

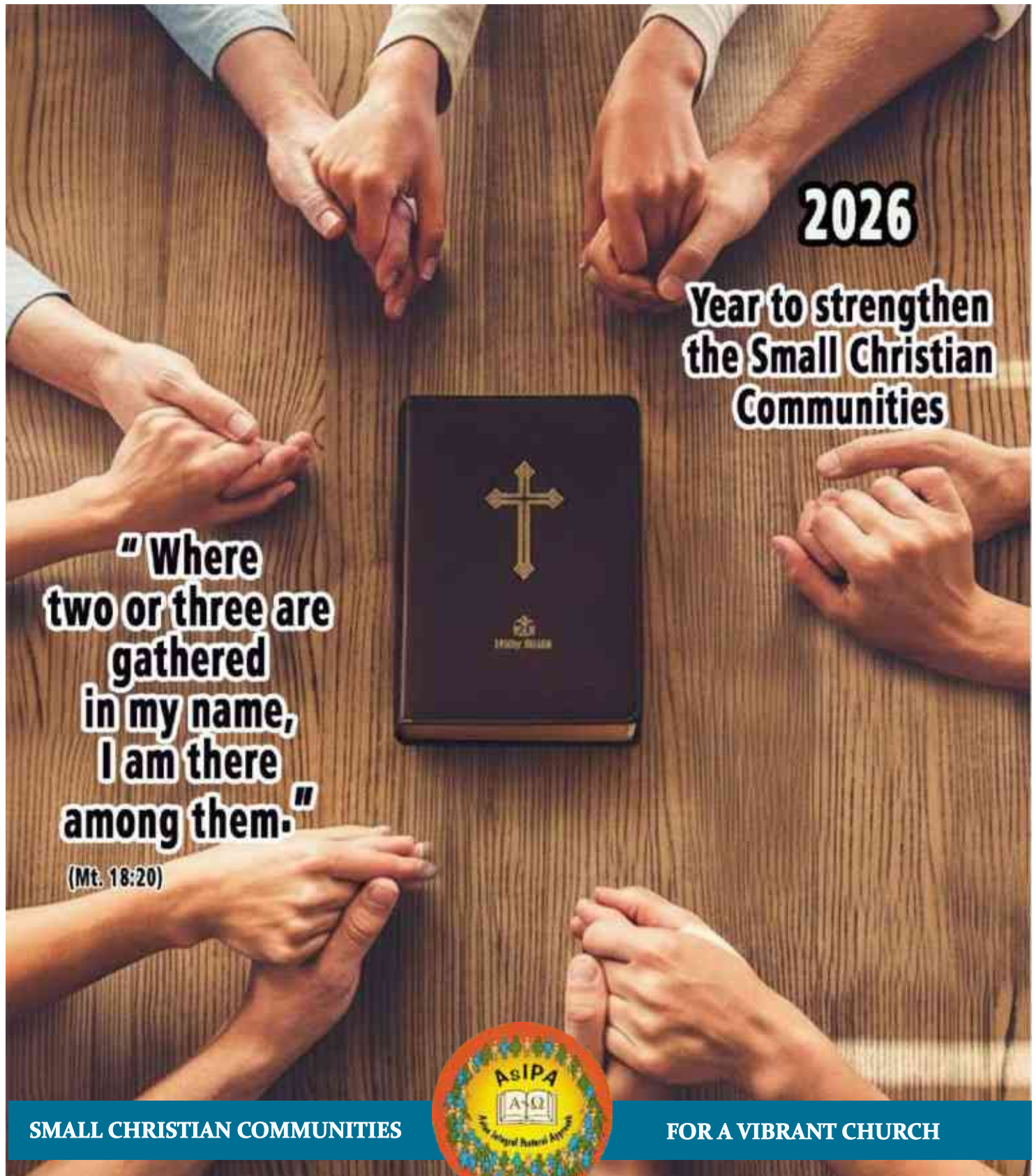


THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF GALLE



JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2026
VOL. 21 - NO. 01

News Letter



2026

**Year to strengthen
the Small Christian
Communities**

**"Where
two or three are
gathered
in my name,
I am there
among them."**

(Mt. 18:20)

SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES



FOR A VIBRANT CHURCH

SAMARITAN'S HEART

Galle Diocesan Relief & Recovery Assistant Mission
Receiving Donations from the Parishes of The Diocese



Handing over the Donation to Ratnapura and Badulla Dioceses



Religious Communities. Please uphold him in your prayer.

