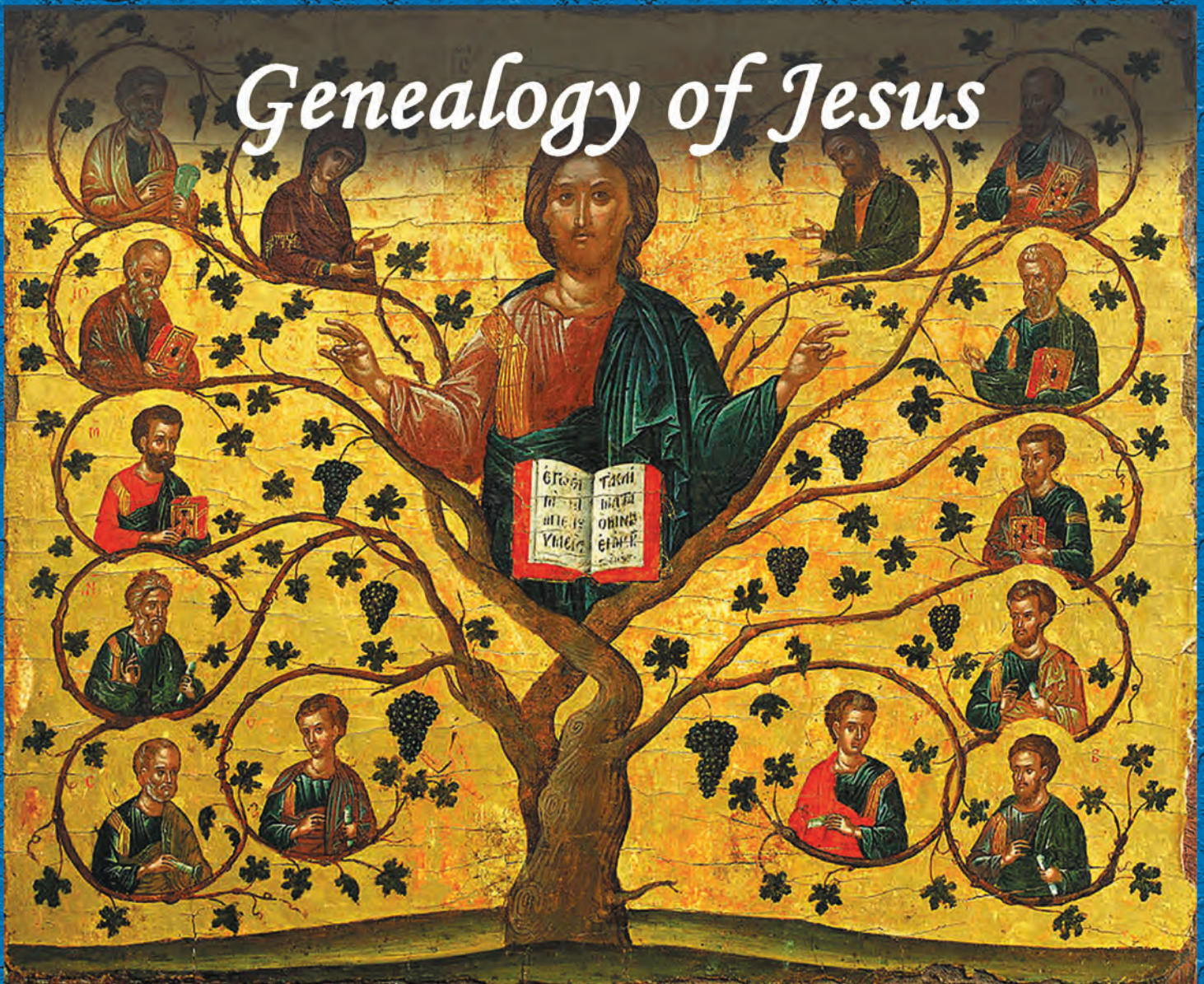


# MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR



**Newsletter Advent/Christmas 2024**

## Genealogy of Jesus



**ALSO**

- **Vocation Story**



**Vol.15**

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Newsletter 2024

# The Genealogy of Jesus

In December, we begin our four-week Advent pilgrimage to Christmas. The liturgy of the third week revisits St. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus - a long list of ancestors confirming that Jesus is not a mythical figure: Jesus is a human person, located in human history. We are preparing to celebrate the birthday of one whose body and soul had an earthly existence, whose incarnation was in real time.

The awaited Messiah, the subject of the ancient promise, is true God and true man. He is the Son of God, and the son of man, born of Mary of Nazareth, of the holy flesh of Abraham in whose descendants all the peoples of the earth would be blessed.

