: *What Every Catholic Should Know about the Bible*

a) The word ‘Bible’ comes from a Greek word ‘biblia’ meaning ‘books’.
b) The Bible is not a ‘single book’ but a ‘library of books and letters’
c) The Bible was written over a very long period of time (approximately 1,500 years). It was during the *Council of Trent* (1545 – 1563) that the Council Fathers officially closed the ‘Canon of the Bible’ (i.e. the dispute over which books or letters were part of the Bible was resolved at Trent).
d) The Bible has two major sections: Old Testament and New Testament
e) The Bible is the word of God expressed in human language.
What I should know about the Old Testament

- The **Pentateuch** (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) is the most sacred part of the Jewish Scripture. Traditional Jews believe that Moses received the Pentateuch in its entirety from God.

- The **Historical Writings** (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1Samuel, 2Samuel, 1Kings, 2Kings, 1Chronicles, 2Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1Maccabees and 2Maccabees) cover the high points in the history of the Hebrew people from the time of the Exodus from Egypt to the post-exilic period.

- **Wisdom Literature** (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus) gives an approach to life, a way of looking at the world and, for Israelites, a way of living out in very deliberate, rational ways their commitment to God.

- The era of **the Prophets** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea., Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) is characterised by three things: (1) The unprecedented political, military, economic, and social upheaval; (2) The enormous level of religious unfaithfulness and disregard for the original Mosaic covenant; and (3) The dramatic shifts in populations and national boundaries. In all these circumstances, God’s Word was needed anew. God raised up prophets who in turn proclaimed His Word accordingly.

What I should know about the New Testament

- The **Gospels** (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) record Jesus’ life and teachings as remembered by those who knew him; for the guidance of the early Christians. There are four gospels: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. For Christians, the Gospels form the most important part of the Bible and we acknowledge this by standing up during the proclamation of the Gospel at Mass.

- The **Acts of the Apostles** is Saint Luke’s account of the rapid spread of Christianity beyond Palestine; and the works of the first followers of Jesus.

- The **Epistles** (Romans, 1Corinthians, 2Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1Thessalonians, 2Thessalonians, 1Timothy, 2Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1Peter, 2Peter, 1John, 2John, 3John and Jude) are letters written by the leaders of the early Christian Churches offering guidance to their communities, encouraging them to remain faithful, resolving disputes and clarifying Christian teachings.

- The **Book of Revelation** (or Apocalypse) has visions describing the battle between the forces of good and evil, which predicts the triumph of God and the final judgement of humanity at the end of time.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Please read the following verses and reflect over them in your quiet time.

"All Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind" (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Christian Tradition** = **Sacred Scripture** + **tradition.** Why? Read: “Stand firm, then brothers, and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Remember: “**Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ**"
Lesson Three: Who May Receive Holy Communion at Mass?

In order to be worthy to receive Holy Communion at Mass,

1) The baptised Catholic must have received his or her ‘First Holy Communion’ and
2) The baptised Catholic must be in the ‘state of grace’ at the moment of receiving Holy Communion.

To be in the ‘state of grace’ means to be free from mortal sin. To be free from mortal sin means either

1) The person has not committed mortal sin, or
2) The person did commit mortal sin but has in faith and conscience gone to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and he or she did receive absolution for such a sin (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1456).

For a sin to be mortal, the sin must be

1) of *grave matter*,
2) committed with *full knowledge*, and
3) with *complete consent*.

Here are some examples of mortal sin: worship of a false god, making mockery of Christ and the Sacraments of his Holy Church, apostasy (i.e. public rejection of the Christian faith), murder, abortion, rape, fornication, concubinage (i.e. being or having a concubine), destroying the character of others, drug abuse, drunkenness, assisting others to commit mortal sins, etc.

**ASSIGNMENT**

Name five mortal sins that have not been mentioned on this page.
Lesson Four: The Importance of the Resurrection

The term ‘resurrection’ usually refers to Jesus’ rising from death on Easter Sunday. It is of paramount importance to the Christian faith that Jesus actually rose from the death to a new and glorified life on Easter Sunday. Saint Paul said: “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty and our belief comes to nothing. And we become false witnesses of God, attesting that he raised Christ ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith gives you nothing, and you are still in sin. Also those who fall asleep in Christ are lost. If it is only for this life that we hope in Christ, we are the most unfortunate of all people” (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

The Resurrection of Jesus gives the basis for Christians (especially Catholics) that all faithful disciples of Jesus will share in his glorious and heavenly life (cf. Phil. 3:20-21; Apoc. 21:1-22:5).

The Resurrection of Jesus also proves the following: There is life after death; Jesus is the promised Messiah; and the power of good has triumphed over evil. Through his resurrection, Jesus offers hope to people of every race. Jesus’ victory over death inspires people to follow his example and become his co-workers in building up the Kingdom of God. His rising from death communicates clearly that we should live in this world with confidence and that this life has a real meaning and value. It also shows that the good we do here will be rewarded in the next life.

The event of the resurrection renewed the faith of the first followers of Jesus. It gave new impetus to a community that was mourning, full of fear and thought the story of their hero ‘Jesus’ was in fact a story of failure.

The resurrection of Jesus was a cause of great joy. In order to celebrate this most memorable event, the early disciples of Jesus began to meet on every Sunday (i.e. the day on which Jesus rose from the death; cf. Mark 16:2). From the first century, Christians began to refer to Sunday as the ‘Lord’s day’ and ‘primus inter pares’ (first among equals).

