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Editor: Mr. Colin Smith.

EDITORIAL:-Stop praying for others!

The news houses are in no doubt that the language coming from the politicians recently clearly indicates that they are fast moving into campaign mode even though the general election.

What is perhaps a little more disquieting is that this rhetoric is very reminiscent of election campaigns of the past in which certain incidents became rallying points and even the justification for disregarding acceptable norms for campaigning and electioneering. To dig up past decades and tell your supporters that the blood of their children and grandchildren is on the hands of the leading candidate of the main party which is opposing you seems to be encouraging just that, even at this very early stage. No doubt the opposition will respond by referring to their dossier of hundreds who are missing or whose cause of death remain unknown. We know that such exchanges have a tendency to increase tensions generally and have a negative effect on Guyana as a whole.

Tens of thousands of Christians flocked to churches around the country on Wednesday to have their foreheads marked with the sign of ashes as they began the season on Lent. The message from the church at this time is very different.

During this season Christians hear the passage quoted from the Bible: ". . .if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways,

then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." The prayer that is called for here is not intercessory prayer for others; it is penitential prayer for the faith community, for ourselves. It is not to call for others to repent; it is a call for us, God's people, to repent. It is our land that needs healed, it is our wicked ways from which we need to turn, we are the ones who need to seek God's face.

Perhaps during this Lenten season we should stop praying for others as if we were virtuous enough to do so, put ashes on our own heads, to come before God with a new humility.

Lent is indeed about prayer, penance and giving alms for a specified period of time. However the deeper and more important meaning of Lent lies in being transformed as individuals and as a nation through these practices. It is to fast from strife, from old arguments and hate, to purify our lives. It is to show a repenting heart, ready to starve out sin from within.

The possibility of making a fresh start in life is always open to us as individuals and as a nation. However it demands that we must recognize and acknowledge that there is need for change. It also demands that we summon up the courage and faith to begin the process of conversion.

We hope that, especially those Guyanese who have taken the message of lent to heart, are ready to show in no uncertain terms their total disapproval and opposition to any proceeding which goes beyond the limits of fairness, decency and justice in this election year.

Restore life, hope, says bishop in message for Lent

Roman Catholic Bishop Francis Alleyne is reminding us that we are called to proclaim and celebrate the mystery of faith and the transformation of brokenness and death into resurrection. In a message for the beginning of lent he adds that this mystery "must radiate to the places of dysfunction to heal blindness, to quench the longing for relief and to restore expressions of life and hope where victims have surrendered to pain and given up."

The full text of the message is given below:

"We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again".

"When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your death, O lord, until you come again".

"Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free".

Above are the three (instead of previous four) responses that will be used for the Mystery of Faith in the revised text for the Mass (see article on Revision of the Liturgy) that will come into use from the first Sunday of Advent this year.

These responses proclaim the very core of our faith; founded on the death and resurrection of our Saviour. This is at the core of every celebration of Eucharist and the Gospels continually extend the invitation to us to place this mystery at the core of our daily lives. “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me” (Lk 9:23).

As the season of Lent opens and unfolds it will draw our focus to this central mystery of our faith. We will hear the stories; the classics from the old Testament, the reflections from the New Testament letters and those special encounters of Jesus that place the Mystery of Faith into the lives of God’s people. As we tell the story of Abraham leaving and “dying to” country and family and entering into a new space and “resurrection” defined by his God (2nd Sunday of Lent) or the story of the people of Israel “dying to” the state of being slaves and journeying to – not an easy journey – fuller communion with their God (3rd Sunday of Lent) we better recognise our own story with its earthly realities and the ways, through the mystery of faith, we are guided to new space and freedom with our God.

The Sunday Gospel readings for this year's cycle from St. John's Gospel; the woman at the well (3rd Sunday), the man born blind (4th Sunday) and Lazarus (5th Sunday) tell of real situations, real people who encounter the Lord of Life and the Mystery of Faith resulting in transformation of the people and the situations. What may be the situations that are real for us? Too often, and with disturbing description, I am told of brokenness and dysfunction in many homes; stories of violence, intimidation, fear, financial pressures to put up with harsh treatment, children left without love, affirmation, supervision and even food. These are real expressions of the suffering and rejection of the Lord present in homes and workplaces and neighbourhoods. We are called to Proclaim and celebrate the Mystery of faith, the transformation of brokenness and death into resurrection. We profess this mystery with our lips and say that this is what we are celebrating each time we gather around the table of the Lord. We also believe, as our Lord takes the lead, that this Mystery must not remain at his table but radiate to the places of dysfunction to heal blindness, to quench the longing for relief and to restore expressions of life and hope where victims have surrendered to pain and given up.