Unity Week: The diocesan Ecumenical Service is scheduled for the 20th January in view of strengthening our communion with the Mainline Churches, this year Matara. Our Diocesan Director for Inter-Religious and Ecumenism Very Rev. Fr. Michael Rajendram has organized a special programme on this day, to have more time for prayer, sharing and discussion. Please respond to the instructions you may receive from Fr. Michael and help find more meaning in the scheduled programme. Let us remember that together as one, we could achieve many good things in our life's journey.

Holy Childhood Sunday: On 25th January we do celebrate Holy Childhood Sunday. Children as witnesses of faith: Holy Childhood Sunday highlights that children, though small and dependent, are rich in faith and love. Their prayers and sacrifices have missionary power. The Association teaches children compassion, generosity, and awareness of global needs, molding them into responsible Christians who care for others. The celebration reminds the Church that mission is not limited to adults or clergy—children too are called to spread the Gospel and support missions worldwide. Please

prepare the Children for a worthy celebration, highlighting the meaning and the importance of the event – encourage them also to contribute to other needy missions and become young missionaries, with a heart full of love and compassion.

We do celebrate Annual Feasts in several main Churches and Mission Stations during the months of January and February. We begin with St. Lucia's Church, Ketapola (Elpitiya Parish), then the Holy Family Church Feast (Claretian Fathers) at Barawakumbuma, followed by St. Sebastian's Church, Udugama, St. Sebastian's Church, Hulandawa, St. Sebastian's Church, Selvakande and Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Halpathota. Please participate with great love and immense joy in their celebrations and encourage all those Small Christian Communities to keep up their faith alive.

Finally, let me proclaim that I thank my God each time I think of you. I praise Him for your dedicated life and mission. Hence may I also take this opportunity to express my personal prayerful best wishes for a peace filled and a blessed New Year.

+ Raymond Wickramasinghe
Bishop of Galle

NEW APPOINTMENTS - 2026



Member of
the Diocesan
Presbyteral Council
and College of
Consultors

Rev. Fr. Felix Malawarachchi SDB



Parish Priest
Sacred Heart Church
Aninkanda
Director - CoDeCeP

Rev. Fr. Patrick Prashanth OMI



Parish Priest
Our Lady of
Sorrows Church
Hambantota

Rev. Fr. Sudath Fernando SSS



Father In Charge
Holy Family Church
Barawakumbuka

Rev. Fr. Iresh Nimarshana CMF

PHOTO GALLERY

Annual Feast of Immaculate Conception Church, Balapitiya



Annual Feast of St. Francis Xavier's Church, Kalgana



Special Intercessory prayer for the Country at the Feet of Our Lady of Matara



Award Ceremony 2025 - Mosvold Educational Centre, Balapitiya



Blessing of a Grotto of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Gulugahakanda, Nagoda



