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March 2025

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR MARCH 2025

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| 1 | 9.30 | a.m. | Graduation Ceremony, SJEC |
| 3 | 9.30 | a.m. | Presbyteral Ordination at Ferar |
| 6 | 9.00 | a.m. | Seminary Administrative Board Meeting |
| 8-9 | | | Pastoral Visit, Belthangady |
| 10 | 4.00 | p.m. | Governing Board Meeting, CBE, at
Bishop's House |
| 11 | 4.00 | p.m. | Governing Board Meeting, CODP |
| 12 | 4.00 | p.m. | Fr L.M. Pinto Hospital Trust Meeting,
Bishop's House |
| 13 | 8.00 | a.m. | Founder's Day Mass, FMCI |
| | 10.30 | a.m. | Inauguration and Blessing of Pharmacy
College Building, FMCI, Deralakatte |
| 16 | 9.00 | a.m. | Women's Day Celebration, Bendur |
| 18 | 4.00 | p.m. | Diocesan Finance Council Meeting,
Bishop's House |
| 19 | 11.00 | a.m. | St Josep's Feast, Mass in Jeppu Seminary |
| 20 | 3.30 | p.m. | Concetta Hospital Trust Meeting,
Bishop's House |
| 21 | 5.00 | p.m. | Mass at Cordel |
| 22 | 10.00 | a.m. | Inauguration of St Philomena Autonomous
College, Puttur |
| 24-28 | | | Bishops Retreat, Bhadravati |

Bishop Meets in the Forenoon:

Diocesan clergy, 11; Religious men and women, 12;
Lay Faithful, 21.

BISHOP'S MESSAGE FOR MARCH 2025

Papal Intention for March: The Pope invites the whole Church to pray for the families in crisis, and more so those wounded ones, that through the medicine of forgiveness, they might find a cure for their wounds. The members of each family are blessed with different gifts. May in our prayers we discover the richness that the Lord has put in each family. Due to personal limitations and external factors, like lack of employment, health and basic facilities, many families suffer deep wounds. May the prayer of the whole Church rise to God so that the grace of God comes to the assistance of the wounded families.

Papal Message for Season of Lent: With Ash Wednesday, we enter into the Season of Lent, a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. For Lent, the Dicastery for Human Development has sent the message on behalf of Pope Francis proposing in this Jubilee Year, a few reflections on what it means to *journey together in hope*. While Lent invites us for conversion of the heart to experience God's mercy and forgiveness, the *journey* from slavery to freedom as experienced by Israel, could be ours too, as we walk away from sin towards true freedom of the children of God. As we journey as "pilgrims of hope", the Holy Spirit impels us to walk *together* with others, listening to one another and attending to others' needs. Further, this Lent urges us to generate *hope* in people, keeping the victory of Easter in front of our eyes. May this Season of Lent be a time filled with God's immense blessings for the whole Church.

Pray for the Good Health of Pope Francis: We are well aware that Pope Francis is ailing, and given his age, he needs strength to fight against his sickness. The whole Church is invited

to pray for his speedy recovery. I invite Parish Priests to call the people to offer intense prayer for the good health of Pope Francis during Mass, Rosary, Adoration, and Family Prayers. On 13 March is the anniversary of his election as Supreme Pastor, and we have all the more reason to thank God for his leadership and for bringing a new breeze of synodality in the Church. He has taught us to listen to the Spirit speaking within us and to listen to one another as the same Spirit moves them. May this Jubilee Year help us to put into practice the synodality in all areas of Church's life.

Jubilee of Women: On 16 March, the Diocese of Mangalore, through the assistance of the Commission for Women, celebrates the Jubilee of women at Bendur church premises. The Parish Priests are requested to announce this event so that the representatives of each Parish may join in this celebration. Keeping the motto of supporting a mission of empowerment, the Commission has resolved to help at least 25 needy families. Let us promote the activities of empowering women, especially those who truly struggle in life having no proper means of sustenance.

Day of Adoration: The Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) invites us to organise 24 hours of adoration in our churches to pray for the whole Church. We have fixed Friday, 28 March, as this special day of prayer. I request the Parishes and Religious Communities to set aside this day for Prayer and intercession before the Eucharistic Lord for the success of the Jubilee Year.