May this sacred season for each of us be graced with a deep transforming encounter with the Mystery of Faith, the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord so that we can live this mystery with our brothers and sisters in their struggle.

First lay head of Religious Ed retires

***MR CAMILLO CYRIL FROM MARURANAWA
AND MR MOSES JOHN OF KARASABAI PRESENT
A GIFT OF APPRECIATION TO MRS ADAMS AT
LAST THURSDAY'S MASS***



“The greatest challenge has been to find ways of helping adults - in particular - to convince them that they need on-going formation. That living the faith is a lifetime undertaking since there is still the feeling

that the Catholic faith is going through the paces getting something and that’s it.” This sentiment was shared by Mrs Verna Adams the first lay person to be appointed head of Religious Education in this diocese and for whom a special Mass was held last Thursday March 3, to mark her retirement after 35 years.

Mrs Adams told the Catholic Standard that the main focus of her job over these years was to help Catholics to know, love and live the faith. “... with my staff, creating programmes for adult lay ministry, liturgy, religious education for young people, the Rite for admitting adults into the Catholic Church, sometimes working with the Youth Office running workshops in different parts of the country, all of this was part of what I did.”

Last Thursday Bishop Francis Alleyne was the main celebrant at the Thanksgiving Mass for her service to the diocese at the Church of the Holy Rosary in Kitty. Several priests from in and out of Georgetown concelebrated.

In the packed congregation were also parishioners from the Rupununi and the North West and other areas in which Mrs Adams often visited and worked. They came especially for the occasion. Some parishes in Rupununi and Father Russ Sampson in Canada were also able to listen to and see the

activity through Skype. Through this link they too joined the priests, parishioners from Linden, Mahdia, Berbice and other areas in paying tribute to Mrs Adams at the church.

In 1975 Mrs Adams left a well-paying, senior post at the Guyana Bauxite Company because she felt called to work full time for the Church. It was from then that she began working with Jesuit priest Father Aloysius Church who then headed the Religious Education Department of the Diocese.

In 1982 she left for the University of the West Indies where she gained a Degree in Theology three years later.

In April 2000 Mrs Adams was awarded the Benemerenti Medal which is conferred on those who have exhibited long and exceptional service to the Catholic Church, their families and community. The medal has the word benemerenti (to a well deserving person) on its face, surrounded by a crown of oak leaves; the ribbon is made of Papal colors. The award included the medal and a parchment scroll indicating that the Pope has honoured her for her contribution to the Catholic Church.

In spite of this Mrs Adams told the Catholic Standard that the real high points of her time at the Religious Education Department (RED) were, “When the team planned work shops, seminars, retreats and other activities and they go very well and later on you see the fruits of your efforts. These are the high points. But I think going into the Interior regions Rupununi, Kurukabaru, North West etc, and realising that people have walked for days, travelled miles by boat to be present for the Seminar, that's also a high point. For me that confirms that we're doing what God wants us to do”, she said.

At the same time she noted that in some instances the Religious Education Department would conduct Know Your Faith sessions, Liturgy Workshops and other ventures and “The same faces turn up. The wider catholic community is not reached. There needs to be more done at parish level in some areas” she said. “RED can help, but RED can't tell parishes what to do”.

Churches packed for Ash Wednesday

...From Leon Jameson Suseran

Clergy and lay ministers throughout the diocese were kept very busy on Ash Wednesday as the usually large crowds who flock churches across the country to be marked with the sign of ash seemed even bigger this year.

A jam- packed church, old and not-so-old faces and rolling blackouts were all part of the experience of the evening Mass for Ash Wednesday at the Church of the Ascension in New Amsterdam.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the 2011 Lenten season.