DATES TO BE REMEMBERED

— BIRTHDAYS —

Rev. Fr. Pandiraja Selvaraj
6th January

Rev. Fr. Naveen Jude De Silva
10th January

Rev. Fr. Bernard Jayasinghe SJ
10th January

Rev. Fr. Bernard Fernando
13th January

Rev. Fr. Oliver Julian SSS
15th January

Rev. Fr. Bernard Wijeratne
17th January

Rev. Sr. Merina HA
1st January

Rev. Sr. Viyuritha SCJM
4th January

Rev. Sr. Kumudu Fernando DOLSH
8th January

Rev. Sr. Noeline Punchihewa SCJM
12th January

Rev. Sr. Harriet Silva SCJM
15th January

Rev. Sr. Pushpa Manori SCJM
15th January

Rev. Sr. Mangalika Fernando SCJM
19th January

Rev. Sr. M. Lourdes AC
20th January

Rev. Sr. Mary Lily HA
21st January

Rev. Sr. Sandya Fernando SCJM
29th January

Rev. Fr. Damian Arsakularatne
1st February

Rev. Fr. Jude Sampath Wilegoda
4th February

Rev. Fr. Lakshman Perirs SJ
17th February

Rev. Fr. James Jenistan OMI
25th February

Rev. Sr. Anne Gamage SCJM
22nd February

Rev. Sr. Venansius HA
28th February

January

— ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY —

Rev. Fr. Naveen Jude De Silva
29th January

Rev. Fr. Shantha Patrick
12th January

Rev. Fr. Anselm Rodrigo
21st January

Rev. Fr. Sheron Fernando
25th January

Rev. Fr. Chrisan Hasalaka
25th January

Rev. Fr. Asiri De Silva
25th January

January

Rev. Fr. Bernard Wijesratne
9th February

Rev. Fr. T. P. Johnson CMF
16th February

Rev. Fr. Rev. Fr. Micheal Colin
17th February

Rev. Fr. Marialangaram Gratian
20th February

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Nagaraja
22nd February

Rev. Fr. Lasantha Sajeewa Fonseka
22nd February

FEBRUARY

— DEAR DEPARTED —

Most Rev. Dr. Anthony De Saram
28th February

FEBRUARY





TOTALLY FOR CHRIST



My dear Rev. Fathers, Sisters and Brothers,
The dawn of the New Year has opened wide new horizons, filled with hope and expectation. St. Paul thanks God because in Christ he has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven. God lives in unapproachable light, which no one has seen nor can see. Christmas proclaimed that he has come into the world. He humbled himself to be one of us – flesh and blood. He has pitched his tent in our camp. He has come to give us 'grace upon grace' to fill us with all the blessings of the heavenly world. The Good News is not just a word, but a person. Christ himself, risen and alive! By the grace of the sacraments, the water flowing from his open side on the Cross become an overflowing spring, 'rivers of living water', a flood that no one can halt, a gift that restores life. In Jesus Christ the road to salvation has been shown to all people, a salvation that is first of all spiritual redemption, but that involves the entire human, including the social and historical, dimensions. Jesus' invitation is: 'Be my friend'. And for all those who accepted him, he gave power to become the children of God. All we need to do is to stretch out our hands in fellowship.

We have decided in the Diocese of Galle to concentrate more this year 2026 on Small Christian Communities. Our Diocese will reach out to scattered Christian families – some in the plantation sector too, much more than the previous years. Our effort will be to share the "Word of God", encourage them to live a dignified life with valued Christian Principals. We will also walk with them in their lives' journey (I Cor. 12/26). Celebration of the Eucharist, wherever possible, and engaging in other devotions will bind the Christian families together. So, may I humbly request all of you to rally round our families – go in search of them and bring them all to light – to celebrate together "LIFE".

Rev. Fr. Christopher Kurera of the Diocese of Ratnapura (formerly of Galle) was called to

Eternal Rest just after the Christmas celebrations 2025. Many decades back, he was the Vice Rector/Later Rector of St. Francis Xavier's Seminary, Kalegana and was my teacher/formator and mentor par-excellence. I was deeply saddened by his death. He was a holy and a humble servant of God, who always responded positively to any pastoral demand. He was obedient and respectful. He died in harness, with much courage and good spirit. The diocese of Ratnapura and whole Catholic Church, lost a precious priest whose yeoman service in the vineyard of the Lord surely is rewarded by the heavenly Father, who would say to Fr. Christopher, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into your Master's happiness." We will always remember Fr. Christopher as a man of God who radiated his sanctity even to the non-Christians with his humanness and concern for his fellow men. May he rest in Peace!

We are deeply grateful to Rev. Fr. A. Jesuthasan, OMI, fomer Parish Priest of the Sacred Heart Church, Aningkande and Director of CODESEP, who is now transferred and appointed as the Rector of St. Joseph's OMI Seminary, Columbuthurai, Jaffna. He has left an indelible mark of a missionary journey par-excellence in the Diocese of Galle. While we thank God for him, we also wish him well in his new mission/undertakings. We welcome Rev. Fr. Patrick Prashanth, OMI, to the Diocese of Galle to begin a new Chapter in his life as **the Parish Priest of Anningkande and Director of CODESEP.** Let us all pray for him and the flock entrusted to his care.

