



THY KINGDOM COME (Mt. 6:10)
DIOCESE OF CHANDA (CHANDRAPUR)

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To,
All Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and the Faithful,
Diocese of Chanda

Dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and the Faithful,

Thy Kingdom Come!
Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand (Is 41:8-10).

This is the assurance God has given us. Jesus repeatedly endorsed this in his teachings. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32, Jn 14:27, Lk 12:7 etc). The assurance of Jesus is very consoling when he says: "When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say" (Lk 12:11-12). It is said that there are 365 times the 'Fear Not' or similar phrases in the bible. It shows that practically each day of the year God is assuring us to go ahead with courage and vigour!

I write this circular in the context of some news from different corners of our country which are not very welcoming and create some kind of fear and uncertainty in our mission ahead. We have no excuse but to continue our mission. These are some gimmicks by some when election is round the corner. Anyhow these are not problems, but just challenges. Jesus and the disciples had and the Church too has faced such challenges in the past. They are not new to the Church. Probably we are new to them as we personally confront them these days. Jesus overcame the

three temptations (Mt 4:1-11 & Lk 4: 1-11) by a challenging mind and reliance in the providence of God, the Father (Cf. Lk 12:27-28). We are given no other option either. The season of Lent helps us to equip ourselves to face these challenges with a spirit-filled mind and enthusiasm. We shall keep this as a special intention for our Lent 2024.

As the nation is getting ready for general election I exhort everyone to use our electoral franchise in a responsible way and guide our people accordingly, so that we may have a genuinely elected government which respects the constitutional rights of the people of the country. We shall pray that there shall be fair election process and there shall be social and religious harmony, and welfare of every citizen is attended to. The developments in the recent past in some parts of our country are really alarming. The recently concluded XXXVI biennial general body meeting of CBCI held in Bangalore (Jan 31 – Feb 07, 2024) had the following as the theme: “The Church’s response to the current socio-political situation of the country and the benefits and challenges of artificial intelligence (AI)”. The message of CBCI states: “As Christian our first response is PRAYER, for with God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26). The CBCI asks that each diocese observes **Friday 22 March 2024 as a day of prayer and fasting for penance and harmony in our country**. May I request everyone to announce it in our parishes and institutions and do the needful. While using the modern technologies of social media and Artificial Intelligence, the CBCI reminds the pitfalls of AI and resist the possible dangers.

In this context I wish to bring to your notice the following:

1. Kindly deal with extra precaution with regard to various incidents in our institutions. Avoid any chance of misunderstanding or misinterpretations whatsoever. Additional care is required when we deal with students in the schools and formees in our formation houses particularly when they are minors. It is safe that we obtain all necessary documents from our formees, such as Adhar card (as age proof), consent letter of parents and formees, marriage certificate of the parents etc. Please do all what is needful and keep our part safe and secure.
2. May I request to be ‘prudent like serpents and innocent like doves’ (Mt 10:16-18) in our ministry of evangelization. It is our mission and we cannot dilute it. The great command of Christ is: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28: 19-20). We shall not seek comfort zones but we need to be on safer side is the need of the hour. Mind you, these are not problems but only challenges. Jesus and the disciples too had such challenges and they faced them with courage and reliance in the providence of God. We too shall follow the suit.
3. It is important that we live witness of Christian values. Transparency in accounts, simplicity in life-style, modesty in constructions etc. are some ways of Christian witness. Keep update FCRA, 12A registration etc. lest we are accused of any malpractices. May people observe in us a close following of Christ and his values in our daily life. We shall resolve to preach what we practice and practice what we preach.

4. In our diocese in some areas people are forming 'sects' due to some outside influences and misapprehensions, and it is observed that we need to frequent our visit to villages, family visits, Holy Qurbana and prayer sessions in the villages, our availability to the people etc. to overcome such hurdles. We shall make great efforts to keep our fold together and take care of them in the best way possible in faith formation and meeting their genuine needs such as service to the sick, facilities for higher education, employment opportunities etc.
5. On 18 December 2023 the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith (DDF) promulgated a declaration with the title '*Fiducia Supplicans*' with regard to the 'blessing' of gay individuals. The discussion about this document in the social media and mass media is misleading. The Church's stand about marriage is, that which is contracted between a man and a woman (Mt 19:4-6, Mk 10:6-9 & CCEO 776). Church does not accept any other relationships as a wedlock. However Church is to show mercy to everyone including gay individuals. When such persons ask for a 'blessing' it is Church's duty to pray for them and 'bless' individually so that they may live according to God's plan and as per the teachings of the Church. Please do not be misguided.
6. As we are in the season of Lent we shall do the acts of penance such as fast, abstinence, etc. and do the devotional practices like Stations of the Cross, Lenten Prayers, Adoration, Almsgiving etc. to make our Lent meaningful and fruitful. I wish everyone a fruitful Lent.
7. We are in the year of Decalogue and the Precepts of the Church. Please follow the homily schedule and other directives to catechize our people to create an awareness to observe the laws of the country and of the Church faithfully and with allegiance (Cf. *Chanda Samachar* No. 1&2, Vol. XLVII January-April, 2024, Pp 2-4 & 69-71).
8. The diocese is planning a Workshop on Evangelization for priests and religious (April 22-24), for Catechists, laity and youth (April 26-27) and for seminarians and scholastics (April 29 to May 01). Bro. Thomas Paul will be a resource person. The details shall be furnished later (Cf. *Chanda Samchar*, January-April, 2024, P.67). Please mark the dates.



God bless Everyone.
Yours devotedly in Christ Jesus,

† Ephrem Nariculam,
Bishop, Eparchy of Chanda

NB: Kindly explain to the people the message of this circular prudently and with caution, preferably on Sunday 18th February or on Sunday 25th February. Please remind also the people to observe 22 March as a day of prayer and fasting for the purpose as indicated in the circular.