In his homily before the hundreds, parish priest Monsignor Terrence Montrose said that Lent is a time when we slow down and ask ourselves about our relationship with the Lord. "One of the things we do recognize is that we are not as good and holy as we ought to be, and so we come and ask the Lord to forgive us our sins. Each one of us will have to go into our hearts and see where our sin is. No one can do that for us. But God knows who we are. He knows our sins. He is waiting for us to come to Him and to say to Him, 'God I am sorry'," Monsignor said.

"We have a choice to make. We are either for God or against God. We cannot have the two things going together," he said Throughout these forty days of Lent, "The Church will remind us again and again, that you are dust and to dust you shall return. That each one of us at the end of time will have to give an account of our lives. What did we do in our lives?"

Monsignor Montrose stated that God usually gives His people "a long rope" but there will come the day when we will have to answer for our actions and lives.

We come together as a church with broken hearts and spirits and we say to God 'Spare your people Lord; Spare us for we have sinned", he concluded.

During the distribution of Ashes, the church was plunged into darkness by a power blackout. Candles provided some light for the distribution of ash. A stand- by generator had to be commissioned and power was restored after a few minutes. However during the Eucharistic Prayer, there was another blackout took place.

The entire Mass, through its solemn music and liturgy, set the stage for the entire Lenten season, a time of deep prayer, fasting and repentance.

Diocese to start preparation for new Mass Text

.....Bishop Francis writes....

"At the beginning of Advent this year the English-speaking world will begin using the revised text for the Mass. This revision has been in the works for some time and now, in its final form, will be promulgated and put into use.

"The revision of the text was done with the purpose of recapturing the spirit and content of the text in its origin. In the very early church when the structure of the Mass was evolving it was doing so in the context of strong fervour, enthusiasm, devotion, conviction and faithfulness to the Gospel. The revised text is very much aligned to the text used in the early formula of the Mass and as we bring this text into use for ourselves my wish is that we not only learn and familiarise ourselves with the new

words and responses but more importantly use this opportunity to renew our love, zeal and sense of mystery in the celebration of the Eucharist.

“During Lent and over the period leading up to the implementation of the revised liturgy there will be a number of articles in the Catholic Standard, programmes on Catholic Magazine and workshops offered to help us all prepare well for this change. Please look out for them. This change is a unique occasion to deepen our understanding of the Eucharist and afford ourselves the chance to more fully celebrated it.

I noted at the meeting with the members of CPDs a few weeks ago the number times the need for formation and spirituality was mentioned. Seeing that the Mass is the main celebration of the Christian Community it would be fitting that we all renew ourselves through learning and deepening our understanding of Eucharist.

Call to be a Catholic Priest

Last year, I challenged my nephew awaiting his final semester results in Automobile Engineering with this question, ‘Are you interested in becoming a Jesuit Priest?’ After a moment of studied silence he broke in with a counter question, ‘***What entrance exam must I pass to become a bishop or cardinal?***’ The answer puzzled me at first and consequently made me realize that what **truly energizes youngsters today** is ‘**competition, prestige and high salary-packages**’. Today competition extends beyond one’s town and even one’s country, ambition and avarice recognize no national borders or geographical boundaries. This cut throat competition begins perhaps even before nursery class and possibly goes on well beyond retirement. What the world values is not performance per se but performance in relation to the other. The thrill is not just to surge ahead but to count the scalps you have trodden over.

However, that is not the same force that drives one responding to a vocation to priesthood. A priest like Christ is called to serve, not be served; to respond to the divine call you must be made of a sterner stuff and be able to make his own the song of “The Man from La Mancha”:

**“To fight for the right without question or pause,
To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause”.**

Vocation is not a profession

Priesthood is not a position you gain by paying a price of years of strenuous studies. Priesthood is not a privilege of just the highly competent, nor is life a bed of roses with lucrative pay package and

all the comforts money can buy. Accepting a vocation is a response of a generous heart that gives without counting the cost and fights without heeding the wounds.

