

Circular No. 01/2015

1st Feb, 2015

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Balasore!

We have every reason to thank the Lord for the wonderful and joyous celebration of the Silver Jubilee of our Diocese. We have prayed for the Diocese this during the Jubilee year; we have happily seen its grand finale on the 29th of last month. We remain indebted to all the leaders of various committees and their collaborators for their committed and dedicated service during the last few months to make the Jubilee celebration a grand success. I thank everyone – clergy, religious, lay faithful – who has made it a memorable one. All those who came were impressed about the event, which has once again confirmed the opinion others have about the Diocese of Balasore – that as far as making celebrations successful, meaningful and grand is concerned, we are second to none. Particularly impressive was the rich tribute paid to the departed missionaries of the Diocese by way of prayer for them as well the collection of their photos meaningfully exhibited.

“And now bless the God of all, who everywhere works great wonders, who fosters our growth from birth, and deals with us according to his mercy. May he give us gladness of heart, and may there be peace in our days in Israel, as in the days of old. May he entrust to us his mercy, and may he deliver us in our days!” (Sir 50:22-24). This biblical passage from Sirach, a great teacher of Israel who lived towards the end of Old Testament times, was chosen as the 1st reading during the Jubilee Eucharistic celebration. The passage is a concluding ‘benediction’ after 7 long chapters (44-50) in which the author describes the mighty deeds of about 30 ‘heroes of Israel’. Such a ‘hymn of praise’ to the ancestors of Israel was composed by Sirach to encourage the Jewish people of his time not to lose hope in times of troubles. Ultimately, for Sirach, it is God who works through human agents.

While all of us can take credit to more or less extent for the growth of the Diocese as well as its arrival at the 25th milestone, culminating in a meaningful celebration, it might be worthwhile to remember that the building up of the Diocese was primarily an act done by God, and therefore His missionaries have served as His own hands till now. That spirit of being a missionary, in the belief of ‘being sent by God’ to carry out His task and not ours, should continue to motivate our remaining endeavours in the Diocese. We have rightly paid sincere tribute to the departed pioneer missionaries by prayerfully remembering them. They have taken nothing with them when they went to their eternal reward, but have left their foot-prints in the land as well as sowed the seeds of faith in various parts of the Diocese. We have

gratefully acknowledged the services of those who laboured in the Diocese and have since then moved to other places and assignments. It is now left to those of who are here to take the baton forward in the great race of Christian faith and life, and pass it on to the next generation of missionaries and faithful. May the Lord who has been so kind to us till now, continue to walk with us in taking this mission forward.

It so happened that the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Diocese coincided closely with the completion of the first year of my life as the Bishop of the Diocese. Bishop Thomas Thiruthalil C.M. has efficiently managed the affairs of the Diocese and led it for 24 long years and has passed on the baton to me to complete the last stretch of one year of the race. Therefore in sincerity I cannot take credit for any good that has happened in the Diocese in the past year. I only tried to continue and build on the good foundation already laid, believing firmly that ultimately it is God who remains behind and guides all our good works. Writing about his missionary endeavours St. Paul says to the Christians in Corinth: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth" (1 Cor 3:6). Thus I remain grateful primarily to God for His providence and protection.

But the ways of God are different from ours. He acts in and through human agents; that is what we learn from the history of salvation. In the present case His agents are the clergy and religious of the diocese, and especially those who have assisted me in various capacities, and continue to do so remaining close to me. I am a late-comer in the Diocese and new to the office I have been entrusted with, and so have stood in need of assistance of many at various levels. And I can gladly and confidently say that I was never denied assistance of any sort; on the contrary, priests and religious have willingly come forward with helpful suggestions and comforting presence when I required them. Sincere thanks to all of them. Of course, moments of tension and problems have not been lacking; but I do feel that with the co-operation of all and God's protecting presence amidst us we will face the future of the Diocese together with hope and courage.

II. UCPI MEETING

I had the opportunity to participate in an ecumenical gathering organized by the United Christian Prayer for India (UCPI) at Bangalore from the 6th till 8th of January. Of the participants amounting to 500, only 50 were from the Catholic Church, of which only three were from Odisha. The rest were from the other Christian denominations in India. The meeting provided an opportunity to consider in the first place the importance of unity among Christians themselves in order to confront together the problems faced by us all today in our country. Follow-up meetings at regional and local levels would realize the goal better and faster.