The resurrection gave this seemingly ‘funny’ and ‘rebellious’ sect (later to be called ‘Christians’) a good reason to ‘cause noise’ and to explain to others why it is worthwhile following Jesus. Whenever the followers of Jesus met on Sundays, they brought alive through their worship and fellowship Jesus’ triumphant victory over death and the great joy they had on Easter Sunday.

The resurrection of Jesus gave new meaning to the cross which was a symbol of disgrace, shame and failure for lower-class criminals. The cross is now a symbol of God’s power over sin and death. It is a dominant symbol in Christianity because it is a symbol of salvation … the cross is in fact ‘the prologue’ leading to the resurrection.

[ASSIGNMENT: Be a little bit more enthusiastic about your Christian faith and your wish to share it with others].
NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

ARCHDIOCESE OF FREETOWN AND BO

Roman Catholic Pre-School, Kanikay gets a new School Building
On Friday 22nd January 2010, the Parishioners of St Martin de Porres Parish, Blackhall Road, Freetown and the Community of RC Pre-School, Kanikay (i.e. pupils, teachers and parents) celebrated the blessing and official opening of their new school building which shares the same compound with Saint Theresa’s Primary School at Bai Bureh Road. The new and beautiful building was funded by Nächstenliebe Weltweit (NLW), Germany. NLW is a humanitarian agency founded by Fr Noel O’Meara C.S.Sp. (an Irish Spiritan) who came to grace the occasion. RC Pre-School, Kanikay has been re-named ‘Saint Boniface’ Pre-School, Kanikay’ in honour of St Boniface who is the patron saint of Germany.

John SESAY (St Martin’s Parish)

Cardinal Arinze Celebrates Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral
On Sunday 6th February 2010 His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze presided over the celebration of the Eucharist at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Freetown. In his homily, the Nigerian Cardinal called on the laity to faithfully carry out those responsibilities proper to their lay state. He reminded the congregation that in the Catholic Church there are no spectators … “Everybody is a player” the Cardinal said. Francis Cardinal Arinze was born on 1st November 1932 and ordained a priest in 1958. He was ordained Coadjutor Archbishop of Onitsha, Nigeria in 1965 when he was 33 years old. He later became Archbishop of Onitsha in 1967. In 1985, he was elevated Cardinal and President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. He was also Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments from 2002 to 2008.

Cardinal Arinze knew Blessed Michael Cyprian Iwene Tansi in person. Blessed Fr Tansi who later became a Cistercian Monk was Assistant to the Late Fr Thomas Brosnahan C.S.Sp. (who later became Archbishop of Freetown and Bo) when he was Parish Priest at Eke, Nigeria. Fr Tansi who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1998 became the first West African to be so honoured in the Catholic Church.

John SESAY (St Martin’s Parish)

DIOCESE OF KENEMA

Pope Benedict XVI Primary School Opens at Nyayahun, Pendembu Parish

With funds from Nächstenliebe Weltweit (NLW), Germany, the community of Nyayahun and its neighbouring villages in Upper Bambara Chiefdom, Kailahun District can now boast of a new school building. R.C. Primary School, Nyayahun was housed in a dilapidated building. The school has now been re-named Pope Benedict XVI Primary School, Nyayahun in honour of Pope Benedict XVI in
whose pontificate such a development took place. Bishop Patrick Koroma, Fr Noel O’Meara C.S.Sp., Fr Augustine Berewa C.S.Sp. and Fr Samuel Von Tucker C.S.Sp. and several civil and traditional leaders came to grace the occasion.

**Holy Rosary Secondary School (H.R.S.S.), Kenema Celebrates Its Annual Thanksgiving Mass**

On Sunday 14th February 2010, the students, teachers, parents and past-pupils of H.R.S.S., Kenema celebrated their annual thanksgiving Mass at St Paul’s Cathedral, Kenema. In his homily, the Chief Celebrant Fr Augustine Berewa C.S.Sp. reminded the Congregation that Catholic schools aim at the overall development of her students; and the environment in the Catholic school should be in favour of promoting the Christian faith. He said the attainment of academic excellence is not the only aim of the Catholic school. He called on the entire school community to respect and promote the Catholic ethos of our Catholic schools. He said, other religious bodies, private institutions and governments are realizing the aims of the ‘hidden curriculum’ for which they opened their schools … be it the spread of Islam, profit-making, the making of political points by Government, promoting ideologies, etc; “Catholics should never be ashamed of promoting the Catholic ethos in their schools … You cannot be involved in education and be value-free or value-neutral” Fr Berewa said.

Frs Michael Lamboi, Augustine Amadu and George Momoh concelebrated at the Mass.

There was a march-past from H.R.S.S. Dama Road to St Paul’s Cathedral and after the Mass to H.R.S.S. H.R.S.S. was founded in 1968 by the Holy Rosary Sisters after the Catholic Training College for Girls was closed. H.R.S.S., Kenema and Koidu Girls Secondary School (K.G.S.S) are the only two secondary schools for girls in the Eastern Province and both were founded by the Catholic Mission.