To begin with, what one needs to understand is the intrinsic meaning of Vocation. Vocation comes from the Latin verb “*vocare*” which means “to call”. So it is a personal ‘call from God to serve’ not to compete. There is no cut-throat competition; thus it is not an alluring profession that leads to nightmares but a divine service to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

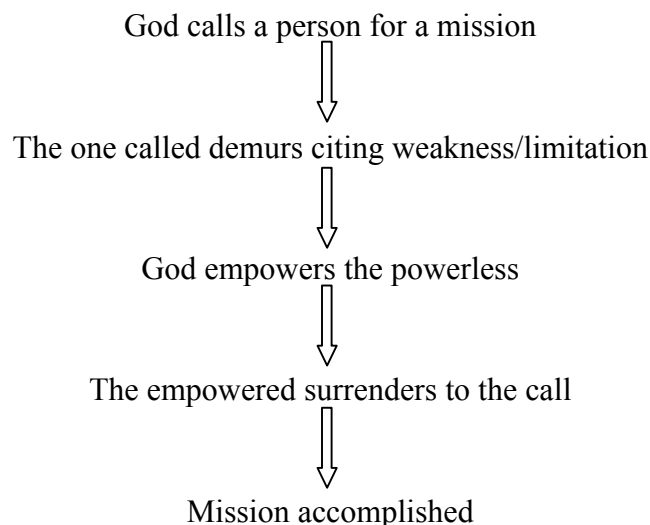
God’s call and my response

God’s call is mysterious and mystical. It is mysterious because no one can say that this is the person or this is the way God calls; it is mystical for it requires some transcendental experience to recognize it. Pope John Paul II describes “vocation” as both a ‘**calling and a relationship**’. Unless one has a deep spiritual intimacy with God, one cannot recognize that voice. One responds to the call because of the perceived value of both the call and the caller, it is the fruit of a loving and lasting relationship. The call is specific and personal requiring a personal commitment and individual response as the following examples reveal.

- Moses call from a burning bush (**Exodus 3**)
- Joshua nomination by God (**Joshua 1:1–9**)
- Isaiah called in a vision (**Isaiah 6**)
- Nehemiah (chapter 1) called through distressing news (**Nehemiah chapter 1**)
- Jonah commissioned to Nineveh (**Jonah chapter 1**)
- Barnabas missioned to Antioch by Jerusalem church (**Acts 11:22**)
- Jeremiah chosen from his mother's womb (**Jeremiah 1:4–10**)
- Apostles’ invitation to follow Jesus (**Mathew 4:19; 9:9, Mark 1:17**)
- Paul called dramatically (**Romans 1:1, 1:Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:15**)

The Pattern of Call

A unique pattern is revealed in all the aforementioned vocation narratives captured in the flowchart.



To illustrate, Moses received his call from the burning bush but he quickly pleaded inability saying, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Ex 4:10. Then God empowers him and you know how Moses led the enslaved people of Israel towards the Promised Land. Thus, we see a vocation is a bilateral process where God's gratuitous invitation requires the individual's acceptance.

Paying heed to the Call

Listening to God's call in today's noisy DJ world is not that easy as everyone thinks. The inner ears must be attuned to listen to and recognize His call. This requires solitude and tuning into the celestial. God's silent call can only be encountered with another ear of silence. The Indian Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore would explain this phenomenon of this silent encounter in the following lines.

*Have you not heard his silent steps?
'he comes, comes, ever comes'*

*Every moment and every age,
every day and every night
'he comes, comes, ever comes'*

*Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mine,
but all their notes have always proclaimed,
'he comes, comes, ever comes.'*

*In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path
'he comes, comes, ever comes'.*

*In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds
'he comes, comes, ever comes. '*

*In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart,
and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine.
'he comes, comes, ever comes'.*

Now replace the word **"comes"** in the poem with **"Calls"**. You will be able to make vague sense of God's subtle and persistent call. If your heart echoes this silent call do not hesitate to contact.

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VIEWPOINT BY VIBERT PARVATAN:THE UPSURGE IN CRIME

The news headlines tell the sad tale of acts of cruelty which in some cases lead to deaths of Human Beings. Murders are now regularly committed in our country with its sad consequences, especially for the victims' families.

