

**PASTORAL LETTER TO CHILDREN
ON WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY**

My Dear Children,

Thy Kingdom Come!

“He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Mt 18: 2-5). These words of Jesus are very striking. How much Jesus value children is very clear in these words. My dear children, what Jesus appreciate is the innocence of a child. It forgets and forgive. A child cannot keep vengeance or hatred in their hearts and go about. Children do not gossip. They keep their innocence. It is said that a child’s innocence is one gift, that once stolen can never be replaced. One of the hardest jobs in this world is to be able to preserve the innocent face our childhood in our adulthood as well.

It is in the context of World Children’s Day declared by Pope Francis that I wished to write this pastoral letter to you. It is the first of that sort. This year Pope has fixed 26 May 2024 for this celebration. He has taken this initiative particularly to honour you. In his message to the children on the occasion he quotes Is. 43: 4 “You are precious”. It is true, ‘you are precious’ to God and to all of us. You are the future of the Church and you are the future of the nation. There are lots of potential in you. You have to bring the potential into actuality. Avail all opportunities. Help one another. Consult your parents, teachers, elders and others so that you are able to grow as per God’s plan. Every child is born with a source of talents and traits. They are inherent in every child. It varies from one from the other. Some may have more and some have less. But everyone has it. Each one should make efforts to bring it out - Indeed that is what is meant by Education - *Educare* in Latin means to bring out. May I quote a paragraph from Pope's letter “All of you, girls and boys, are a source of joy for your parents and your families, but also for our human family and for the Church, in which each of us is like a link in a great chain stretching from the past to the future and covering the whole earth. That is why I encourage you to pay attention to the stories of grown-ups: your moms and dads, your grandparents and great grandparents. And not to forget all those other children and young people who are already battling illness and hardship, in hospital or at home, and those who even now are being cruelly robbed of their childhood. I think of children who are victims of war and violence, those experiencing hunger and thirst, those living on the streets, those forced

to be soldiers or to flee as refugees, separated from their parents, those prevented from going to school, and those who fall prey to criminal gangs, drugs or other forms of slavery and abuse. Let us listen to their voices. We need to hear those voices, for amid their sufferings they remind us of reality, with their tearful eyes and with that tenacious yearning for goodness that endures in the hearts of those who have truly seen the horror of evil”.

Pope Francis is asking us to learn from parents and elders, he is asking us to be concerned of others especially those who are deprived of facilities, he is asking us not to go astray, he is asking us to be compassionate. We shall positively respond to Pope’s invitation. It will do good to you, to your family, to the Church and to the whole world.

Another point that Pope says in the message is that about sharing of joy. “The fact is that we cannot be happy all by ourselves, because our joy increases to the extent that we share it. Joy is born of gratitude for the gifts we have received and which we share in turn and it grows in our relationships with others. When we keep the blessings we have received to ourselves, or throw tantrums to get this or that gift, we forget that the greatest gift that we possess is ourselves, one another: all of us, together, are “God’s gift.” Other gifts are nice, but only if they help us to be together. If we don’t use them for that purpose, we will always end up being unhappy; they will never be enough.” There is an adage says as follows : "The joy shared doubled, the sorrow shared, divided”. We shall share our joy with others and share also our sorrows with others so as to form a family of love, communion, and honour.

In another paragraph Pope shares with us a secret to be happy “If we really want to be happy, we need to pray, to pray a lot, to pray every day, because prayer connects us directly to God. Prayer fills our hearts with light and warmth; it helps us to do everything with confidence and peace of mind. Jesus constantly prayed to the Father. Do you know what Jesus called him? In his language, he simply called him “Abba”, which means “Daddy” (cf. *Mk* 14:36). Let’s do the same thing! We will always feel that Jesus is close to us. He himself promised us that, when he said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (*Mt* 18:20)”.

So my dear children it is a great occasion for you and for all of us this celebration of the first World Children's Day. We shall celebrate it in a very solemn way. Ask Fathers and Sisters in the parishes/boardings and plan out yourself how to celebrate it. They will guide you. It will be good that you take leadership in arranging the liturgy/Holy Qurbana of the day. I have also

requested Fr. Vivek Puthenpurayil, the director of Holy Childhood Association to give you some guidance to celebrate the day in a befitting manner. I pray that, this celebration of the World Children's Day boost each one of you to be active in faith and faithful to Christ and the Church. God bless everyone of you.

Yours devotedly in Christ Jesus,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ephrem Nariculam".

† Ephrem Nariculam
Bishop, Eparchy of Chanda

NB: Please read to the children the translation of it in local language or explain its content on any convenient Sunday in May 2024. Kindly celebrate the day befittingly on 26 May itself or on another Sunday.