**Theresa VANDI (Kenema)**

**Annual Lenten Pilgrimage to Serabu**

The Kenema and Blama Inter-Parish Annual Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church at Serabu, drew a huge crowd of both children and adults on Saturday 20th March 2010. It was well organized by the Kenema Inter-Parish Council who provided enough booklets of the Stations of the Cross and a well designed programme for this year’s Pilgrimage. All the crowd of pilgrims walked following the steps of Jesus to Calvary, Singing Lenten songs and praying the prayers of the Rosary.

Consequently, in deep prayer, contemplation and the Stations of the Cross, pilgrims reached the climax of this year’s pilgrimage with the celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Priests were available to hear confessions before mass.

In his homily, Bishop Patrick Daniel Koroma addressed the Pilgrims among other things. His key words of caution were “the Law does not allow us to pass judgement on a man without giving him a hearing and discovering what he is about” (John 7:51).

**Mr. Peterkin A. B. SESAY** (Pastoral Centre, Kenema)
ITCABIC Meeting Held in Makeni

The Inter-Territorial Catholic Bishops’ Conference of The Gambia and Sierra Leone (ITCABIC) met in Makeni from the 26th to 29th January 2010. Present at the meeting were the following: -

- Most Rev. George Antonysamy, Apostolic Nuncio in Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia
- Biguzzi, Bishop of Makeni and who unto the end of that meeting was the President of ITCABIC
- Most Rev. Edward Tamba Charles, Archbishop of Freetown and Bo
- Most Rev. Patrick Daniel Koroma, Bishop of Kenema
- Most Rev. Robert Ellison, Bishop of Banjul
- Fr. Henry Aruna, Secretary General of ITCABIC

At this meeting an opening address was delivered by His Excellency George Antonysamy, Apostolic Nuncio in Liberia, The Gambia and Sierra Leone. Other issues pertinent to ITCABIC were discussed. Reports were given by the President, Secretary General and National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies. The Rectors of the two ITCABIC Seminaries, St. Paul’s Major Seminary and St. Kizito’s Pre-Major Seminary, gave their own reports. These reports were discussed by the Bishops and important decisions were made.

The Bishops also had a forum with the following: -

- The Bishops had an open discussion with Sr. Ann Stevens, President of the Conference of Religious Superiors. Among other important matters discussed, the Bishops expressed their appreciation for the work of the Religious in ITCABIC and the continuous collaborative ministry that is very evident in carrying out the mission mandate of Christ.

- At this forum Fr. Bruno presented a draft copy of a Child Protection Policy for the Catholic Church in Sierra Leone and possibly the Gambia. Final decision is to be made at meeting that will be held later.

- Fr. Joseph Turay and the representatives of the School Sisters of Notre-dame presented the accreditation of the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), awarded by the Tertiary Commission of the Government of Sierra Leone. The Bishops were informed about the different departments and the possibility to train lay people in the department of Religious Studies which may help to bust up pastoral ministry in the conference.

The issue of the proposed Diocese of Bo was discussed. All documentations have been forwarded to Rome. The Conference now awaits the final decision from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

At the end of the meeting elections were held. Most Rev. Patrick D. Koroma was elected President of ITCABIC, and Most Rev. Edward Tamba Charles was elected Vice President.

The next meeting will be held sometime next year in the Diocese of Banjul. Let us continue to pray for the Bishops of ITCABIC as they continue to shepherd the people of God in their respective dioceses.

Fr Henry ARUNA
Secretary General, ITCABIC
NOVENA PRAYER TO ST. JOHN VIANNEY

[Patron Saint of Parish Priests]

DAY ONE (21st May 2010)  Theme: ARDENT FAITH

Saint John Marie Baptist Vianney you were born of a deeply religious mother; from her you received the Holy Faith; you learned to love God and to pray. At a young age, you were seen kneeling in the front of the statue of Mary. Your soul was supernaturally carried towards the things on High. Despite the high cost, you answered your vocation!

Against many obstacles and contradictions, you had to fight and suffer to become the perfect priest which you were. But your deep spirit of faith supported you in all these battles. O Great Saint you know the desire of my soul; I would like to serve God better; from Him I have received so many good things. For this, obtain for me more courage and especially the depth of faith. Many of my thoughts, words, and actions are useless for my sanctification and for my salvation, because this supernatural spirit does not stir up my life. Help me to be better in the future.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!

DAY TWO  (22nd May 2010)  Theme: COMPLETE TRUST IN GOD

Saint John Marie Baptist Vianney, what confidence the people had in your prayers! You could not leave your old rectory or your humble church without being surrounded by imploring souls, who appealed to you as they would have appealed to Jesus Himself during His earthly life. And you, O good Saint, gave them hope by your words, which were full of love for God. You, who had always counted entirely on the heart of God, obtain for me a deep filial trust in His Providence. As the hope of divine goods fills my heart, give me courage and help me to always obey the Commandments of God.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!
DAY THREE (23rd May 2010)  
Theme: TRUE LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

Saint John Marie Baptist Vianney because of your love of God you showed great charity towards your neighbor. You could not preach on the Love of God without burning tears of love. During your last years, it seemed as though you could not talk about any thing else or live for anything else. Thus you sacrificed yourself to your neighbor by consoling, absolving and sanctifying them to the limits of your strength. Your charity inspires me to greater love of God, a love which is shown more by acts then by words. Help me to love my neighbor generously as Christ loves them.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!