The 36th Plenary Assembly of CCBI and Synodal Pathways for Mission: The Bishops of India (Latin Rite) gathered in Bhubaneswar and discerned the Synodal Pathways for Mission from 28th January to 04th February 2025. In its letter to the People of God, the Conference has identified some 16 themes that would need our attention: 1) Faith Formation and Word of God; 2) Children; 3) Family; 4) Youth; 5) Laity; 6) Basic Ecclesial Communities; 7) Migrants and Refugees; 8) Dalits; 9) Tribals/Adivasis/Indigenous Peoples; 10) Socially Excluded People; 11) Women and Gender Justice; 12) Poverty and Equitable

Economy; 13) Digital Technology and Social Media; 14) Ecology and Climate Stewardship; 15) Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue; and finally 16) Peacebuilding. The Bishops expressed their intention to use the methodology of “Spiritual Conversation” in the participatory bodies of the Church and thereby listen prayerfully to “what the Spirit says to the Churches” (Rev. 2: 7). May this method of listening to the Spirit in prayer be the hallmark of this Jubilee Year. May all of us constantly discern the effective synodal pathways to carry forward the mission of the Lord.

Wish you a fruitful Season of Lent and intense experience of the mercy of God.

✠ Peter Paul Saldanha
Bishop of Mangalore

LENT: A SEASON OF PRAYER, PENANCE AND CHARITY

Lent is a favourable time for personal and community renewal — through ceaseless acts of goodness, uprooting evil from our lives, fostering healthy relationships, and supporting those in need. Prayer serves as the source of strength and guidance for this journey.

Canon 1249 states: “All Christ’s faithful are obliged by divine law, each in his own way, to do penance. However, so that all may be joined together in a certain common practice of penance, days of penance are prescribed. On these days, the faithful are in a special manner to devote themselves to prayer, to engage in works of piety and charity, and to deny themselves by fulfilling their obligations more faithfully, and especially by observing fast and abstinence.”

The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent (can. 1250). As determined by the Episcopal Conference, abstinence from meat or from some other food is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (can. 1251).

1. ***Mandatory Days of Fast and Abstinence in Lent:*** Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Abstinence becomes mandatory from the age of 14, and the law of fasting and abstinence binds those who have attained their majority (18 years completed) until the beginning of their sixtieth year (can. 1252).

Let us remember that more than “abstaining from meat,” what we have to pray for is a ‘clean heart’, a ‘new heart’. The Gospel is not a set of laws to be observed but the surrender of our hearts to God in conversion. Each one of us will look for many other ways of “abstinence” from the pleasurable things of life that our heart is inclined to.

Our Clergy, Religious and Lay faithful are urged not to excuse themselves too easily from this obligation, as it is but fitting that on the two prescribed days of fasting, we unite ourselves in a special manner with the Passion and Death of Our Saviour by a more intense form of penance.

2. ***Other Days of Penance in Lent:*** Fasting and abstinence are recommended on all the days of Lent, particularly on Fridays. These should be enhanced with devotional practices of our faith that manifest our deeper communion with the Lord. For example:

A. Forms of Prayer

- a) Active participation in the daily Mass
- b) Making the Way of the Cross in the church or at home.
- c) A prayerful visit to the Church/Blessed Sacrament.
- d) Reading the Bible and Spiritual Books.
- e) Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.
- f) Meditating on the Lord’s Passion.
- g) Family Prayer in common (the Rosary, Bible Reading, some other prayer).
- h) Prayer to the saints for their intercession
- i) Reception of the Sacrament of Penance/Confession

B. Acts of Penance

- a) Abstaining from meat/fish for those for whom meat/fish is part of the regular diet.

- b) Making efforts at reconciliation with a family member or neighbour
- c) Offering voluntary service for some social/charitable work
- d) Abstaining from alcohol/smoking/TV/cinema/partying/mobile and other media
- e) Abstaining from beverages (like tea/coffee between meals)
- f) Praying and fasting for one particular person every day of Lent.
- g) Turning off all noise and distractions for extended periods of time
- h) Maintaining meditative or reflective silence

C. Works of Charity

- a) Giving 10% of one's daily earnings to charity.
- b) Offering a meal to a poor family; sponsoring a part of the school fee
- c) Offering voluntary service for some social/charitable work.
- d) Visiting the sick/aged/lonely/anyone in need.
- e) Donating blood.
- f) Taking special care of the environment by carbon fasting or in some other way, e.g. limiting the consumption of electrical energy.

