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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Dear Sisters,

"Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father" (Matthew 6:1).

At the beginning of Lenten Season, we make resolutions just as we do on the first day of every New Year. Some of those resolutions are sometimes not continued by the middle of the year or by the end of the year. This is almost what happens every Lent when we become holy, prayerful, sober, and contrite. Immediately after Lent, we will return and pick up everything we had given up. Let's ask ourselves, in this Lenten period, are we going to perform or live in the spirit of the Lent?

Prophet Joel encourages us, "Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God" (cf. Joel 2:13). This means that if we rend the garments and not the heart, nothing changes, no conversion takes place. Conversion is complete when we begin by rending the heart.

When we rend our hearts, three things will change: We will no longer live but Christ will be living in us (cf. Galatians 2:20); everything will be considered loss because of knowing Christ (cf. Philippians 3:8); we will become witnesses (cf. Acts 1:8). Only through the life of witnessing can we testify that we are followers of Christ. How do we witness? We witness in love.

In Nollywood movies, stories are always centered on worldly love (performing love) but hardly plots around the love of God (living in love). Because the world celebrates love without God, we end up performing love but do not live in love. Unfortunately, the performing love ends in pains and sorrow, but God's love springs faith, hope and charity.

When we give alms, pray, and fast during this holy season of Lent, may we avoid mere performance but do everything in sincerity of heart. Only what we do with sincerity will endure after the season of Lent. "Behold, now is the very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Stop performing and start living.

Sr. Adenike Regina Oke, SSMA

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RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD: THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH ON FAMILY PLANNING”

An Online Talk Delivered by Sr. Anthonia Bolanle Ojo, SSMA on Thursday, 15th February, 2024.

Preamble

The Church's stance on Family Planning aligns with its teachings on marriage and family morality, emphasizing the importance of procreation and love union in sexual acts, otherwise, it is considered morally wrong. Marriage is a divinely designed partnership of life and love between a man and a woman, aimed at mutual companionship and offspring generation. The Second Vatican Council emphasizes the importance of parents transmitting human life and educating their children as they are cooperators with God's love and interpreters of that love.

Responsible Parenthood

The obligation to procreate does not imply that couples should give birth irresponsibly. Instead, the Church requires spouses to be "cooperators with the love of God" and interpreters of that love through procreation. The fecundity of marriage comes with the duty of a generous openness and willingness to accept the task of parenthood and the sacred responsibility of deciding when and how many children to have in marriage. Responsible parenthood calls parents to take reasonable decisions on the size of their family for their own good, the welfare of the children, and society as a whole. This will lead us to what Family planning is and the position of the Church on this.



What then is Family Planning/Birth Control?

Family planning is a method that controls the number of children born to a couple and their birth timing, aiming to build a happy and fulfilling family by ensuring the right number of children and spacing births. There are two methods of family planning: artificial methods and natural methods. Artificial methods involve the intentional use of medical intervention, barriers, devices, drugs, or other techniques to prevent pregnancy by interfering with the process of conception. The Church has long criticized contraception as morally illicit, as it contradicts the innate language of reciprocal self-giving between husband and wife. Instead, the Church promotes natural family planning (NFP), a systematic, natural, and moral method of birth control that helps couples achieve or postpone pregnancies. NFP involves monitoring fertility signals, such as menstrual cycle length, body temperature, and cervical secretions. Successful use requires commitment, mutual cooperation, and concern for each other.

Methods of NFP

NFP methods represent authentic family planning, respecting the nature of sexual intercourse as God designed, promoting respect between husband and wife, openness to human life, and recognition of children's value. Natural family planning (NFP) is based on virtue of continence or marital chastity, requiring sacrifices, mutual cooperation, consent, and concern for each other. NFP methods track the changes associated with ovulation and treat each menstrual cycle as unique. Successful use of NFP relies on a couple following what they know about the method and matching their intimate behaviour to their family planning intentions.

Benefits of NFP

NFP methods represent authentic family planning because they respect the nature of sexual intercourse as God made it – to be love-giving and life-giving. It is a natural method of contraception that offers numerous benefits, including self-



control, sacrifice, respect for one's spouse, and gratitude for the graces received in marriage. It restores women's dignity by treating them as unique individuals rather than objects, is safe and healthy with no side effects, and is financially beneficial for families. NFP promotes long-term health and well-being of new born babies, as frequent or closely spaced pregnancies can lead to higher infant mortality rates. It also allows women to control the timing and spacing of their pregnancies, reducing their risk of serious health consequences and death. Although NFP has its own challenges such as fertility signals being affected by illness, stress, lifestyle changes, and environmental changes, the Catholic Church still considers it morally permissible due to its respect for natural laws and rhythms of fecundity, the sacredness of human life, and the value of the child.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Catholic Church condemns unnatural forms of birth control and approves NFP when there is a sufficient reason to avoid or postpone pregnancy. NFP is more than a method; it requires cooperation between husband and wife for effective use. Family planning counselling should support couples in choosing the best method and solving any problems that may arise. Research shows that family planning method use is more successful when couples choose and agree upon a method together.