Recent Stabroek Newspaper headlines stated:

"MOTHER OF TWO STABBED TO DEATH, DAUGHTER INJURED"	-	February 13, 2011
"LALUNI CREEK WOMAN DIES AFTER SEVERE CUTLASS BEATING BY HUSBAND"	-	"
"HUNT STILL ON FOR PARTNERS IN KILLING OF TWO WOMEN"	-	February 14
"ENMORE WOMAN MURDERED"	-	February 16
"NABACLIS WOMAN REPEATEDLY STABBED BY EX"	-	February 17
"STRATHSPEY CANE CUTTER, FAMILY HELD CAPTIVE BY GANG"	-	February 22
"BARTENDER KNIFED IN ROBBERY"	-	"
"PORT KAITUMA MAN FOUND MURDERED ON TRAIL"	-	February 28
"POLICE PROBING REPORT OF TWO BODIES AT ISSANO"	-	February 28, 2011
"WOMAN REMANDED OVER MURDER OF FEMALE LOVER"	-	March 1
"ROBBERY SUSPECT SHOT BY POLICE AFTER ATTACK ON PENSIONER"	-	March 2
"WATER CHRIS OWNER SHOT AT, ROBBED OUTSIDE HOME"	-	March 4
"HUSBAND SUSPECT IN MURDER OF VREED-EN-HOOP WOMAN"	-	March 7
"SIX HELD AFTER MAN MURDERED AT		

TIMEHRI”

- March 8

“FISH VENDOR KNIFED TO DEATH AT
PORT-KAITUMA”

- “

Those stories reveal the serious crime situation which exists in our country.

It sensitizes our people to the harsh realities of the environment and dictates to them that they exercise caution and alertness whether in the homes, public places or even in vehicles travelling along the road way.

While the incidents generally relate to robberies, there are some cases of domestic violence. Those terrible stories on crime on a regular basis, highlight the apparent inability of our hard working law enforcement personnel to effectively combat crime.

It will be inappropriate to merely highlight the problem as it is necessary for thoughts to be given as to improving the situation. It is my view that a number of inter-related circumstances and factors contribute to our crime situation.

These include:-

- ✓ An under-manned Police Force
- ✓ Inadequate transportation for members of the Force, especially in responding to reported crimes

- ✓ The large number of unsolved crimes which give criminals greater confidence
- ✓ Inadequate police patrols around the city and in urban areas
- ✓ Poor street lighting
- ✓ Too much loitering around businesses, outside banks and in general
- ✓ Weakened investigative capability
- ✓ Under utilisation of road blocks and check points at strategic point
- ✓ Absence of an effective reward system to motivate members of the force.

Members of the Police Force need the support and cooperation of members of the public. There is a shared responsibility for establishing and preserving Law and Order.

However, John Public's cooperation could be impaired if the image of the Police Force is tarnished and lead citizens to think that in some cases they act beyond their legal authority and do not demonstrate that they have the welfare of citizens at heart.

It is an unhealthy environment in which people live in fear of criminal activity, which is a major problem in many countries. Citizens have to be alert, cautious and aware of the challenges and pitfalls to which they and their family members are exposed.

Criminals are not born that way, they are the product of their environment and in search for explanations, we need to look at upbringing of children, parental guidance, religious teachings, all of which can in a positive way lead to better conduct and a way of life. The social fabric of our nation and levels of poverty are areas to be looked at.

The absence of rehabilitation of persons involved in crime and the emphasis on punishment may lead to harden the criminals. It is unfortunate to find many of our youths who are initially involved in petty crime, being remanded to prison to mix with those whose lives are painted and tarnished in criminal activities.

The crime situation demands special attention by the agencies responsible to society for the preservation of Law and Order.

Lethem's Cary Elwes Centre: A Ray of Hope

By Eddie Doyle

The carpentry workshop in the compounds of the Jesuit Mission in St Ignatius, Lethem was first built about 15 years ago. Unfortunately due to a number of factors, the centre was unable to live up to its objectives. It therefore ceased to operate, and remained unused since 2007.



It was the wish of Fr Joachim to see the unit re-open and be used as a training workshop & resource centre for local youths for whom there are limited opportunities for vocational training and employment. Following a discussion with Fr Joachim and Mr Timothy McIntosh, Program Manager of Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) Guyana, I was brought in, in April 2010 on a two year placement to evaluate and attempt to revive the centre to its original intended goals.

One of the challenges of starting up a training centre is to have sufficient funds to keep it going and motivate apprentices to continue attending, until the level of skills and output reach a point where the centre can generate its own income.