To embrace the call to conversion, reconciliation, and solidarity, it is beneficial to view the spiritual and corporal works of mercy as a model for penance. These fourteen practices require significant sacrifice and generosity, while also guiding us toward deeper conformity with the Lord. Focusing on one of these works each week can be a practical approach to incorporating them into our personal, family, and parish lives.

Corporal Works of Mercy: (i) Feeding the hungry, (ii) Sheltering the homeless, (iii) Clothing the naked, (iv) Visiting the sick, (v) Visiting the imprisoned, (vi) Giving drink to the thirsty, (vii) Burying the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy: (i) Converting sinners, (ii) Instructing the ignorant, (iii) Advising the doubtful,

- (iv) Comforting the sorrowful, (v) Bearing wrongs patiently,
- (vi) Forgiving injuries, (vii) Praying for the living and dead

Devotional exercises that are traditionally associated with Lent are to be strongly encouraged. Stations of the Cross should be prayed communally, particularly on each Friday of Lent, to foster the preparation of the faithful for the celebration of Easter.

Parishes should offer more opportunities for individual and community renewal through, for example, a Lenten Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction, evenings of reflection, spiritual renewal days for parish organisations (councils and associations), or other Lenten family/parish activities.

Our Lenten Penance must never become superficial: “No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great” (St John Chrysostom).

FROM THE PROCURATOR’S OFFICE

- 1) A reminder to the Parish Priests to pay all the earmarked collections, including those of March 2, 2025, and other dues (D.C.M.F. till February 2025, Clubbed & Binated Mass stipends, D.C.P., P.A.F.) from the Parish for the year 2024-25 by **15 March 2025**.
- 2) The Parish Priests are requested to send the D.C.M.F. claims/returns up to February 2025 by **10 March 2025**.
- 3) The P.A.F. members are requested to claim their medical bills for the Financial Year 2024-25 (up to February 28, 2025) by **10 March 2025**.
- 4) The Parish Priests are requested to reconcile the Mass Account with the Mass Register as of 31 March 2025. The excess or surplus amount in the Mass account, including the

- Bank Interest after deducting the Bank Charges, if any, must be transferred to the Church Account.
- 5) In case there are surplus Normative Masses, Binated and Clubbed Mass stipends in the Parishes, they must be remitted to the Diocese.
 - 6) The new financial year 2025-26 has 54 Pro populo Masses (52 Sundays, Feast of the Assumption of Mary and Christmas). The Parish Priests are to follow these steps:
 - a) Draw the amount of Pro populo Mass Stipends and the Legacy Mass stipends from the Church account and credit the same to the Mass Account by cheque. Kindly avoid cash transactions.
 - b) A receipt for the amount has to be passed in the Mass Account for Pro Populo & Legacy Masses in the Mass Account. This receipt will serve as the voucher for payment in the Church account.
 - c) Simultaneously, an entry must be made in the Mass Register assigning these Masses. This transaction should be completed in the first week of April 2025.

MANGALA JYOTHI

I. Programmes/Events for March:

- 2 : Diocesan Catechism Day and Honouring of the Top Scorers, X Std Catechism Examination, Urwa.
- 5-8 : Adult Catechesis – Parish Retreat, Mogarnad.
- 9-11 : Adult Catechesis – Parish Retreat, Nirkan.
- 9 : Adult Catechesis – Parish Associations, Farla.
- 9 : Online Liturgy Class, UFS
- 16-18 : Adult Catechesis – Parish Retreat, Perampally.
- 20-23 : Adult Catechesis – Parish Retreat, Kinnigoly.
- 24-29 : CCBI Training, Goa.
- 30-April 1 : Adult Catechesis – Parish Retreat, Gurpur.