CULTURAL DAY CELEBRATION IN MICHAELIAN CATHOLIC NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL, BECKY II ESTATE, KARU.

By Sr. Beatrice Jegede, SSMA



local delicacies.

The celebration included pupils showcasing their cultural heritage through dance, drama, and recitations of prayers such as "The Lord's Prayer," "Hail Mary," "Glory Be," and traditional songs in their respective languages. Additionally, they shared their local delicacies with teachers and friends, fostering a sense of unity and understanding among everyone present. The celebration created a beautiful atmosphere where pupils, staff, parents, and well-wishers could appreciate the beauty of different cultures. The event concluded with a heartfelt closing prayer led by the Yoruba community in their local language at 3:30 pm.



The cultural day celebration took place on February 8th, 2024, at Michaelian Catholic Nursery and Primary School Becky 11 Estate, Nasarawa state. This event marked the first-ever cultural day celebration in the school's history. The day was lively and filled with color, thanks to various activities centered on the theme of "UNITY IN DIVERSITY," showcasing the rich cultures of Tiv/Benue, Igbo, Yoruba, Arewa, and South-South. The program commenced with a solemn opening prayer led by the Igbo community in their native language at 10:00 am in the school compound. It was a sight to behold as pupils, staff, and parents arrived in their traditional attire and brought along





MATRICULATION INTO ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY, EPE

We congratulate three of our Sisters who had their matriculation on the 8th February, 2024 at St Augustine University, Epe, Nigeria.

At the Left is SR RITA ETOFO who will be studying INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. In the middle we have SR MARYFRANCES THOMAS of the department of NURSING SCIENCE and the right IS SR RITA JAMES who will be studying ACCOUNTING



MAY ALMIGHTY GOD GRANT YOU SUCCESS. AMEN!



Happiest birthday to our
MARCH celebrants

2nd Sr. Akinbolade Elizabeth

5th Sr. Olorunda Josephine

9th Sr. Taiwo Bridget

14th Sr. Otubo Stella

15th Sr. Ale Theresa

22nd Sr. Sorinola Florence-Ben

26th Sr. Adeyemi Rachael

27th Sr. Ajayi Helen

31st Sr. Agbanu Felicita-Mary

4TH SR REGINA OKE



FREE
TRAINING COURSE
FOR WOMEN RELIGIOUS

PENTECOST
project

OF THE DICASTERY FOR COMMUNICATION
WITH AND THROUGH
SISTERS



FREE ONLINE TRAINING FOR WOMEN RELIGIOUS



By Sr. Titilayo Aduloju, SSMA

The Dicastery for Communication has launched a free online training for women religious around the world on the most pertinent contemporary communication concerns through the Union of International Superior Generals (UISG). The training which would be held from Tuesday, 9 April to Tuesday, 25 June 2024 from 2:30 to 4:30 pm (Italian time), is part of the 'Pentecost Project' of the Dicastery for Communication With and Through Sisters.'

The course becomes a necessity as many religious sisters are becoming more concerned about how to navigate or handle the "digital highways," to effectively use the digital platform to disseminate the Gospel to every corner of the globe. According to the information released through the UISG, the course would enable the participants to investigate a variety of digital media communication strategies. It is the belief of the Dicastery that "Advancements in technology have made new kinds of human interactions possible. In fact, the question is no longer whether to engage with the digital world but how." (Towards Full Presence – A pastoral reflection on engagement with social media).

Hence, this course is designed for religious sisters who already maintain an active presence on social media, whether through their own accounts or accounts that they oversee for their religious community, apostolate, etc. Various topics including building unity in divided societies, communication planning, and modern difficulties in the digital environment are to be covered during the lectures. Of course, the course is opened to every religious across the world, but the number of participants is limited to only those who complete and submit the registration Google form latest by Thursday, 29 February 2024.

The Dicastery for Communication team in collaboration with international experts, would coordinate the 12 weekly Zoom sessions to meet the goals of this no-cost online course. The classes which would be predominantly delivered in English language, nevertheless, simultaneous translation into another language may be offered based on demand.

The Dicastery for Communication initiated the 'Pentecost Project with and through the Sisters' to establish a global network of Sisters' voices in Vatican Media, demonstrating their contributions to the Church's work with the support of Hilton Foundation support.

CONDOLENCES

The entire members of the Sisters of Saint Michael the Archangel commiserate with our dear sisters

Sr Genesia Ajani who lost her elder sister, Late Mrs. VICTORIA ALAGBE on 10th January, 2024 and was buried on Friday, 9th February, 2024.