I also wish to inform you that I have appointed Rev. Fr. Felix Mallawarachchi, SDB, as a member of the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors, replacing Rev. Fr. Jesuthasan, OMI. Rev. Fr. Felix is presently the Parish Priest of the Immaculate Conception Church, Balapitiya and the Diocesan Director for Small Christian Communities. He is also a Spiritual Director/Confessor for several Women



Bishop of the Diocese
Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe

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Designed by
S. Reginold - Diocesan Media Unit

FOR CIRCULATION AMONG THE CLERGY
OF THE GALLE DIOCESE.

Dear Rev. Fathers & Sisters,
You are kindly requested to send your
information and news articles
to be published in the News Letter
before 20th of every month.

News Letter

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2026 VOL. 21 NO. 01

Contents

Bishop's Letter	03
Sharing the Joy of the Christmas	05
Small Christian Communities	06
Church Feasts	08
Dates to be remembered	10
Samaritan's Heart	12
Photo Gallery	11



PHOTO GALLERY

Requiem Mass : Remembering the Deceased Bishops and Priests of the Diocese



Workshop for the Writers : Commemorating the 30th Death Anniversary of Late Rt. Rev. Dr. Don Sylvester, the 4th Bishop of Galle



Thanksgiving Holy Eucharist celebrating for the Centenary of St. Theresa's Convent, Elpitiya



Diocesan Altar Servers' Day 2025



St. Sebastian's Church - Udugama



Vespers

24th Saturday, January 2025
At 5.00pm

Feast

25th Sunday, January 2025
At 8.30am

St. Sebastian's Church - Hulandawa



Vespers

31st Saturday, January 2025
At 5.00pm

Feast

01st Sunday, February 2025
At 8.30am

Our Lady of Lourdes Church - Halpathota



Vespers

14th Saturday, February 2025
At 5.00pm

Feast

15th Sunday, February 2025
At 8.30am

St. Lucia's Church Elpitiya



Vespers

10th Saturday, January 2025
At 4.30pm

Feast

11th Sunday, January 2025
At 10.00am

Holy Family Church Barawakumbuka



Vespers

17th Saturday, January 2025
At 6.00pm

Feast

18th Sunday, January 2025
At 9.00am

St. Sebastian's Church Selvakanda



Vespers

07th Saturday, February 2025
At 5.00pm

Feast

08th Sunday, February 2025
At 8.30am

HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTION

FOR THE MONTH OF

JANUARY



FEBRUARY

For prayer with the Word of God

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

For children with incurable diseases

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

Sharing the Joy of the Christmas





Throughout the various stages of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, church leaders have referred to a new model that includes basic ecclesial communities.

But what exactly are those?

The communities — often referred to as CEBs for their Spanish acronym (comunidades eclesiales de base, also referred to as BECs) or as BCCs for Basic Christian Communities — are prominent in Asia and Latin America. The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa refers to them as Small Christian Communities and has made them part of the ecclesial structure of the church. Some such communities also exist within at least four archdioceses in the United States, primarily within ministry to the Hispanic communities in Baltimore, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The communities are small groupings of families that meet to pray, study Scripture, discuss needs and problems of group members, and make decisions about action that needs to be taken. The lay leaders receive special training. But unlike Bible study or even Renew groups, these communities have members who function somewhat as a family, who consider the meeting a sacred space to unburden themselves, share problems and help other members.

Synodality and small Christian groups

Father Jose Navez Puthenparambil, who helped organize Basic Christian Communities in the Indian Diocese of Vijayapuram, explained the structure to OSV News. The whole diocese is a community of parishes, he said. Parishes are communities of Basic Christian Communities. BCCs are communities of families, which are communities of people. Synodality — walking together, listening to the people, then listening to the Holy Spirit — “is practiced in the BCCs,” said Father Puthenparambil. “Synodality is actually about Basic Christian Communities. When synodality is practiced in all levels of the church, synodality is realized,” he said. “That happens through Basic Christian Communities.”