DAY FOUR (24th May 2010)  
Theme: HORROR OF SIN

Saint John Mary Baptist Vianney, you were so adamant against sin, yet so sympathetic and so ready to welcome the sinner. I come to you today as if you were still alive, as if I were kneeling at your feet and you could hear me. Bend towards me, listen to the repentant confidence for the weaknesses and miserable deeds of mine. Priest of the Lord, inexhaustible Confessor, obtain for me the horror for sin. You wanted us First to avoid the occasion of sin. I want to take your advice and make the resolution to break bad habits and to avoid the dangerous occasions of sin. Help me today to examine my conscience.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

DAY FIVE (25th May 2010)  
Theme: CONFESSOR OF SOULS

O Holy Priest of Ars, you knew how important was a good confession for the Christian life. It was to procure the happy fruits of millions of souls that you agreed to be in an uncomfortable confessional, which was like a prison, up to 15 to 16 hours on certain days. I will try to develop the habit of frequent confession, to prepare properly each time and to have always regret for my sins, so that the grace of final perseverance but also the sanctification of my soul will be assured. Ask this grace for me.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!
DAY SIX (26th May 2010)  Theme: REAL PRESENCE

O Holy Priest of Ars, whose only comfort in this world was the real presence of Jesus in the tabernacle, was it not your great joy to distribute the Eucharist to the pilgrims who visited you? You refused Communion to the souls who refused to reform but to souls of goodwill you opened wide the doors of the Eucharistic Feast. You, who each day at Holy Mass received Holy Communion with great loves, give me some of your fervor. With freedom from mortal sin, obtain for me a sincere desire to profit from receiving Holy Communion.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!

DAY SEVEN (27th May 2010)  Theme: DISPELLER OF SATAN

O Holy Priest of Ars, the infamous attacks of the devil which you had to suffer and the trials which disheartened you by fatigue would not make you give up the sublime task of converting souls. The devil came to you for many years to disturb your short rest but you won because of mortification and prayers. Powerful protector, you know the temptor's desire to harm my baptized and believing soul. He would have me sin, by rejecting the Holy Sacraments and the life of virtue. But good Saint of Ars dispel from me the traces of the enemy.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!

DAY EIGHT (28th May 2010)  Theme: EXQUISITE PURITY

O Holy Priest of Ars, a witness of your life made this magnificent praise of you: 'We would have taken him for an angel in a mortal body." You so edified others: the modesty and the exquisite purity radiated from your body. With such charm and with such enthusiasm you preached to others about these beautiful virtues which you said resembled the perfume of a vineyard in bloom. Please I beg you to join your entreaties to those of Mary Immaculate and Saint Philomena in order
that I guard always, as God asks me, the purity of my heart. You, who have directed so many souls towards the heights of virtue, defend me in temptations and obtain for me the strength to conquer them.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.
O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests!

DAY NINE (29th May 2010: Closing Ceremony at Makeni) Theme: DESIRE FOR HEAVEN

O Holy Priest of Ars, your precious remains are contained in a magnificent reliquary, the donation from the priests of France. But this earthly glory is only a very pale image of the unspeakable glory which you are enjoying with God. During the time you were on earth, you used to repeat in your dejected hours, 'one will rest in the other life." It is done, you are in eternal peace, and eternal happiness. I desire to follow you one day. Until then, I hear you saying to me: "You should work and fight as long as you are in the world." Teach me then to work for the salvation of my soul, to spread the good news and good example and to do good towards those around me in order that I will receive the happiness of the Elect with you.

Holy Priest of Ars, I have confidence in your intercession. Pray for me during this novena especially for ... (mention silently your special intentions).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Let us pray
O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep the Priests, your servants, within the shelter of your Sacred Heart where none may harm them. Keep unstained their anointed hands, which daily touch your sacred body. Keep unsullied their lips purpled with your precious blood. Keep pure the hearts sealed with the sublime marks of your glorious priesthood. Let your holy love surround them and shield them from the world’s contagion. Bless their labours with abundant fruit and may the souls to which they minister here below be their joy and consolation and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown.

O St John Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us and for all priests! Amen.
THE ROLE OF THE CHOIR IN OUR LITURGIES.....

A GREAT EVENT

On Saturday, 30th January 2010, in the grounds of the Pastoral Centre, Makeni, a very solemn celebration took place: the ordination of two Deacons and two Priests. The Liturgy was presided over by Cardinal Francis Arinze, the former Prefect (Head) of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, assisted by three other Bishops, a large number of Priests and Religious from all over the country, and a huge congregation. It was indeed a glorious occasion and an event to remember with joy and pride.

Before the final blessing of the Mass, the Cardinal, among other things that he said, praised the choir for their laudable contribution to the liturgical celebration: “You sing very well!” he said. And surely everybody present agreed. I, too, agreed, but with some reservations. My reservations did not concern the skill of the choir, but rather the appropriate way to fulfil the choir’s liturgical role. I felt that the Cardinal, as former Prefect of the Liturgy for the whole Catholic Church, would have added one or two observations…. But that was not the right moment to say them aloud.

CHOIR PERFORMANCE

Since he was our guest in Makeni for a couple of days, I had the chance to bring up the topic of the choir’s performance at the ordination with him, and so my doubts were confirmed: he DID have some reservations about the “liturgical” goodness of the choir during the ordination ceremony. I think the Cardinal’s thoughts on this matter are well summed up in one of 10 REMARKS he himself made at the closing session of the Liturgical Congress which was held in Kumasi, Ghana, in July 2006 (while he was still in office as the Prefect of the Congregation for divine Worship).

