

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Balasore!

“Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom” (Job 32:7).

The one who made this statement in the Bible is Elihu, a character in the Book of Job, who had come to explain the reason for Job's suffering. As the story goes Job, probably one of the best known characters in the Bible, has undergone sufferings of various types – physical, mental and social – and these have in fact taught him to be strong and to be hopeful. Experience is a great teacher; and more of it, as we grow older, makes us wiser. Time is educatory. Every day has its lessons so arranged that we could learn from it. The 'days' by their pedagogical processes should throw brighter light on the problems of life and provide us with a sense of hope. As we step out of the year 2015 and step into 2016, we look back and try to learn from the lessons taught by the past year, and look forward with hope to the new one.

Within the span of a week we celebrate two births – of a baby on 25th December, and of a new year on 1st of January. The beginning of another year could be compared to that of the birth of a baby. Both are presented to us as mysteries, as we do not know what the future holds for the baby that is born, and for the year that begins. But we hope for the best, as always.

It is hope that makes us celebrate. Hope is a word of optimism and expectation that looks forward to a promising future. Here is how a dictionary describes hope: '*a desire accompanied by expectation or belief in fulfillment*'. Hope, from the world's viewpoint is just what the definition describes. The world sees hope as a wish or a desire; it is a longing for something that may or may not take place.

Hope is a powerful thing. For G. K. Chesterton, the famous English writer, "*There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow.*" Yet multitudes of people have lost their hope. Some feel hopeless about specific areas such as their marriage, children, health, finances, or job. Yet for others, this emotion of hopelessness permeates their entire lives. They exist but have no hopes, dreams, or goals. This is not the way God intends for us to live. He created us to live with a purpose, working toward goals with a sense of anticipation for things to come. However, the fullness of hope never reaches a limit in this life. It can always grow and always abound more and more. St. Paul points out that one of the ways hope grows is by feeding off its own fruits. Hope in the promises of God produces the fruits of joy and peace. But joy and peace in the promises of God stirs up more hope, and more hope awakens more joy and peace; and so the graces of God continue to "abound" more and more. So St. Paul says to us: "May the God of hope fill you

with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).

May the virtue of Christian hope fill us with enthusiasm to face the coming year. Having learnt from the past year we look forward to better days ahead.

Wish You a Happy and Blessed New Year 2016

I. JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

On Tuesday, the 8th of December, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mother Mary, Pope Francis opened the "Holy Door" of St Peter's basilica to start the extraordinary Jubilee year, while urging the Church to reach out to the modern world. This special year of remission of sins and universal pardon closes on 30th November, 2016, on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

While the 8th of December marked the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council (8.12.1965), it was also the 1,000th day of Pope Francis' pontificate.

Mercy not judgement–

‘Mercy triumphs over justice’ is a theme made familiar to us by William Shakespeare in ‘Merchant of Venice’. However the biblical reference to it is the letter of James 2:13. The theme is dramatized by Jesus in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). Pope Francis says: "How much wrong we do to God and his grace when we speak of sins being punished by his judgement before we speak of their being forgiven by his mercy," ..."We have to put mercy before judgement... Let us set aside all fear and dread, for these do not befit men and women who are loved.... God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness"

Traditionally, many Catholics make a pilgrimage to Rome to benefit from the indulgences offered to the faithful who pass through the Holy Doors during Jubilee years. The Holy Father has effectively done away with this custom by ordering Cathedrals around the world as well as major churches and pilgrim centres to symbolically open their own Holy Doors. On 13th December, on the Third Sunday of Advent, the Pope himself opened the door at one of Rome's major churches, St John Lateran.

The Year of Mercy is an invitation to all of us - an invitation to love, kindness, and unbounded generosity. Pope Francis is offering us the opportunity to encounter the incredible mercy of God. Encountering mercy means encountering God. It can transform our life, our relationships, our work, and our ability to embrace and experience all of life.

Fr. Geno Sylva, official for the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, has this to say: “One of the central aims of the Jubilee Year of Mercy will be to reorient the Sacrament of Confession back to the centre of the Church's pastoral life. Mercy is the tangible expression of God's love in the world. By placing ourselves in situations to reflect upon this love and to experience the grace of this love in the Sacrament of Penance and

Reconciliation, we find the strength, the courage, and the compassion to be instruments of mercy to others. I really believe that by recognizing and experiencing how incredibly patient and forgiving God is with each one of us in our imperfections and failings, we can become ever more patient and forgiving of those with whom we live, work, and interact every day.”

What can we do concretely during this Jubilee Year of Mercy? There are two types of acts of mercy.

Corporal Works of Mercy: Feed the hungry; Give drink to the thirsty; Clothe the naked; Visit the imprisoned; Shelter the homeless; Visit the sick.

Spiritual Works of Mercy: Counsel the doubtful; Instruct the ignorant; Comfort the sorrowful; Forgive offenses willingly; Bear wrongs patiently; Pray for the living and the dead.

Each parish may chalk out some plan of concrete action of mercy during this Jubilee year and thus respond effectively to the call of the Holy Father.

II. A CHARISMATIC RETREAT

A charismatic retreat led by Fr. Mathew Naikamprambil, V.C. from the Divine Retreat Centre, Muringoor, will be held on February 15-19 at Utkal Jyoti (Regional Pastoral Centre) Jharsuguda. The retreat is meant for Priests and Religious working in Odisha.

Those who wish to participate in the retreat may kindly register their names with the Director of Utkal Jyoti, Fr. Joseph Sagayaraj, latest by 15th January (Mob: 9437032133; 9178164433).

