

CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF INDIA



CIRCULAR

Communio India Sunday

Sunday, 2 December, 2018 (First Sunday of Advent)

“Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34)

To All Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons,
Religious, Catechists and Lay Faithful of the
Latin Catholic Church in India

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Today we begin a new liturgical year with the season of Advent which offers us a sense of hope, joy and encouragement as we continue our journey of faith to celebrate the Mystery of the Incarnation. Advent refers not only to the birth of our Lord at his First Coming but also to our hope and expectation of him at his Second Coming. This expectation demands from us fidelity to the Gospel by being constantly watchful like the wise virgins (cf. Mt. 25: 1-13) or the ever faithful and wise servant (cf. Mt. 24:45-51) for the Master's return.

Incarnation is an intimate expression of God's unconditional love for us: "God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). Christ has taught and shown us that Love is the heart of the Gospel. To receive God's salvation is to be fully taken up in this infinite love of God for us in Jesus Christ.

During this Advent and Christmas season we are called to share God's love with our fellow brothers and sisters, especially with the poor and the needy. Heeding the call of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we have to live our lives for others. This can happen through a conversion of heart that Jesus called us to, at the very beginning of his ministry. He invites us to make a new and determined effort to fulfil our responsibilities as disciples of Christ, in order to live fully the two great commandments, to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbour as ourselves (cf. Mt 22: 36-40).

Pope Francis says: "Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 2).

Many Christians live in poor and even inhuman conditions, deprived of the basic necessities of life such as drinking water, food, clothing, shelter, education, employment, and a secure future. Those among us whom God has blessed with sufficient material means to meet our needs have the responsibility to reach out to our poor brothers and sisters and provide them with

pastoral assistance, both spiritual and material. There are local Churches in our country struggling to live their Christian faith in the midst of socio-economic backwardness.

A good number of Catholics in India do not have a proper place to worship and celebrate the Holy Eucharist together. Many of our missionaries in rural and remote areas are working with limited facilities. They need financial assistance to build places of worship and other minimum facilities for their communities.

As you are well aware the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) has been dreaming and discussing for a long time about the possibility of initiating a funding agency on the pattern of Missio in Germany to assist our mission dioceses, which are facing financial difficulties, for their pastoral and evangelical work. This would be a concrete expression of our solidarity with one another in following the example of the early Church that was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

After extensive discussions and deliberations through various meetings, the CCBI has established, Communio India to assist our dioceses and religious congregations working in the missions.

The purposes of Communio India are (1) to build a culture of sharing in order to express solidarity with our needy brothers and sisters in the country. (2) to encourage our faithful to pray and help the missions and the missionaries and to promote missionary vocations. (3) to inspire our lay faithful to work in mission areas as lay missionaries.

It is our responsibility to promote Communio India as a means of evangelization: "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since according to the plan of God the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (*Ad Gentes*, 2). It is the duty of the Church to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon the mission of evangelization marked with the Joy of the Gospel (Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 1).

It is our earnest desire that Communio India Sunday should be observed faithfully and meaningfully in all our parishes and institutions. Holy Mass ought to be solemnly celebrated and

special prayers must be added for the Church's mission and her missionaries. It should not only be a day of prayer but also a day of awareness to enable us to become missionary disciples. We request you to encourage our missionaries not only through prayers but also through your generous contributions.

We appeal to all the faithful to be generous in sharing their resources to help our brothers and sisters in need in the remote regions of the Indian Church. All our contributions, big or small, would be of great help for the missionary work of the Church in India.

As we open our arms and hearts to celebrate Baby Jesus, at His nativity, we are inspired to open our arms and hearts also to those who are in need of us. Sharing is the most relevant and meaningful way to celebrate God's generous gift of His divine life with us in the manger of Bethlehem.

The Church in India is blessed with numerous, dedicated and committed missionaries. We appreciate and acknowledge their sacrifice and passion for missionary work. We request all of you to continuously pray for our missionaries and the missions. May Jesus the Good Shepherd guide and help us to carry out His work of evangelisation through Communio India.

Given on 8 September, 2018; on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

† Oswald Cardinal Gracias

President, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India and
Archbishop of Bombay

† George Antonyamy

Vice President, CCBI and
Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore

† Anil Joseph Thomas Couto

Secretary General, CCBI and
Archbishop of Delhi

This Circular should be read and explained on "Communio India Sunday", in all our parishes, religious communities and institutions of the 132 dioceses of Latin Catholic Church in India.