II. Information:

A Commission for Faith Formation:

1 Diocesan Level Catechism Day and Faith Jubilee 2025:

We will be celebrating Catechism Day on 02 March 2025 at Urwa Parish. On this day, we will honour the top scorers of the 10th-grade students in the School Catechism Annual Exam. You are cordially invited to the programme. Invitations have been sent to you via the WhatsApp group. Please keep us in your prayers.

2. Evaluation and Annual Report of Catechetical Ministry 2024-25 (Parish):

Parish Catechetical Coordinators, in collaboration with the Parish Priest, are requested to conduct an annual evaluation of the ministry and prepare an annual report detailing catechetical activities, including a proper evaluation and analysis of the results. This final report should be submitted to the respective Deanery Priest Coordinator by 31 March 2025. Contact information for the Deanery Priest Coordinator can be found in the December 2024 Mangala Jyothi Bulletin or online at www.mangalajyothi.com.

3. Report Submission Reminder (Deanery Priest Coordinators)

Deanery Priest Coordinators are requested to collect the parish catechetical activity reports by 31 March 2025. Following this, please organise a meeting with all parish coordinators to evaluate the ministry. The collected reports should then be submitted to Mangala Jyothi by 10 May 2025, either via email at bible@mangalajyothi.com or by post.

B. Commission for Liturgy:

1. Lenten Recollection and Ministry Review for Extraordinary Ministers

- During Lent, please organise a recollection and review meeting for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in your parish/deanery level.
- During the meeting, collect the necessary data using the Parish-wise Data Form (Excel/PDF), attached to the WhatsApp group.

- Submit the completed forms to us by 15 April 2025.
- For the recollection, Rev. Fr. Sunil George Dsouza, Director, SCC (Contact: +91 87623 68101) is available. The suggested theme is “*Serving with Gladness: Ministers of Hope and Communion.*”
- You are welcome to invite another priest to lead the recollection if you prefer. We would be grateful if you could inform our office of this so that our records are kept up to date.
- Training for newly selected Extraordinary Ministers will be held at Mangala Jyothi on Sunday, 15 June 2025.
- Please keep the Recollection and Training sessions separate. If you require any special training, please get in touch with Mangala Jyothi. - This training can also be organised at the deanery level.
- Maintain a separate file for the Extraordinary Ministry at your parish office.
- Online data entry is also mandatory. If you encounter any difficulties with online entry, please contact Mangala Jyothi for assistance (+91 70195 22940).

2. New Translated Lenten Gospel Acclamation: The Lenten Gospel Acclamations from the English Lectionary have been translated, set to music, and approved by the Bishop for liturgical use. The notation is available at Mangala Jyothi, and the audio recording will be available soon. These acclamations will also be included in the upcoming Konkani Lectionary. Those who prefer the current Gospel acclamation (ವಂದನ್ ಪುಕಾ) may continue using it until the new Lectionary is published.

C. Upcoming Events: Please note these dates

01 June 2025: Newly Selected Catechists Course and Training

08 June 2025: Inauguration of the Sunday Catechism for the year 2025-26

15 June 2025: Newly Selected Extraordinary Ministers’ Training

III. Books and other Items available at our Stall:

* ಖುರ್ಸಾನ್‌ವಾಟೆಚಿಂ ಪುಸ್ತಕಾಂ:

1. ಜಿಣಿಯೆಚಿ ಖುರ್ಸಾನ್‌ವಾಟ್
2. ಖುರ್ಸಾನ್‌ವಾಟೆಚಿಂ ಭಕ್ತಿಪಣ್
3. ಕುಟ್ಮಾಚಿ ಖುರ್ಸಾನ್‌ವಾಟ್
4. ಕ್ರಿಸ್ತಾಚೊ ಮೋಗ್
5. ಭರ್ವಶಾಚ್ಯಾ ಯಾತ್ರಿಕಾಂಕ್ ಖುರ್ಸಾನ್‌ವಾಟ್
6. ಭರ್ವಶಾಚ್ಯಾ ಪಯ್ಲಾರ್ ಖುರ್ಸಾನ್‌ವಾಟ್
7. ಭರವಸೆಯ ಪಯಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಶಿಲುಬೆ ಹಾದಿ
8. ಸೊಡ್ವಣೆಚಿ ಕಾಲ್ಸ್

* Missal - English & Kannada, Konkani (reprint edition);
Lectionary - Konkani, English & Kannada; Easter Candles
with different sizes and designs, and other religious books
and articles

IV. Mangala Jyothi office remains closed on 19 March 2025
on the occasion of the feast of St Joseph.

Director, Mangala Jyothi

COMMISSION FOR BIBLE

1. Vicariate Level Bible Classes:

a. Vicariate-Level Bible Classes at St Jude's Vicariate, Kirem

Topic: Bible classes on the Gospel of Matthew, “*God with Us*” will be held for the priests, religious, and Laity in Konkani.