His Remark n.9 reads: “Church choirs need to be encouraged. The leaders of the choirs should be well instructed by the priest how to carry out their role. In particular, choirs are to lead the people in singing, allow the people to sing a part, and not monopolise the singing or orchestrate. The choir should allow the people moments for silent and personal prayer.”

So he wrote: “Not to monopolise or orchestrate”. To orchestrate here means: to play like an orchestra in order to entertain… and receive the applause of the congregation… which happens pretty often in some churches. But this is wrong! This is bad! It is a shame and a real perversion!

It means using the church, the time of worship, the songs and praises composed to glorify God and diverting them to self-glorification!

Are we forgetting that verse of the Psalm: “Not to us, o Lord, not to us, but to YOUR NAME give the glory”? This should be the MOTTO of every serious, well-instructed, responsible choir, according to the mind and the directives of the Church.
FULL, ACTIVE, CONSCIOUS PARTICIPATION OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE

SINGING is of the utmost importance in every liturgical celebration. Singing gives the rites greater solemnity, dignity and beauty. The Church has stressed this and continues to stress it, and has laid down clear norms and guidelines especially in 3 very important documents: the Constitution on the Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium, Vatican 2), the Instruction “Musicam Sacram” and the General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM).

The general principle is that every effort must be made to ensure that the Christian people take part in the liturgical celebration “fully, actively, consciously” and as a community (Cf. Sacr. Concilium, n.14). The celebration of the liturgy is not something that belongs just to the priest or to the choir, but it is the action of the whole Body of Christ. Therefore “the full, conscious, active participation of all the faithful is demanded by the nature of the Liturgy itself. By reason of baptism, it is the DUTY and the RIGHT of the Christian people” (Musicam Sacram, n.15).

It is regrettable that the ROLE OF THE CHOIR is not yet understood in the Church. Some choirs perform in such a way as to attract attention on themselves as if they were the centre of the celebration. The choir has a ministerial role to play in the celebration of the Liturgy, i.e. it is at the service of the congregation, the people of God: its purpose and task is to lead and help, to animate and support, to encourage the full participation of the congregation.

Therefore the idea of a choir that entertains the passive congregation with skilled, elaborate “pieces” is unacceptable, it an ongoing temptation and an abuse, it is ROBBING THE PEOPLE OF GOD OF THEIR RIGHT to actively and fully participate in the celebration of the Liturgy.

How are we – we priests in particular - to resist that ongoing temptation and pressure on the part of the choir “to play to the gallery” in church, that is, to play in order to entertain, to impress and to show off, instead of helping people to glorify God and to make the Liturgy beautiful and attractive? All the documents of the church – as quoted above- insist on liturgical instruction and spiritual formation of all the choir members. A few regular sessions to present and explain the relevant parts of the Church’s documents will go a long way towards helping the choir to understand, appreciate and accept “THE MINISTERIAL ROLE” which they are expected to play in church. The faith aspect will surely bear the fruit of convincing and complying.

WHO IS TO “DIRECT” THE CONGREGATION?

There is another aspect of utmost importance which so far has been totally ignored almost everywhere, but needs to be faced openly. If all the faithful must be actively involved in singing God’s praises and the choir should not replace the singing of the assembly, who will take care of the singing of the congregation? Who will “direct” the singing of the congregation? Obviously this is THE TASK OF THE CHOIRMASTER (Cf. GIRM, n.104). It is his task to stand in front, to give the appropriate start, to mark the tempo if necessary, to show the rhythm of the singing, in other words to conduct. This is a must, a necessity. We all know too well that when a large group of people or a large assembly try to
sing something without a leader in front, the result will often be disharmony, uncertainty (shaky- shaky going) or more often, a drag. If the choir is placed in church at the front of the congregation or nearby, it will be pretty easy for the choirmaster to take care both of the congregation and of the choir (which is part of the congregation!).

Of course, one necessary requirement will be to have brief, well-planned, regular singing practice sessions with the whole congregation before the Mass or any other celebration. It will be a matter of a few minutes: going over a refrain, a response, a verse or even learn a new song. If this is done regularly and promptly (and briefly), the liturgy will surely improve by leaps and bounds, to everybody’s satisfaction. By the way, more space should be given to dialogical and responsorial singing, according to the pattern of traditional African singing.

SILENCE IS PART OF THE LITURGY

Before concluding I want to mention TWO more points (…of course, important). Firstly, the necessity of a bit of SILENCE during the celebrations. If it is good and laudable to be fully involved in joyful and communal singing, it also NECESSARY (mark the word) to make room for some silence and reflection at the appropriate times, especially after communion. Silence is part and parcel of the celebration of the “sacred mysteries”, which also demand quiet contemplation. The choir should refrain from heaping non-stop song upon song, which end up by choking the poor members of the congregation. Please, give us a break! Allow us also to pray, to reflect, to admire quietly.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY ALWAYS FIRST

Secondly – and here I go back to something that Cardinal Arinze had at heart, when I consulted him. He said that the choir should not continue to sing when the Celebrant is ready to move on with the liturgical action, because that would mean interfering, putting the choir before the celebration of the Liturgy: not serving, but imposing.

Choir masters should be aware of this and use the singing in correct dosage, always keeping an eye on the altar, the centre of the celebration, to avoid any “interfering”.