III. SYNOD ON FAMILY

The Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, popularly referred to as the Synod on the Family, took place from 4 to 25 October 2015 with the theme of *lithe* vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world." It took place in the Synod Hall in the Paul VI Audience Hall in Vatican City. The assembly included a great part of the episcopate, with as many as 279 participants including bishops and priests alongside 90 experts, contributors, and delegates from other Christian churches who were specially invited to attend and participate in the discussions.

The final report of the Synod was passed with each of the 94 paragraphs receiving more than 2/3 of the bishops present voting for it. A committee of 10 clerics drafted the document after reviewing the 1,350 speeches given during the assembly.

(More on the Synod on Family will be given in the *BALASORE DEEPTHI*)

IV. BISHOP THOMAS' BIRTHDAY

On **Sunday, the 17th of January**, Bp. Thomas completes 80 years of his God-given and eventful life. We shall thank the Lord with him on that day by joining him in the Eucharistic

celebration in the Jyothi Hospital hall at 4.30 P.M. The Mass will be followed by a short felicitation programme and dinner.

All of you are invited to the function. Having made yourselves free for the occasion please let Fr. Paul Koonamparampath know about your participation.

V. PRINCIPALS' MEETING

On **Saturday, the 16th of January**, we shall have a meeting of all the Principals of the English Medium schools of the Diocese. Besides being a get-together, it will be an occasion for sharing of information as well as voicing our concerns.

The meeting will be held at 10 am. at Deepthi Bhavan Pastoral Centre, Kuruda.

VI. WORKSHOP ON PASTORAL PLAN

A two-day workshop in view of preparing a Pastoral Plan for the Diocese will be held at Deepthi Bhavan Pastoral Centre. The dates planned are **18th and 19th of January (Monday-Tuesday)**. Mr. Kushal Neogy, Director – Partnership Capacity Building, CRS, will be the resource person for the workshop. Besides the secretaries of the various diocesan commissions, a few more will be invited to participate in the meeting. I will send the invitations to the would-be participants shortly.

The meeting will begin at 9 am on the 18th and conclude by 4 pm on the 20th.

VII. CLOSING THE YEAR OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE

The Year of Consecrated Life, which had commenced on 30th November 2014, will be concluded on the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on 2nd February 2016.

However, in our Diocese we shall have a celebration to conclude the Year on **Saturday, the 30th of January, 2016**. All the priests and religious of the Diocese are requested to participate in the Eucharistic celebration at 11 am in the Cathedral Church. It will be an occasion to thank God for the gift of consecrated life in the Church in general as well our own local Church in particular.

VIII. THE SEASON OF LENT

I would like to bring to your notice the fact that in the current liturgical year the Holy Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on the **10th of February**. I will send a letter regarding this season of grace some time later.

IX. A RETREAT FOR THE SANTHALI SPEAKING FAITHFUL

A Lenten retreat for Santhal speaking faithful has been planned at Hatigarh from the **15-18 February, 2016**. The preacher of Retreat is Fr. MashiTudu, a priest from the Diocese of Bhagalpur. Concerned parish priests are requested to contact Fr. JaduMarndi for further information on this.

X. BONUAN CHURCH

The construction of the Church at Bonuan is nearing completion. The date planned for the blessing of the Church is **Saturday, 6th of February, 2016.**

XI. A SEMINAR FOR PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

A Seminar on 'Word of God and Pastoral life' for Priests and religious has been planned to be held **on 21st and 22nd of Jan. 2016,** at Pastoral Centre, Kuruda. Fr. Augustine Mulloor, OCD, a renowned Biblical scholar, will be the resource person for the same. More information will be sent by Fr. Roy the Director of the Pastoral Centre.

XII. PONTIFICAL SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD

'Children helping Children' is the motto of Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood, one of the four branches of Pontifical Mission Organization. The other branches are: Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle, and Pontifical Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.

The aim of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood is to promote missionary zeal among children so as to lead them to a sharing of spiritual and material resources with other children.

Parish priests and heads of institutions of the Diocese are hereby reminded that every year 2nd Sunday of February is observed in the Catholic Church as Holy Childhood Sunday. In this liturgical year, it falls on the 14th of February, 2016. The collection on that Sunday is for the Holy Childhood Society. Please encourage the faithful to contribute, as well as organize innovative means to raise funds.

XIII. BISHOP'S PROGRAMME

JANUARY 2016

01	- Balasore	- Midnight Mass
	- KC Pur	- Morning Mass
03	- Jhatioda	- Parish Feast
05	- Berhampur	- Cathedral Parish Mass
06	- Mohana	- Feast of Epiphany
07-15	- Kerala	
16	- Kuruda	- English Medium Principals' Meeting
17	- Balasore	- Bishop Thomas' Birthday
18-19	- Kuruda	- Pastoral Plan Workshop
20	- Raghunathpur	- St. Mary's School, Annual Day
22	- Mitrapur	- St. Mary's School, Annual Day
24	- Padampur	- St. Paul's Seminary, Annual Day
25	- Hatigarh	- Priestly Ordination of Dns. Sebastian and Samir, C.M.
28	- Gopalpur	- Aquinas College Day

29 - Betnoti - DivyaJyothi School, Annual day
30 - Balasore - Closing of the Year of Consecrated Life

FEBRUARY 2016

02 - Ghattiduba - Parish Feast
06 - Bonuan - Blessing of the New Church
10 - Balasore - Ash Wednesday
11 - Mitrapur - Feast of Mother Mary of Lourdes
22 - Bhubaneswar - OCBC Meeting
27-28 - Bodopoda - Bible Sabha

MARCH 2016

1-10 - Bangalore - CBCI General Body Meeting

With Regards and Blessings

+ Simon k. em

†Simon Kaipuram, C.M.
Bishop of Balasore