Date: 2025, March 08, 15, 22, 29 & April 05

On Five Saturdays from 4.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.

Venue: Church Hall, Kinnigoly.

The respective parish priests are requested to announce the same to the faithful.

Faithful from outside the deanery and neighbouring parishes can also join.

Please contact Rev Fr Alban D'Silva, 9986563842.

b. Vicariate-Level Bible Classes at St Zuze Vaz Vicariate, Permannur

Topic: Bible classes on the Gospel of Luke, “*To Proclaim the Good News,*” will be held for the priests, religious, and Laity in Konkani.

Date: 2025, March 02 (Permannur), 16 (Ranipura), 23 (Panir), 30 (Nithyadarnagar) & April 06 (Fajir).

On Five Sundays from 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Venue: Selected Church Premises of the Vicariate.

The respective Parish Priests are requested to announce the same to the faithful.

Faithful from outside the deanery and neighbouring parishes can also join.

Please contact Rev Fr Jayaprakash D’Souza, 9480147114.

2. Study of the ‘Passion Narratives in Luke’ for Priests

As we know each year on Palm Sunday Passion Narratives from one of the Synoptic Gospels is read. This year Lk 22:14 — 23:56 will be read. A special study session exclusively for priests will be held on Thursday, 27 March 2025, from 9.15 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. at St Antony’s Ashram, Jeppu, Mangalore, on the Passion Narratives in Luke.

3. Biblical Retreat at Holy Cross Church, Hospet, from 9 — 11 March 2025,

4. Bible Convention at Cordel Church on 20-23 March 2025, 4.30 p.m. – 8.30 p.m., in association with Charismatic Service Team, Diocese of Mangalore.

- Fr Vincent Sequeira, Secretary

PROGRAMMES OF CODP

02.03.2025 : Women’s Day celebration and Training on Communication and Effective Listening in Kulai

08.03.2025 : Manini State-level convention for Women Empowerment Staff in Shimoga

11.03.2025 : CODP Governing Board Meeting at Bishop’s House

12.03.2025 : Women’s Day Celebration and Training on Community based development in Moodbidri,

- Bandhavya Federation Governing Board Meeting
at CODP, L.M. Pinto Health Centre Governing
Board Meeting at Bishop's House
- 14.03.2025 : Women Empowerment Project Staff meeting at
CODP
- 15.03.2025 : Training on Leadership in Vorkady, Training on
Conflict Management in Talapady
- 20.03.2025 : Women Empowerment Project field evaluation
by State Team
- 21.03.2025 : Women Empowerment Project field evaluation
by State Team
- 23.03.2025 : Women's Day Celebration and Training on
Community based development in Bajpe
- 25.03.2025 : Awareness on Women's Rights and Constitutional
Rights in Talapady
- 26.03.2025 : Training on Gender Equality and Justice in
Manjeshwar
- 27.03.2025 : Training on Local Resource Management in Sheni
- 28.03.2025 : Awareness on Women's Rights in Bela

Other Information: We believe the Lenten Envelopes have reached all the parishes of the Diocese of Mangalore, along with the Bishop's Letter for CODP's Lenten Campaign 2025.

For the Bishop's Letter and other instructions related to the collection and remittance of Lenten contributions, please refer to *Inter Nos*, February 2025, pp. 41-43.