The Cathedral Church is the heart and centre of the Diocese. Great events and celebrations usually take place there (or nearby, just like the recent ordinations under the palm trees in the grounds of the Pastoral Centre). The faithful of the whole Diocese and beyond flock around there:

They want to see, to witness, to participate and to remember. Logically and naturally, everybody expects that whatever takes place in the Cathedral be AN EXAMPLE and AN INSPIRATION to every parish and community. Hence the responsibility of all the people involved in the planning and execution of all the sacred actions and events: everything should be done according to the mind and wish of the Church.

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CAN A “DIVORCED” CATHOLIC REMARRY VALIDLY AND LAWFULLY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

The question presupposes a few canonical intricacies that must be cleared before attempting the question itself.

I would first of all like to look at the Church’s definition or description of marriage from a doctrinal point of view. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, Gaudium et Spes, describes marriage as “The intimate partnership of life and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws: it is rooted in the contract of its partners, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent. It is an institution confirmed by the divine law and receiving its stability, even in the eyes of society, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other; for the good of the partners, of the children, and of society; this sacred bond no longer depends on human decision alone. For God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view. By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory” (Gaudium et Spes, 1965 paragraph 48,).

Both the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the 1983 Code of Canon Law echo this definition of Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and describe marriage as: “The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life, which by its nature is ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring: this covenant between the baptised has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament” (Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 1601 and Canon 1055 paragraph 1 of 1983 Code of Canon Law). This definition of marriage underscores the origin of the union between a man and a woman – God, the part the couple must play – safeguarding their well being and the end to which the sacrament is ordained – procreation and upbringing of children, and the part the Church herself as the custodian of the sacraments plays - to keep intact the integrity of marriage.

A VALID MARRIAGE

The next important factor to examine is what constitutes a valid marriage. A few elements come into play for marriage to be celebrated validly. Any partner to marriage must have been baptised as baptism constitutes the sacramental basis for the reception of the other six sacraments. In other words, without baptism no one can receive another sacrament validly. Since Christ the Lord himself raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, the reception of First Holy Communion becomes a sine qua non (a necessary condition) if the union of a man and a woman is to be validly celebrated within the context of the celebration of Mass. Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation constitute the sacraments of Christian Initiation. A Catholic is strengthened by these sacraments by grace infused by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church.

1. Consent: Canon 1057 paragraph 2 of the 1983 Code defines Matrimonial Consent as “An act of the will by which a man and a woman by an irrevocable covenant mutually give and accept one another for the purpose of establishing a marriage” Canon 1101, paragraph 1 adds to consent and says: “The internal consent of the mind is presumed to conform to the words or the signs used in the celebration of a marriage”. This consent must be audible or seen by all present and Canon 1104, paragraph 2 states: “The spouses are to express their matrimonial consent in words; if, however, they cannot speak, then by equivalent signs”.

What this means is that when a man and a woman decide to marry each other, they must make a conscious, well thought out and voluntary decision (a positive act of the will) independently and the agreement or covenant they will establish will not be taken back (an irrevocable covenant).

Canon 1101, paragraph 2 goes on further to throw light on “a positive act of the will” and says: “If, however, either or both of the parties should by a positive act of the will exclude marriage itself or any essential element of marriage or any essential property, such party contracts invalidly”.

2. Ability that the parties/couples must have to contract marriage: For a man or a woman to contract and celebrate marriage validly, he or she must ensure that there is no obstacle or anything at all that blocks the valid celebration of their marriage. In other words, they must make sure that there is no impediment or danger that might go against a valid celebration of their union. The 1983 Code of Canon Law gives us two kinds of impediments: A) Diriment Impediments in General and B) Individual Diriment Impediments.

A) Diriment Impediments in General: The Code tells us what a diriment impediment does in Canon 1073. “A diriment impediment renders a person incapable of validly contracting a marriage”. A couple of examples could help throw light on this concept. a) A man who is already married cannot validly marry another woman, whether or not she is single. The reason is simply the fact that he has created a marriage bond by his first marriage. b) A man cannot validly marry his first cousin because they are related by blood (or by consanguinity). Any attempt to marry in these circumstances will make the marriage invalidly.

The concept of a diriment impediment is an objective circumstance attaching to a person which, in virtue of either divine law (from God) or human law (by a Bishop or an Episcopal Conference), makes that person incapable of validly contracting marriage (The Canon Law Letter and Spirit, A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law, edited by Rt. Rev. Mgr. Gerard Sheehy et al).

B) Individual Diriment Impediments. The 1983 Code gives us twelve (12) individual diriment impediments:
1) Age: A man cannot validly enter marriage before the completion of his sixteenth year of age, nor a woman before the completion of her fourteenth year (Canon 1083, paragraph 1),
2) Impotence: Antecedent (before marriage) or Perpetual (after and during marriage). By reason of its very nature, marriage is invalidated by antecedent and perpetual impotence to have sexual intercourse,
whether on the part of the man or on that of the woman, whether absolute (with any other man or woman) or relative (with a particular man or woman) (Canon 1084, paragraph 1),

3) **Previous Bond:** A person obliged by the bond of a previous marriage, even if not consummated, (by first sexual act after marriage) invalidly attempts marriage (Canon 1085, paragraph 1),

4) **Disparity of Cult or Worship:** A marriage is invalid when one of the two persons was baptised in the catholic Church or received into it and has not by a formal act defected from it, and the other was not baptised (Canon 1086 paragraph 1),

