

PASTORAL LETTER ON EVANGELIZATION – I

Dear Rev. Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

Thy Kingdom Come!

“The pastor is to be a presbyter to whom, as the principal cooperator of the eparchial bishop, is entrusted the care of souls as their proper shepherd in a determined parish under the authority of the same eparchial bishop” (CCEO 281).

As pastor of a parish ‘Care of Souls’ is the primary duty of a priest/missionary. Indeed he is called and sent out (Mk. 3: 14-15) to care the souls and assure them of salvation. He has to show the way and he has to become the way for Jesus reminds us “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14: 6). As St. John Maria Vianney says every priest is a sign board to God’s Kingdom. They must show the way and walk in the way.

Church by her very nature is missionary (*Ad Gentes*, 2). Church exists to preach the good news. It is the primary duty of each Christian. A priest by his very nature of ministerial priesthood is offered to the mission of preaching by word and deed. All the rest are secondary and to be assisting to witness the primary duty. In the encyclical *Evangelisii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI exclaims that “today, if at all people listen to our preaching, it is because of our witness”. The apostles preached and confirmed their preaching by their life witness (Mk 16:20).

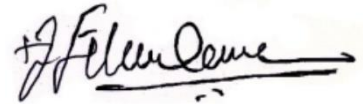
At the threshold of the third Millennium in 2000 in the document *Tertio Millennio* Pope St. John Paul II reminds every Christian missionary the three fold dimension of proclamation – evangelization to the gathered, re-evangelization of the scattered and new evangelization. In the context of our diocese re-evangelization to become a dire need as some have gone away from our fold. Thanks to our pioneering missionaries for their hard work and zeal for souls. As good will and little time can bring many back to our fold. As Good Shepherds we have a divine mission to reach to the scattered and shattered for we have to bring them back in the track and assure them of their Salvation. “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, and one shepherd” (Jn 10:16).

In this Diamond Jubilee Year we are given with a golden opportunity to revamp our spirit of evangelization and reunite our people. A re-enforcement of family visit and village ministry need a special focus. For our diocese it is not a new method but following the good old model of Jesus himself – “He went around doing good, visiting villages and towns” (Mt 9:35). As we all know one of the characteristic traits of our diocese is that most of our stations and mission centers are in the villages and in the interior of forests. The vision of Bp. Januarius CMI, the architect, visionary and the first bishop of our diocese was “peripheries to the centre”. It was a great beginning and a leap of missionary experiment in the ecclesial mission history in our country. Needless to say that it was a great success. So the late archbishop of Nagpur – Rt. Rev. Eugene

D'Souza - exclaimed at silver jubilee of Chanda Mission in 1987 "the desert is bloomed and blossomed".

So, dear missionaries, as we are in the Diamond Jubilee Year, we have to bear on our shoulders the thrust to revitalize and keep a fresh "the mission greenery" by recommitting ourselves to the great mandate (Cf. Mt 28:19-20, Mk. 1:15) of Christ our Lord and Saviour, in whose priesthood we partake and render our ministry. May I invite everyone to re-launch our vitalities to ameliorate our missionary endeavors. God bless everyone with good winter and prayers.

Yours devotedly in Christ Jesus



† Ephrem Nariculam
Bishop, Eparchy of Chanda