III. HOLY CHILDHOOD SUNDAY (8TH FEB)

“Children Helping Children” is the watchword used by the Holy Childhood Association. While children should be encouraged to help other children who are less fortunate, it is also the duty of the adults to realize the importance of this world-wide mission. Please ensure that a special collection is made on the Sunday designated as ‘Holy Childhood Sunday’, on the 8th of February this year, for this purpose.

IV. HISTORY OF BALASORE DIOCESE

Fr. Jacob Kallapurackal, the veteran missionary of the Diocese, has penned down a short history of the Diocese of Balasore from its beginnings till today. I have requested Fr. Tom Mannukunnel to include it in the special Jubilee edition of the ‘Balasore Deepti’ he is planning to bring out. The narration of the history of the diocese will certainly be a source of information and edification to all who work in the Diocese. By going through it we realize how indebted we are to all those who were associated with the Diocese and have gone before us. It will be also a fitting tribute to them as well as an impetus to us to continue their work with enthusiasm. Sincere thanks to Fr. Jacob for this valuable and noble contribution to the Diocese, especially in the context of its Silver Jubilee.

V. SEASON OF LENT

With the Ash Wednesday, falling this year on the 18th of February, we enter the holy and grace-filled season of Lent. Though I shall send a Lenten message to all of you later, may I remind you to consider the season as one of self-purification by of prayer, penance and good works. Duly observing the stipulated days of fast and abstinence (Ash Wednesday and Good Friday) would only point to a legal observance of the requirements. We may need to go beyond fulfilling such norms and find ways and means of making it really a grace-filled season by self purification and concern for the poor.

VI. YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

We are already in the Year of Consecrated Life which began on the 30th of November 2014 and would end on the 2nd February 2016. In a conversation with the 120 Superiors General of religious men during their 82nd General Assembly in Rome on 27-29 November 2014, Pope Francis said to the religious in general: “Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world”. The Holy Father expressed his expectations for the year-long observance, inviting consecrated men and women to examine their presence in the Church life and respond to the ‘new demands constantly being made on them, to the cry of the poor’.

While during the year the Religious would definitely go into soul-searching, leading to their re-dedication and re-commitment, it would be good for the rest of us to try to understand and appreciate the contribution these men and women with specific charisms have made for the implanting and growth of the Church in various parts of the world, and in particular our own Diocese. Their collaboration and service would continue to be required in the years to come for the growth and expansion of the local Church.

VII. CCBI MEETING AT BANGALORE

I will be attending the meeting of the CCBI (Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India – the Bishops of the Latin Rite) in Bangalore from the 3rd till 8th of February. Given the political scenario of the country, and the reports of recent developments in the life of faith of the Church in various parts of India, the meeting gains some importance. Please pray for the success of the deliberations at the meeting.

VIII. ANNUAL LENTEN RETREAT

Fr. Ramesh Bishoi C.M. and his team from Navajeevan Dhyana Kendra, Allada, will be conducting the annual Lenten Retreat at KC.Pur on the dates: **5-6-7-8 March 2015**; the participants should arrive at KC.Pur on the 4th evening. It will be in Odiya and is meant for the lay faithful of the Diocese. I request the Parish Priests to encourage the people in large numbers to participate in this annual Lenten renewal programme. Please inform Fr. Saji Karathankal, the Parish Priest, about the number of people from the parishes attending the retreat.

IX. BISHOP'S PROGRAMME:

FEBRUARY 2015

01	Rangiam	Sunday Liturgy
3-8	Bangalore	CCBI Meeting
10	Dubuna	School Day
11	Mitrapur	Feast of Mother Mary of Lourdes
12-16	Berhampur	Platinum Jubilee of the arrival of DC in India at Gopalpur; Lourdes Feast at Mary Nagar; Silver Jubilee of Bishop Sarat
18	Balasure	Ash Wednesday
19	Bhadrak	Jyothi School Day
21	Anandapur	St. Mary's School Day
25-26	Delhi	CBCI-CARD Meeting

MARCH 2015

4-6	Mysore	Asia-Pacific Formators' Meeting of CM
7-8	KC.Pur	Annual Lenten Retreat
22-26	North-East India	
29 th March -5 th April	Balasure	Palm Sunday and Holy Week

With Regards and Blessings

†Simon Kaipuram, C.M.

Bishop of Balasure