Therefore in July, with the approval of Fr Joachim, I submitted a project proposal and funding request to the Jesuit Missions, which received the full support of Fr Dermot. This set the stage for the operation of the Cary Elwes Woodwork Training Centre, named, as suggested by Fr Joachim, after the first priest to start the Jesuit Mission in St Ignatius.

In October 2010, 22 year old Francis (Panda) Fredricks joined the workshop as its first apprentice; and in December 2010 I was able to secure 1600 BM of wood from the Tiger Wood Corporation, the only internationally approved sustainable logging operation in Guyana, providing for the use of local Amerindian communities.

The Kanuku Mountain Community Representatives Group (KMCRG), a body representing more than 11 communities in Southern and Central Rupununi, assisted me in providing residential training workshops for skilled and unskilled carpenters from different communities. The church premises were made available and this allowed the trainees to stay on site while their communities provided for their transport & meals for the duration of the two-week workshop.

During the course of these two week workshops, students are taught the correct and safe use of hand and machine tools and how to take care of them. They also learn new techniques, exchange skills & experiences, and complete a project which they are able to carry back to their communities. Since November 2010, eleven carpenters from 5 communities have attended the workshops; with a further two (for 6-8 trainees in each workshop) planned to take place by April 2011. At the end of the Workshop students receive a Certificate of Attendance and are able to take their work back to their respective communities.

(Eddie Doyle is a qualified Cabinet Maker and Master Woodworker who lived and worked in Sweden. He also studied development and specialised in providing instruction and training of woodworking skills as occupational and vocational therapy for persons with physical or mental disabilities. He also worked as a volunteer woodworking tutor for 2 years in Zimbabwe & two years in Ghana, West Africa)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Rebuilding of Sacred Heart is 'soul-stirring'

Dear Editor,

The news of the 'turning-of-sod' ceremony for the rebuilding of Sacred Heart Church, Main Street, on Friday, 18th February, is indeed very moving and soul-stirring for all lovers of this beautiful heritage building and its special place in the history of Guyana. I notice that some papers in the United States too have reported this event. That the space available is being utilized also to house a presbytery, a hall, a chapel, a library, archives, the Catholic newspaper and other facilities is sure to attract even more people than before.

It will surely become a tourist-centre and a place of pilgrimage for many. Shifting the mid-day Mass from the Cathedral to Sacred Heart is a brilliant idea. The only glitch in Leon Suseran's report is that Fr. Joe Chira, former Jesuit Superior for Guyana Region, is not deceased, but is now working in the Kerala Jesuit Province, South India. He has probably been mistaken for Fr. Kuruvila Cherian, who was in Guyana since 2002 and passed away last year, 2010.

I have no doubt that the Good Lord, Who surely wants the Church dedicated to His Sacred Heart be rebuilt in all its glory, will provide the money needed through His many generous friends.

JOSEPH M. DIAS, S.J.

BUREAUS FOR MEN, WOMEN IMPORTANT

Dear Editor,

The formation of these organizations is a step in the right direction because they should address some of the issues affecting both genders whether old or young. However we need to put our priorities in order.

It is an axiom that the basic human needs are for food, clothing and housing and to satisfy these needs money is of paramount importance. Although this fact is elementary we tend to lose sight of its reality. When people appear before these bureaus in most instances the lack of adequate money will surface as the underlying reason for the majority of problems. Holistic methods must be employed to deal with these matters.

Let us admit that most persons receiving salaries, wages and pensions find difficulty in meeting routine expenses for food, clothing, rent, electricity, water and transportation. This situation is worse if payments must be made towards mortgages and hire purchases

Finally we need to revalue our dollar to give it spending power. In terms of our exchange rate to the US Dollar, we need to narrow the difference. Why can't it be about \$10G to \$1US? We need to build homes for rental especially for the elderly. Those retirees who came off many years ago receive a greatly diminished pension owing to inflation and the concomitant depreciation of our currency.

MALCOLM CLARKE

[Stinking garbage in Wellington St](#)

Dear Editor,

On Wellington Street between Charlotte and South Road is a metal garbage container. This thing is almost in the middle of the road. It is a traffic hazard and around the place is forever wet and stinks. One has to close one's mouth and nose when passing.

W.P.GEORGE