- **Director, CODP**

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2025

Let us journey together in hope

Dear brothers and sisters,

We begin our annual pilgrimage of Lent in faith and hope with the penitential rite of the imposition of ashes. The Church, our mother and teacher, invites us to open our hearts to God's grace,

so that we can celebrate with great joy the paschal victory of Christ the Lord over sin and death, which led Saint Paul to exclaim: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:54-55). Indeed, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the heart of our faith and the pledge of our hope in the Father’s great promise, already fulfilled in his beloved Son: life eternal (cf. Jn 10:28; 17:3).

This Lent, as we share in the grace of the Jubilee Year, I would like to propose a few reflections on what it means to *journey together in hope*, and on the summons to conversion that God in his mercy addresses to all of us, as individuals and as a community.

First of all, *to journey*. The Jubilee motto, “Pilgrims of Hope”, evokes the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land, as recounted in the Book of Exodus. This arduous path from slavery to freedom was willed and guided by the Lord, who loves his people and remains ever faithful to them. It is hard to think of the biblical exodus without also thinking of those of our brothers and sisters who, in our own day, are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones. A first call to conversion thus comes from the realisation that all of us are pilgrims in this life; each of us is invited to stop and ask how our lives reflect this fact. Am I really on a journey, or am I standing still, not moving, either immobilised by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of my comfort zone? Am I seeking ways to leave behind the occasions of sin and situations that degrade my dignity? It would be a good Lenten exercise for us to compare our daily life with that of some migrant or foreigner, to learn how to sympathise with their experiences, and in this way, discover what God is asking of us so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father. This would be a good “examination of conscience” for all of us wayfarers.

Second, *to journey together*. The Church is called to walk together, to be synodal. Christians are called to walk at the side

of others, and never as lone travellers. The Holy Spirit impels us not to remain self-absorbed but to leave ourselves behind and keep walking towards God and our brothers and sisters. Journeying together means consolidating the unity grounded in our common dignity as children of God (cf. Gal 3:26-28). It means walking side-by-side without shoving or stepping on others, without envy or hypocrisy, and without letting anyone be left behind or excluded. Let us all walk in the same direction, tending towards the same goal, attentive to one another in love and patience.

This Lent, God is asking us to examine whether in our lives, in our families, in the places where we work and spend our time, we are capable of walking together with others, listening to them, resisting the temptation to become self-absorbed and to think only of our own needs. Let us ask ourselves in the presence of the Lord whether, as bishops, priests, consecrated persons and laity in the service of the Kingdom of God, we cooperate with others. Whether we show ourselves welcoming, with concrete gestures, to those both near and far. Whether we make others feel a part of the community or keep them at a distance. This, then, is a second call to conversion: a summons to synodality.

Third, let us journey together *in hope*, for we have been given a promise. May *the hope that does not disappoint* (cf. Rom 5:5), the central message of the Jubilee, be the focus of our Lenten journey towards the victory of Easter. As Pope Benedict XVI taught us in the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, “the human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: ‘neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom 8:38-39)”. Christ, my hope, has risen! He lives and reigns in glory. Death has been transformed into triumph, and the faith and great hope of Christians rests in this: the resurrection of Christ!

This, then, is the third call to conversion: a call to hope, to trust in God and his great promise of eternal life. Let us ask ourselves: Am I convinced that the Lord forgives my sins? Or do I act as

if I can save myself? Do I long for salvation and call upon God's help to attain it? Do I concretely experience the hope that enables me to interpret the events of history and inspires in me a commitment to justice and fraternity, to care for our common home and in such a way that no one feels excluded?

Sisters and brothers, thanks to God's love in Jesus Christ, we are sustained in the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul". It moves the Church to pray for "everyone to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4) and to look forward to her being united with Christ, her bridegroom, in the glory of heaven. This was the prayer of Saint Teresa of Avila: "Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one" (*The Exclamations of the Soul to God*, 15:3).

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope, intercede for us and accompany us on our Lenten journey.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 6 February 2025, Memorial of St Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs.

CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF INDIA

36th Plenary Assembly, Jan 28 to Feb 4, 2025, Bhubaneswar

LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN INDIA

Pilgrims of Hope: Discerning the Synodal Path
For we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We, the 145 Archbishops and Bishops representing the 132 dioceses of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), gathered at the XIM University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, for our 36th Plenary Assembly from 28th January to 4th February 2025, send you greetings of Peace, Love and Joy.