Pope Benedict XVI once declared that

*"Christianity is a physical religion that deals with the realities and exigencies of this world, and must not be relegated to folklore or legend, or allowed to be privatized and treated as a talisman."*

Do we truly believe that God became man in Jesus? That his incarnation affects me as a human being? Do I understand that the words and works of Jesus have meaning for my life, speaking to me in my depths and impelling me to a response? That his birth reminds me of my own coming into this world, and awakens me the desire to fulfil the purpose for

*which I was born, just as he did?*

Looking carefully at this genealogy, we also see, unusually, that five women are mentioned. Ancient genealogies never included women. In addition to Mary, there are four pagan women: Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Tamar. Yet, in these pagan women who appear at crucial points to play a pivotal roles in the



history of salvation, also appears the mystery of the Church of the pagans - us gentiles!

These women, (remember Bathsheba) are sinful women, and thus the mystery of grace appears in them. They are sinful women in whom appears the greatness of the grace that we all need. They reveal an exemplary response to God's faithfulness, showing their faith in the God of Israel.

And thus, we see through the Church of the pagans, the mystery of grace, faith as a gift and as the way to communion

with God.

Matthew's genealogy, therefore, is not merely a lengthy list of generations. It is history brought about first by God, but with humanity's response and active involvement. It is a genealogy of grace and faith.

It is precisely on the absolute fidelity of God and on the sound faith of these women that the fulfilment of the promise made to Israel is founded.

In these women, the critique of religious and racial purity is also challenged. Jesus has mixed blood. He shares the bloodline of pagans, of gentiles. Therefore, Jesus was born from all people, for all people. He is the first universal man.

We truly welcome a new kind of king in a new kind of kingdom. His royal "blue blood" is the royal blue of the heavens!

As we joyfully await the festive season, let us recommit ourselves to living in peace and goodwill toward all people.

Fr Hayden Augustine, MOP  
Our Lady of Visitation Monastery  
Nairobi, Kenya

# Vocation Story



**Sister Erin MOP with her parents.**

God the Father called me to religious life when I was 13 years old. Despite my lack of understanding at the time, a couple of experiences had prepared me for this calling. Firstly, I had a catechism teacher who taught us to pray every day. Even though my prayers were very brief at that time, I do believe that God used them to keep my heart open to His will and His immense love for me. Teaching all children to pray daily is crucial for their connection to Jesus. Another experience I had was learning about the story of Gabriel's Annunciation to Our Lady. As I was pondering what Our Lady did for Jesus, I hoped that one day I would be able to do something for Him.

After having received the call to religious life, I began to grow in faith and learn about the Catholic teachings and religious life. I struggled for a long time with finding a specific order to join. My spiritual director introduced me to the Missionaries of the Poor Sisters.

Years earlier, I volunteered with the Brothers in Jamaica, but there were no Sisters. In the summer of 2014, I made a come-and-see with the Sisters but was not quite sure if this was the specific order God wanted me to join, though I was drawn by the work with the poor and by the prayer life of the Sisters.



**Sister Erin takes her final vows on November 1, 2024**

In 2015, I took another come-and-see, and this time, I was certain that God was calling me to join the MOP Sisters, which



I did in January 2016. Since then Jesus has been guiding and preparing me to be His bride forever, and I am so glad to finally be able to take final vows, realizing that this isn't really me doing something for God but God lavishly showering His merciful love on me. I am eternally grateful to Mother JoAnne MOP, my community, and my family and friends for all that they have done to support me up to this point. I am grateful to the people of Jamaica for accepting me and allowing me to serve Jesus in his distressing disguise amongst them. Praise God for His work in my life and the lives of all missionaries serving the poor!

Sr. Erin Elizabeth Randall, MOP  
Regina Coeli Monastery  
Kingston, Jamaica



# FAITH CENTER – Happy 40th Anniversary!

By Grace Washington

It was Christmas Day, in the year 1984, and at Faith Centre, the residents were in high spirits. Workers, Diana, and other volunteers were laboring over hot cauldrons with the dishes of Christmas dinner. Young Charlie, who was both deaf and mute, swayed with the music communicated to him through his hands, which were placed around a drum being beaten. Residents were swaying and dancing to the live music. Mr. Morris was accompanying the band on his mouth organ. “Hipsters, Hipsters,” some residents laughed and cried out gleefully to dancing Arunda, which, of course, sent his hips swiveling ever more wildly!

Contrast that to the time earlier in the month when Arunda and I were sitting in a doctor’s office. “Do you know where he came from”? With this I was charged as I sat with Arunda in the office of this doctor, his face and voice crying out scorn.



Early residents of Faith Center Home

Yes, I knew where Arunda came from: Eventide, Kingston’s notorious public alms house. He was one of the first residents at our new home, Faith Centre. He was what people call a cretin\*. Long face with drooping, slanted eyes. Arms so long it seemed they would touch the ground. His gait was a slow saunter. He was also epileptic and suffered frequent grand mal seizures, the

very reason I was seeking medical help for him.

He was a gentle soul, liked by the other residents. When he was about to have a seizure, a sort of bewildered look would overcome him, and then he would fall to the ground writhing in contortions. Other residents would rush to his side, bending down to offer what little help they could. “Put a spoon in his mouth so he won’t swallow his tongue.” Some would cradle him gently until the storm had passed.