5) **Sacred Orders:** Those who are in sacred orders (priests and deacons) invalidly attempt marriage (Canon 1087),

6) **Public Perpetual Vow of Chastity:** Those who are bound by a public vow of chastity in a religious institute (religious priests, nuns and brothers) invalidly attempt marriage (Canon 1088),

7) **Abduction:** No marriage can exist between a man and a woman who has been abducted, or at least detained, with a view to contracting a marriage with her, unless the woman, after she has been separated from her abductor and established in a safe and free place, chooses marriage of her own accord (Canon 1089),

8) **Crime:** One who, with a view to entering marriage with a particular person, has killed that person’s spouse, invalidly attempts this marriage (Canon 1090, paragraph 1); They also invalidly attempt marriage with each other who, by mutual physical or moral action, brought about the death of either’s spouse (Canon 1090, paragraph 2),

9) **Consanguinity (blood relationship):** Marriage is invalid between those related by consanguinity in all degrees of the direct line, whether ascending or descending, legitimate or natural (Canon 1091, paragraph 1); In the collateral line, it is invalid up to the fourth degree inclusive (Canon 1091, paragraph 2),

10) **Affinity:** Affinity (a relationship through a valid marriage – between a man and the blood relations of the woman, and between a woman and the blood relations of the man) in any degree of the direct line invalidates marriage (Canon 1092),

11) **Public Propriety:** The impediment of public propriety (a man and the blood relatives of his partner, and vice versa; unlike affinity, public propriety is a stable union other than marriage) arises when a couple live together after an invalid marriage, or from a notorious or public concubinage. It invalidates marriage in the first degree of the direct line between the man and those related by consanguinity to the woman, and vice versa (Canon 1093),

12) **Adoption:** Those who are legally related by reason of adoption cannot validly marry each other if their relationship is in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line (Canon 1094).

3. **Canonical Form:** It is described in Canon 1108, paragraph 1 as: Only those marriages which are contracted in the presence of the local Ordinary or parish priest or the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who, in the presence of two witnesses, assists, in accordance however with the rules set out in the following canons, and without prejudice to the exceptions mentioned in Canons 144, 1112 paragraph 1, 1116 and 1127 paragraphs 2 and 3.

Sometimes for certain reasons known to the spouses and the priest or deacon who prepares them the Canonical Form is not observed. In this case, to avoid celebrating the marriage invalidly, the parish
priest of the church where the marriage will be celebrated must obtain a Dispensation (special permission from the (Arch)Bishop or the Chancellor). A special form is available in the parishes for this dispensation. When it is granted, the parish priest should have it documented with all other pertinent marriage documents in a file and kept in the parish archive.

A LAWFUL MARRIAGE
For marriage to be lawful, it should be celebrated according to what the church teaches about the sacrament, observing all the norms and laws with pertinent documents available. The church requires that at least three months’ notification should be made before a date is chosen for the celebration of marriage and this is followed by a faithful marriage preparation for at least two months.

As mentioned above, the sacraments of baptism and first communion are a pre-requisite for not only a valid celebration, but also for it to be lawfully celebrated. A baptism or catholic card containing all the pertinent information about one’s religious state must be presented to one’s parish priest or the priest or deacon who is going to prepare the couple for marriage. The church encourages couples to be confirmed before they celebrate their marriage. Sometimes confirmation is relegated to the future or completely forgotten after marriage.

By the end of the preparation, the couple, singly, should fill a Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form (with questions about the spouses) and present it, signed by both, to the parish priest or deacon who prepares them. The priest or deacon goes over this form meticulously with the couple to ensure that the form is properly filled. Only after this, and with his satisfaction that the questions were correctly answered, does the parish priest or deacon sign and date the form, indicating when and where banns were published/announced.

The announcement of church banns is another requirement by both church and state law. For very good and overt (open/disclosed) reason(s) the publication of banns could be omitted. When this is done the parish priest must request and obtain a Dispensation from Banns and the couple themselves must obtain a marriage license from the Registry Office at their own expense. The parish priest makes a notation in the Pre-Nuptial Investigation Form and marriage register that Banns were not announced.

For a widower or widow who wants to remarry, an authentic death certificate (issued by the state) of his/her former spouse must be presented to the parish priest and a copy of it should be made and kept in the parish archive and another copy sent to the parish of domicile (where the widow or widower lives).

A “DIVORCED” CATHOLIC
The phenomenon of divorce is somehow strange and alien to the Catholic Church for the simple reason that it goes and militates against the very dignity of marriage and integrity of the mind of God who institutes marriage and against the teaching of the Church, that marriage is for life. The strangeness of divorce in this sense is seen from the perspective of a civil dissolution of a valid and lawful church marriage that has been ratified and consummated. Seen from this angle a “Divorced
“Catholic” cannot validly and lawfully remarry in the Catholic Church; he/she is still married in the eyes of the church and the bond of the previous marriage still exists.

Sacred Scripture unambiguously maintains the indissolubility of marriage and teaches against divorce. “This is why a man must leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united man must not divide” (Matthew 19:6). From a scriptural perspective divorce is a contravention of the unitive (one man and one woman), indissoluble and perpetual character marriage must have, according to the mind of God. To rupture this union only to attempt another one in the church is not accepted by the church. As a matter of fact, the church teaches that a marriage that is valid and lawful, ratified and consummated cannot be dissolved at all by any human power. “A marriage which is ratified and consummated cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause other than death” (Canon 1141).