&

Sr Vivien Ogbodo who lost her mother, Late Mrs. STELLA MODUPE OGBODO on 11th February, 2024 and will be buried on Friday, 8th March, 2024.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God and merits of Christ rest in peace. Amen.



EATING HEALTHY @50+

By Sr. Dr. Stella Okogie, SSMA



Preamble

Irrespective of your age or imbalance diet food intake of follow, it is never too late to begin repairing the harm that a bad diet has done, especially as one attains the age of 50. Studies have shown that cutting back on highly processed meals that are heavy in sugar, salt, and other additives and replacing them with more nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, lentils, seafood, and whole grains can have significant positive effects on health at any age, most importantly from age 50+.

What is Nutrition?

Nutrition is known as the process by which food is consumed and transformed into energy and other essential components needed for survival by organisms. The organisms use nutrients in the process of feeding themselves. Nutrients are substances found in foods that our bodies use to grow, reproduce, and survive. Some of these essential nutrients are roughage, vitamins, minerals, protein, fat, and carbs.

At Age 50+

There is a saying that **“You are what you eat.”** At age 50+ one must be careful about what one eats, how you eat, and when to eat. i.e. Quality, (the nutritional value in the food one eats), the quantity, (the amount of food one serves), and the time one eats (eat light food for dinner and eat between 6-7: 00p.m) matters.

At age 50+, the body system and organs change, and the digestive system can no longer function perfectly compared to a younger age. So, as you get older, eating the right nutrients is super important - less starch, more vegetables, fruits, and drink lots of water.

In addition, when one reaches the age of 50 and above, it is imperative for one to make changes to one's lifestyle in order to help maintain good health.

Of course, at age 50+, one is prone to some medical challenges such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Arthritis, osteoporosis, etc., and most of these diseases are caused by unhealthy food.

Stick to these foods @ 50+

At age 50+, one should stick more to these classes of food for healthy diet: Carbohydrates (yam, rice, bread, plantain, etc.); Proteins/Nuts (fish, chicken, egg, groundnut, coconut, almond, walnut, etc.); Fruits/Vegetables (pawpaw, orange, apple, cucumber, green vegetable, Okoro, etc.); Oil & Spread (Avocado oil, Extra virgin olive oil, cheese, etc.); Vitamins & Minerals; Plenty of water.

In short, Eat more complex grain; Eat fish and high protein foods; Eat high calcium foods; Eat more vegetables (EAT GREEN TO LIVE GREEN); Eat a rainbow (let color fill your plate i.e. Carrot, green beans, tomatoes, cucumber etc.) and above all, Eat when you are hungry.

Avoid these Food @ 50+

At age 50+, one should try to avoid these types of food in order to Sugar, Saturated fats, Red meats, Highly salted food, Coffee, Alcohol / sugary beverage, Deep fried food, Unprescribed medications.

Accompany Food with

It is important to know that food alone does not make one healthy, thus, to maintain a healthy diet, and food should be accompanied with: Maintenance Life style, Regular Exercise and Periodic Medical Checkups.





IMPACTS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION ON CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

By Sr. Susan Jegede, SSMA



Catholic education is different from other types of schooling. Catholic schools focus on developing the whole child, not just their academic abilities. They believe in nurturing the physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of students. The goal of Catholic Schools is to help each child grow in all these areas.

Some key ways Catholic Education affects a child's development:

Physical, Moral, and Intellectual Development: Catholic education sees a person as a whole, not just parts. It's not just about academics but also about morals and physical health. This helps kids become well-rounded individuals.

Developing a Sense of Responsibility: Students learn about their duties to themselves, others, society, and God. They understand the importance of not avoiding these responsibilities.

Participation in Society: Catholic education teaches kids about being part of a community. They learn skills to help others in society.

Openness to Dialogue: Kids learn to respect other people's opinions and have conversations freely.

Promotion of Common Goods: Children are taught to take care of the Earth and its resources, understanding that they're gifts from God.

Development of Sound Moral Judgment: Good Catholic Education helps kids learn right from wrong and make good choices in different situations.

Prudent Sex Education: Children learn about sex in a respectful way and understand its purpose, helping them avoid misusing it.

Knowledge and Love of God: Most importantly, Catholic education teaches kids about God's love and the teachings of Jesus Christ, helping them grow in their faith and love for God.

In conclusion, Catholic education plays a big role in building better individuals and contributing positively to society. Parents, teachers, and students work together to develop good values and make the world a better place.





EDITORIAL

Dear Sisters and Friends, it is with great joy that we present to you the FEBRUARY edition of our Michaelian Voice Newsletter. We hope you find it enriching and interesting. Do remember to send us your comments. Thank you and remain blessed!

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