The Synod on Synodality, with its emphasis on Communion, Participation and Mission, has deepened our understanding of the

Church as the People of God. As a follow-up of the Synod, considering the Final Document of the Synod, we came together to deliberate, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, on how to journey further towards a Synodal Church. The theme of our Plenary was: *Discerning Synodal Pathways for Mission*.

The Church in India embarked upon three journeys towards a synodal Church. First, at the universal level, in response to Pope Francis' call for a synodal Church, the Conference initiated an extensive consultation process from October 2021 to July 2022, culminating in the collation of reports from 130 dioceses into the CCBI's *National Synthesis* (August 2022). Secondly, at the Asian level, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), marking its Golden Jubilee, undertook prayerful discernment by representative Bishops of Asian countries, culminating in the *FABC Bangkok 50 Document: Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia ... and they went a different way* (Matt 2:12) (March 2023). Finally, the CCBI engaged in a massive consultation process, involving close to 5,000 people, culminating in the *Pastoral Plan - Journeying Towards a Synodal Church: Mission 2033* (September 2024).

The CCBI reviewed the fruits of these journeys and prepared the Working Document for the Plenary Assembly. The Working Document outlined ten themes which served as a framework for us to engage in prayerful reflection, listening and discernment. The methodology used at the Plenary was "Spiritual Conversation": listening prayerfully to "*what the Spirit says to the Churches*" (Revelation 2:7). All the participants felt powerfully the movement of the Holy Spirit. The Bishops expressed their intention to use this methodology in all structures of participation, such as parish and diocesan pastoral and financial councils, in arriving at decisions on administration, governance and ministry-related matters that could help the Church immensely.

Searching for synodal pathways for the coming years, we discerned the following themes that would need attention: Faith Formation and Word of God, Children, Family, Youth, Laity, Basic Ecclesial Communities, Migrants and Refugees, Dalits, Tribals/Adivasis/Indigenous Peoples, Socially Excluded People, Women and Gender Justice, Poverty and Equitable Economy, Digital

Technology and Social Media, Ecology and Climate Stewardship, Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue, and finally, Peacebuilding. The CCBI will soon share in a more elaborate manner the fruits of this Plenary for the benefit of all.

The purpose of the Synod of Bishops was “*to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands*” (Pope Francis’ Address at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, 3 October 2018). The Synod is not a destiny nor a distant future but a process of active engagement. We see our 36th Plenary Assembly as one step forward in this ongoing process.

With sentiments of deep affection and spiritual closeness, we would like to thank you, the lay faithful, consecrated persons and priests, for your participation in various consultation processes undertaken so far and for your prayers for the Plenary Assembly. In our prayers, we gratefully remembered you, the laity, especially the faithful of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar Archdiocese and, with pain and hope, all those who sacrificed and bore witness to the faith during the Kandhamal persecution.

It is our heartfelt desire that we, as a synodal family, journey towards a synodal Church. We invite committed members of the Church to walk together as we seek to take new Synodal Pathways for Mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May Mary, Mother of the Church, who walks with us on our pilgrimage, guide us as we embark on a synodal path with missionary zeal as Pilgrims of Hope, especially during this Jubilee Year 2025 and in the coming years.

Given on February 4, 2025 on the Feast Day of St. John de Britto.

Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão
President, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India
Archbishop of Goa and Daman

George Antonysamy
Vice President, CCBI
Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore

Anil Joseph Thomas Couto
Secretary General, CCBI
Archbishop of Delhi

STATEMENT

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I, Rev. Fr Henry Sequeira, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 31-03-2025

(Sd.) Rev. Fr Henry Sequeira
Publisher

DIAMOND AND GOLDEN BIRTHDAYS

- * Rev. Fr Joseph Mascarenhas, Parish Priest, Our Lady of Mercy Church, Fajir, celebrates his 60th birthday on 19.03.2025.
- * Rev. Fr Vincent Anil Menezes, Spiritual Director, St Joseph Seminary, Jeppu, celebrates his 50th birthday on 24.03.2025.

On your special day, dear Fathers, we celebrate the gift you are. May God bless you abundantly and guide you from afar. A birthday is not just the anniversary of your birth but a reminder of all the lives you've touched.

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