Our beloved deceased Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation – *Familiaris Consortio* (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World) sympathised with the situation of couples who have had broken marriages. “The Ecclesial community must support such people more than ever. It must give them much respect, solidarity, understanding and practical help, so that they can preserve their fidelity even in their difficult situation; and it must help them to cultivate the need to forgive which is inherent in Christian love, and to be ready perhaps to return to their former married life”. For those who have had a civil divorce he wrote: “The situation is similar for people who have undergone divorce, but, being well aware that the valid marriage bond is indissoluble, refrain from becoming involved in a new union and devote themselves solely to carrying out their family duties and the responsibilities of Christian life. In such cases their example of fidelity and Christian consistency takes on particular value as a witness before the world and the Church. Here it is even more necessary for the Church to offer continual love and assistance, without there being any obstacle to admission to the sacraments” (paragraph 83)

The Catholic Church has its own legal framework (marriage tribunal) and the integrity to look into troubled marriages. Our laity and parishioners are encouraged to use this office to help salvage their marriage and remedy the problems they might be having.

There are, however, two conditions in the Catholic Church that allow a “divorced” catholic to marry. The conditions are: 1) after a marriage is declared null and void, 2) Pauline Privilege or Papal Dissolution. A catholic who gets a civil divorce on the basis of these conditions only can validly and lawfully marry in the church.

1. **NULL AND VOID MARRIAGE**: A marriage is declared null and void when it is found to have had some defects from the very onset. It could have been the presence of an impediment, a defective consent, a defective Form, an attempt to simulate, fear or fraud.

Fr. Kevin T. Kelly in his book – *Divorce and Second Marriage Facing the Challenge* says that: “To say that a marriage is null is to say that it has never been a real marriage right from the beginning. This is a different notion to that of divorce, which involves saying that a real marriage has now
ceased to be or at least is no longer legally binding. The concept of nullity did not fall down from heaven. It is a human creation which attempts to interpret what is the real truth in a particular situation. In fact, it is based on the belief that appearances do not always correspond to reality. Things are not always what they seem, as the old song says. I do not think anyone would deny the wisdom of this insight. Nullity is just one instance of a broader approach to life which all of us would accept” (pages 27-28). “When a marriage tribunal declares a marriage null it does not in fact make that marriage null. If it is right in its decision, the marriage is null already and has been null right from the beginning. The tribunal’s declaration does nothing to change the marriage itself. Its value lies in its being a public and official act recognizing the already nullity of the marriage” (pages 29-30).

2. PAULINE PRIVILEGE OR PAPAL DISSOLUTION: Pauline Privilege is a biblical favour that is given to an unbaptised man or woman who wishes to leave an already existing union, to be baptised and marry a baptised man or woman. If the unbaptised party decides to leave peacefully, the “marriage union” ceases and could be dissolved by the Holy Father the Pope. (I Corinthians 7:12-17).

Canon 1143 paragraph 1 says of the privilege: “In virtue of the Pauline privilege, a marriage entered into by two unbaptised persons is dissolved in favour of the faith of the party who received baptism, by the very fact that a new marriage is contracted by that same party, provided the unbaptised party departs”. The Holy Father has the power to dissolve a marriage of this nature in favour of the faith of the believer who eventually becomes catholic.

Fr. Kevin T. Kelly says that the Pauline Privilege and the exercise of the power of Papal Dissolution have in common the fact that what was considered to be a true marriage is considered to be no longer binding.

When these two instances are the cause of the severance of a union, a civil divorce for the definitive end of what was thought to be a marriage (a null and void marriage), a catholic is always free to contract another marriage.

The response to the question: “Can a “Divorced Catholic marry validly and lawfully in the Catholic Church” is a resounding yes, given the conditions mentioned – a marriage that was never a marriage from the beginning (a null and void marriage) and a Pauline Privilege or Papal dissolution of a union between two unbaptised persons; one leaving the former union to be baptised and marry a baptised person.

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DO WELL - ANYWAY

PEOPLE ARE UNREASONABLE, ILLOGICAL, AND SELF-CENTERED.

LOVE THEM ANYWAY

IF YOU DO GOOD, PEOPLE WILL ACCUSE YOU OF SELFISH MOTIVES.

DO GOOD ANYWAY

IF YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL, YOU WILL WIN FALSE FRIENDS AND TRUE ENEMIES.

SUCCED ANYWAY

HONESTY AND FRANKNESS MAKE YOU VULNERABLE.

BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY

THE GOOD YOU DO TODAY WILL BE FORGOTTEN TOMORROW

DO GOOD ANYWAY

THE BIGGEST PEOPLE WITH THE BIGGEST IDEAS CAN BE SHOT DOWN BY THE SMALLEST PEOPLE WITH THE SMALLEST MINDS.

THINK BIG ANYWAY

PEOPLE FAVOUR UNDERDOGS BUT FOLLOW ONLY TOP DOGS.

FIGHT FOR SOME UNDERDOGS ANYWAY

WHAT YOU SPEND YEARS IN BUILDING MAY BE DESTROYED OVERNIGHT.

BUILD ANYWAY

GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU HAVE AND YOU’LL GET KICKED IN THE TEETH.

GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU HAVE ANYWAY