

PRAYER | SOLIDARITY | MISSION

DECEMBER 2022

A CCBI
INITIATIVE

TO ASSIST
THE CHURCH
IN RURAL INDIA

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In communion we realize our bond with one another

Inaugurating the 33rd Plenary Assembly of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), in Bangalore on Friday 11 November 2022, His Excellency Most Rev. Leopoldo Girelli, the Apostolic Nuncio to India and Nepal, exhorted the bishops to promote relations with other religions with the Gandhian spirit. The Papal Ambassador said, *“All Christians must be committed to dialogue with others so that moral values are protected, and God is praised in all creation.”* He also encouraged the Bishops to take concrete steps to promote inter-religious dialogue and promote relations among people in order to foster the culture of peace.

God’s gift of His Son to humanity at Christmas becomes an invitation for us to open ourselves up so that we may share what we are and what we have with others. Moreover, we are in the midst of the celebration of the Synod for a Synodal Church 2021-2023. *Synodality is lived out in communion, participation and mission* - in communion we realize our bond with one another, in participation we celebrate each’s one’s gift and, in mission, we reach out to others, particularly those in the peripheries.

Let us reach out to our neighbours as the shepherds & Magi reached out to others sharing the Goodnews of baby Jesus born in Bethlehem. Wish you a Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year 2023.

Fr. Stephen Alathara

Deputy Secretary General, CCBI

Director, Communio

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A Christmas Letter to my Fellow Catholic

Dear,

Just the other day, I was listening to this popular carol “**What Child is this, Who, laid to rest...**” and I was drawn into this intra-exclamation ‘Indeed! What Child this must have been for Whom ‘wise’ men journeyed distances, got down on their knees and offered the kind of gifts reserved for God!’

And this moment of awe led me to think about the essence of Christmas—the essence that is taught to us and the essence that is sold to us.

Now fests and Christmas in particular, calls for preparation which is best demonstrated through décor, food and clothing. But the very essence is lost when Saviour becomes veiled by Santa and Christmas replaced with Xmas.



FOR WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is the birthday of Jesus. And it is not “only” a day of commemoration, but ‘also’ a day of anticipation. A day that marks for us and the world the remembrance of the birth of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, and also a day that directs our minds and hearts to await His Second Coming at the end time.

Christmas requires that we keep in anticipation for both Jesus’ coming more deeply into our lives, and, for his Second Coming. And that as we keep in anticipation, we prepare the way for Him and make room for Him in our minds and hearts, by way of **Prayer, Reflection, Scripture and Sacraments...** so as to arrive at that internal state of perfection, which is most precious for our souls than the things of this world, which are passing away.

And as we begin to arrive at that internal state of perfection—being formed and empowered by the Holy Spirit in hope, faith, joy and peace, we can bear witness to the joy of the Lord, extending our time and resources in solidarity to the neighbor in need; and set out on a mission, courageously to remind the world that beyond the trees and Santa, the cards and the cakes, the essence of Christmas is Christ in us.

Yours faithfully,

Angela Nayak
Communio Volunteer, Hyderabad



My Calling to be a Lay Catholic Missionary

I am Nguangtola Victoria from Sotokur village of Shamator District, belonging to the Yimkhiung tribe of Nagaland. I was born Baptist. At the age of two I met with an accident which almost took my life. I received a heavy blow on my neck during that tragic moment which affected my overall physical growth. I was half paralyzed and no one in my village thought I would make it out alive. Many things were done in order to cure my illness. In desperation to save my life, my parents offered me in the church with the promise to God that "If she lives, her life will be for God," and the whole Christian community prayed over me. Later, my paternal uncle, whom I call Grandpa, prayed over me and told my mom, "She will live, she will not die. She will bear the light around her, and she will travel far and wide". Later, by God's grace I received complete healing.



In 1993, my dad decided to accept Catholic faith when I was eight years old and we all obliged to his decision. When I grew up my parents and my villagers kept reminding me that I should become a missionary, since I was offered in the church. My parents even remotely expected me to become a Nun. My dad tried to send me to the convent from eighth standard, however things did not work out as imagined even after my twelfth standard, as God had other plans for me. During my graduation final year, I met Jesus Youth (JY) leaders from South India in my parish, Nagaland and with just one interaction I was convinced and decided to join Jesus Youth as a full-time volunteer. I knew nothing about Jesus Youth when I enrolled myself for the Fulltime volunteer's training program in 2007, however I felt the hand of God was leading me and I realized that I am called to be a Lay Catholic Missionary.



MISSION TESTIMONY

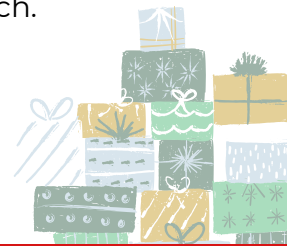
One-year full-time commitment in Bangalore taught and equipped me to live a missionary life. When I returned back to Nagaland, I got myself fully involved with Parish mission. Catechizing the new catholic communities, visiting homes, teaching and explaining about Catholic faith during our informal discussions at homes and over a traditional black tea near fireplaces, which resulted in the mushrooming of Catholic communities in my area.

Despite the stiff opposition from other Christian denominations and non-cooperation from the village council, we could construct our Catholic church in Sotokur village. With the reception of fifteen families into the Catholic Church by Most Rev. Bishop James Thopil on 10th December 2021, the Church, finally took a foothold in my village. There are people who have tirelessly worked to bring Catholic Church in Sotokur village. The first initiation from the church was taken by Fr Loyola Antony and Mr Throngji Timothy from St. Augustin Church, Chessore; followed by his successors Fr David Tithong and Fr. Victor Renthungo along with the church council.

Having been involved in the Catholic mission as a Lay Missionary for 15 years, I have been immensely blessed and had great experiences. As a lay missionary I feel we can do more. It is about knowing the right way of getting oneself involved into the structured system of our Catholic church. Someone asked, "What is blessing?" I replied, "blessing is I AM A CATHOLIC".

Ms. Nguangtola Victoria

Lay Catholic Missionary, Nagaland



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RURAL CHURCH**
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Christmas with
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COMMUNIO SUNDAY

Delhi archdiocese's most well-known celebration

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Around 12,000 lay people from various parishes gathered at the cathedral to celebrate the Delhi archdiocese's largest and most well-known celebration, the solemnity of Christ the King on 20th Nov 2022. CCBI youth commission used this opportunity to reach out to the people to support the church and its missionaries working in rural parts of India. Youth leaders of ICYM along with Fr. Chetan Machado (CCBI National Youth Director) created awareness about Communio and Communio Sunday.

Many youth volunteers participated in this event. Mr. Abhishek Bhattacharjee (YCS/YSM National Coordinator), Ms. Divya Sarkar (Former NEXCO ICYM), Ms. Angelina Ekka (NEXCO YCS/YSM), interacted with priests, religious and laity and shared about Communio Sunday and its significance, they also distributed pamphlets and brochures to the lay faithful to create awareness of the missionary mandate, which was given to every baptized Christian.

I SUPPORT MY CHURCH, what about you?

Adv. Antony Judy

National president ICYM

Full Time Volunteer for CCBI Youth Commission.

<https://linktr.ee/communioIndia>



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