Maryknoll Father Joseph Healey, who spent 55 years working in Africa, emphasized that “in Eastern Africa, the Small Christian Community model in the church is not a program, it’s a way of life.” He said some African church leaders say people in the West do not understand the communities because the parish structure is slightly different. African parishes have subparishes, which have mission stations or outstations; those mission stations have Small Christian Communities, groupings of families.

Parish structures and small faith communities

Father Healey said the Second Vatican Council members agreed that the “basic juridical unit is the parish,” but

bishops can develop pastoral structures that are compatible with the local communities. In Africa, some parishes have 30 outstations, and a priest can only visit once a month. Father Healey predicted that in the United States and Europe, as elderly priests retire and vocations stagnate, the West will adopt a model of church with the smaller communities.

The idea has been present in the synods in the past. In a 2012 interview with National Catholic Reporter during the Synod of Bishops on Evangelization, Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna said, “Many bishops from around the world have spoken about the Small Christian Communities.”

“We’re forced to reduce the number of parish structures, with all their administration and expenses, but we want to favor a growing number of Small Christian Communities led by laity — laity who aren’t full time, who aren’t bureaucrats, but volunteers,” he continued. “These are people living in the field, who do what laity in many parishes and other communities already do, which is to take responsibility for a large part of the life of the church, the vibrant aspects of community life.”

“We want to implement more explicitly the great theme of Vatican II: the common priesthood of all the baptized, with the ministerial priesthood at its service, promoting the holiness of the people of God,” the cardinal said in what could be a definition of a Small Christian Community.

In April 2023, at a Vatican press conference to present the present the conclusion of the second stage of the synodal process, Xavière Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the synod, spoke of the “seeds of synodality” in different cultures and referred to “the experience of Small Christian Communities.”

Listening when others won’t

The priority is listening, a theme often brought up in discussions about the synod. CEB members practice “ritually listening in a world where nobody has the time to listen.”

In many instances, the Small Christian Communities meetings are held in people’s homes and often they share a meal or food. Lia Garcia, director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said it is not a social event, “but with the Hispanic community, sharing a meal is just part of who we are.”

Small Christian Communities “are the church as the church began. ... They are a group of people who come together to be church for one another.” The archdiocese has 18 communities at six parishes, and communities are being formed at two more parishes. Although every community is different, said Garcia, all meetings have three criteria: meet in the home, a Bible reading and the check-in — what Garcia calls the most important component of the community: How is everybody doing? Otherwise, it just becomes a Bible study.

"What are the things that they need prayer over," she said. During the check-in, if a problem comes up, "everything else stops," Garcia said. Community members are not expected to solve the person's problems, but listening is "very important."

Combatting individualism, secularism

Franciscan Father Edgardo Jara Araya works with base ecclesial communities at St. Camillus Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland, which is in the Archdiocese of Washington. For his doctorate in ministry from Fordham University in New York, he wrote his dissertation on three of the parish communities. He told OSV News many BEC members also belong to other movements, such as charismatic renewal or the Legion of Mary, but the Small Christian Communities only have 12 to 15 people.

"How can we participate with the struggles and joys" of people if "we don't know anything about them?" he asked. At Mass, you sit next to someone, but "you don't know if that person is struggling with something."

For his dissertation, he interviewed nine St. Camillus BEC members, from Guatemala and El Salvador. He said they

told him the BEC is where they share "their experience of life, their struggles, their joys." And all of them, he said, spoke of their community members as "family."

It's not all sugar-coated, however. Garcia said she thinks U.S. dioceses "don't know how to define the small faith communities." Some who do not know them associate the communities with liberation theology in the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America. The 1969 Rockefeller Report on Latin America presented liberation theology as a risk for U.S. national security.

Father Healey, now working with hybrid and virtual Small Christian Communities from his home in New Jersey, once asked a Catholic sister about the communities. He said the sister told him that the biggest obstacle to such communities in many U.S. dioceses is that "white, middle-class Americans do not want to be vulnerable to each other in faith-sharing groups."

"The power in America of individualism and privacy dominates," said Father Healey, "and with secularism, it fights against the spirit of community."

By Barb Frazee published on Our Sunday Visitor

Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe, the Bishop of Galle and the Parish Community of The National Shrine of Our Lady of Matara Visited and Helped Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, Kalaoya



Annual Retreat of the Priests serving in the Diocese of Galle