*“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”  
(Isaiah 53:3).*

Indeed, the residents at Faith Centre, rejected and abandoned by family and society, taught us about acceptance and love.



# MOP Vows Ceremonies



On September 8, 2024, four MOP Brothers took their final profession of vows in Naga, Philippines



On October 28, 2024, four MOP Brothers took their first profession of vows in Warangal, India



On September 14, 2024, in Flores, Indonesia, three MOP Brothers made their final vows and three MOP Brothers made their first vows

# Christmas Message for the Institute 2024

At Christmas we celebrate a mystery. God became a human being and in so doing made another mystery possible i.e. for man to become God-like. Human beings of course can never be God, but they become God-like when under the influence of that Spirit which overshadowed Mary, they put on some of the characteristics of God, albeit in a very finite manner.

Today hidden away in the story is an important element in God's unfolding relationship with humanity. "A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. .... And Joseph too went up from Galilee to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child."

God became a human being and allowed himself to be counted for a purpose, so that human beings who needed salvation could be saved. In today's world we would say "He stood up and was counted. The life of Jesus, the God-human, was a continued living out of that stance. In favorable times and in unfavorable times, whenever human beings needed a defender, whenever people, especially the marginalized were being oppressed, Jesus, the God-human, stood up for humans in need of salvation and was counted, right up until his death orchestrated by the powerful and those who wanted to keep the poor oppressed. That mystery, the mystery of God standing up and



being counted among men, allows the other mystery. Human beings too can stand up and be counted when the salvation of other human beings is involved and in so doing become God-like.

Christmas then in essence is not a commercial affair. It is to contemplate what God has made the most noble characteristic of human beings. To stand up and be counted when the salvation of others is in play.

On these days of Christmas let us thank God for the great mystery revealed to us in the baby in Bethlehem, God standing up and being counted for us. We thank God for the impact that this mystery has had in the lives of so many persons who have become God-like. They have stood up and have been counted on for the sake of their brothers and sisters, especially those on the margins. I think of Damian, standing up for the lepers in Molokai; I think of Rosa Parks; I think of Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa;

I think of the many others too numerous to count, of doctors and nurses, and lawyers, and those who enter politics for the good of their country, and the numerous volunteers in so many parts of the world, all selflessly working for the salvation of those who suffer.

The mystery of God made human has allowed the mystery of humans becoming God-like.

My prayer this Christmas for every one of you is that the mystery be operative in you so that you become more and more God-like.

Have a Happy and Holy Christmas! Let us pray for the strength to help others in need of salvation.

Most Rev. Joseph Harris, C.S.Sp.  
Missionaries of the Poor  
Campagnano di Roma, Italia

# MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR



## Newsletter

Is the official Newsletter of the Institute of the Missionaries of the Poor.



November 1, 2024 on the feast of All Saints, Sister Erin Randall MOP took her perpetual vows.

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Young Charlie would push old Miss Ida, who was blind and crippled, around in her wheelchair. Old Scottie, who was blind and diabetic, would serenade the other men in the dormitory with melodies from times gone by. Theresa, one of our mentally disabled young women, washed copious amounts of laundry for others unable to do so. Those unable to bathe themselves were bathed by those who could. Those unable to feed themselves were fed by others. When Dawn fell deathly ill, other residents gathered around her to pray, Down Syndrome Winston proudly holding a Bible in his hands and intoning his own special words of scripture!

The goodly doctor might have seen Faith Centre as a house of horrors. We, however, knew in our hearts that Faith Centre was all about building the kingdom of God. That was Fr. Ho Lung's vision those many years ago: Faith Centre, in the ugliest of ghettos, was Bethlehem over which the star shone brightly. Here in this poorest of places, Christ is born! Christ alive and well in the poor! Here they are gathered as children of God: poor, blind, deaf, crippled, physically and mentally handicapped, young and old. The beautiful ones! The blessed ones!

St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face." When the scales fall from our eyes, we see with Isaiah:

*Here is your God,  
he comes with vindication;  
With divine recompense  
he comes to save you.  
Then the eyes of the blind shall see,  
and the ears of the deaf be opened;  
Then the lame shall leap like a stag,  
And the mute tongue sing for joy.*



\*The doctor saw Arunda as a cretin as slang language uses the term: idiot, deformed. But imagine this! Even etymology "sees" the truth. Cretin is from the Latin Christianus, Christian, from the Greek Khristianos, from Khristos, CHRIST! Amen! Hallelujah!

Grace Washington and her husband, Donald, were full-time volunteers with Missionaries of the Poor from 1982 to 2002 when they returned to the USA. Grace and Don now live in North Carolina.

# MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR

*Help us improve our Faith Center Home*

Enclosed is my gift \_\_\_\_\_  
our Faith Center Home in Kingston, Jamaica.

in support of the renovation of

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