

12th December 2012

My dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and Lay Faithful,

1. The Season of Advent:

We began this year the Season of Advent on 2nd December, the first Sunday of Advent. It is the time the Church has set aside for preparing ourselves for the great solemnity of Christmas. During Advent, let us specially ponder the words of St. Paul to Titus: "We should reject godless ways and worldly desires, and live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age as we await our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2, 12-13). From the day of the Annunciation, the Blessed Virgin Mary prepared herself to bring the Divine Saviour to the world. The birth of Christ was the dawn of a new era for humanity. During the remaining days of Advent, let us make adequate preparations for the meaningful and fitting celebration of the great Feast of Christmas. I am sending you herewith in a separate sheet my Christmas Message. ***I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a grace-filled New Year 2013.***

2. The Year of Faith:

As you were already informed in my Circular No.4/2012 dated 8th August 2012, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI announced the Year of Faith, starting on 11th October 2012, the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and also the 20th Anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In this context, the Bishops of Odisha sent to you a Joint Pastoral Letter, highlighting the significance of this Year of Faith, taking extracts from the Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XVI "*Porta Fidei*" and making a few recommendations for the meaningful celebration of this Year of Faith.

The main thrust of the Year of Faith is to provide the Church an occasion to rediscover the splendor, the power and the beauty of Faith. Knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart which is the authentic sacred space within the person is opened by grace so as to see the surface and understand the word of God. The renewal of the church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers; by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us. I have appointed a Committee to go through the Apostolic Letter "*Porta Fidei*" and requested them to make a few practical proposals for the celebration of the Year of Faith in the diocese. I will be giving you in January 2013, a few guidelines for the meaningful implementation of the Year of Faith. May this Year of Faith make our relationship with Christ the Lord increasingly firm. Let us entrust this time of grace to the Mother of God about whom we say, "Blessed is she who believed" (Lk 1:45). (#15).

3. Christmas get-together:

A Christmas get-together for the Priests, Brothers and Sisters will be held in the Bishop's House, Balasore, on 27th December (Thursday). All the Priests, Brothers and Sisters working in the Diocese are hereby cordially invited to participate in it. The programme for that day will be as follows:

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| 10.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. | - Sharing by two persons on Christmas and its message in our pastoral works |
| | - Talk by the Bishop on Christmas |
| 12.00 noon | - Eucharistic Celebration in the Cathedral |
| 01.00 p.m. | - Lunch |

4. Bishop's Visit to the Holy Land:

The Neocatechumenate Group invited the Bishops of Asia for a Convivence in the Holy Land from 6th to 11th November, 2012. 120 Asian Bishops took part in it. Besides the Bishops, there were 280 participants in it, comprising Priests and Laity. We had a very meaningful Convivence reflecting on our faith and its deepening; daily meaningful celebration of the Eucharist; reflections on the Sacred Scripture, and the mission of the church in the present Asian context. We also visited some of the important places in the Holy Land, recalling the birth, the life, the crucifixion and the death and the Resurrection of Christ. It was really a very meaningful and enriching experience.

5. Priestly Ordination:

I am pleased to inform you that the Priestly Ordination of Deacon Francis Xavier Singh from Krishnachandrapur parish is scheduled for 2nd January 2013 at Krishnachandrapur parish.

6. Bishop's hospitalization:

On 29th November I had to undergo a minor surgery for the removal of gall bladder stone, in our Jyothi Hospital, Kuruda, Balasore. I was in the hospital for a week. I am very glad to inform you that I am fast recovering from it. I am very thankful to the Director and the Staff of Jyothi Hospital for their efficient and committed services to me during my hospitalization. I am also very grateful to you for your great concern during my hospitalization and for your prayers for my speedy and complete recovery. God bless you.

7. Appointments/ Transfers:

- Fr. Efrem Lakra - Secretary of the Diocesan Commission for Dialogue and Ecumenism
- Fr. Jadu Marandi - Director of the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Kuruda, Balasore – with effect from 3rd January 2013
- Fr. Jadu Marandi - Diocesan Director of Catechetics and Secretary for the Diocesan Commission for Proclamation
- Fr. Singray Tudu - Parish Priest of Guttiduba
- Fr. Tom Mannukunnel - Director of the Diocesan News Bulletin

Devotedly yours in Christ,

**Thomas Thiruthalil, C.M.
Bishop of Balasore**

Bishop's Programme

December 2012

- 18 6.30 p.m. - Balasore - Christmas celebration at Deepthi Bhavan, Kuruda
- 22 10.00 a.m. - Balasore - Governing Board Meeting of BSSS
- 23 10.30 a.m. - Anandapur - Blessing of the Village Chapel
- 4.30 p.m. - Balasore - Christmas Celebration at Jyothi Hospital
- 25 - Balasore - Christmas Midnight Mass
- 27 10.00 a.m. to 01.00 p.m. - Balasore - Christmas get together for the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters

January 2013

- 2 - Krishnachandrapur – Priestly Ordination of Deacon Francis Xavier Singh
- 7-13 – Kerala
- 27 - Hatigarh - Feast of the Parish

February 2013

- 4-10 – Vailankanni (Tamilnadu) – CCBI Plenary Assembly Meeting
- 13 - Balasore - Ash Wednesday
