

COMMUNIO

Sunday

3 DECEMBER 2023
(First Sunday of Advent)





INTRODUCTION

The first Sunday of Advent is Communio Sunday. This year Communio Sunday falls on 3rd December, 2023. It's the one Sunday in the year when the entire Latin Church in India comes together to support the Church's mission in our country. And every single donation from Communio Sunday goes to support rural missions and missionaries working in the areas where the Church is new, young or poor.

This is our opportunity and privilege to show love and solidarity to our Church family. Through our prayers, we support missionaries everywhere in spreading the Good News. And by donating, we respond to Christ's call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

Communio brings the Church together in compassion and communion. Together, we provide mission dioceses with the essential support they need to become self-sufficient. Communio works with local bishops, churches and missionary congregations, to distribute resources and funds fairly, on the basis of need.

COMMUNIO SUNDAY CIRCULAR

3 December 2023 (First Sunday of Advent)

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



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

1. As we begin a new liturgical year with the Season of Advent, may we be filled with its sense of hope, joy and encouragement. In celebrating the Mystery of Incarnation, which is the most fundamental expression of God's unconditional love for us, may we resonate with the teaching of Christ that Love is the heart of the Gospel, and that to receive God's salvation is to be fully taken up in this infinite love of God for us revealed in Jesus Christ.

2. Throughout the year, but very specially during the Seasons of Advent and Christmas, we are called to share God's love with our fellow brothers and sisters, particularly with the poor and the needy. Through all her ministries, the Church in India strives to continue transmitting the joy of the Gospel everywhere, but socio-economic limitations pose obstacles on her way to fulfil her mission. In Manipur, life has been thrown into disarray and our brethren are displaced, the majority of them having lost their homes and worship places. Many of our brothers and sisters live in poor and inhumane conditions and are devoid of a proper place to worship and celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Several of our missionaries in rural and remote areas work with very limited facilities.

3. Once again, as we commemorate Communio Sunday on the First Sunday of Advent, let us celebrate it joyfully and appeal to all our faithful to be generous in sharing their prayers and resources in order to help our brothers and sisters, especially in the remote regions of our country, so that they too can experience the love of God.

4. Communio is an initiative of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) taken in 2018, to assist, support and sustain our Dioceses and Religious Congregations exercising pastoral ministry in rural and mission areas. “Hearts in prayer, minds in mission and hands in solidarity” is the vision of Communio. Its objectives are: (i) to build a culture of sharing among the Catholic faithful in order to express solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need; (ii) to encourage the faithful to pray and to support the missions and the missionaries and to promote vocations to consecrated life; (iii) to inspire the lay faithful to volunteer to work in mission areas and (iv) to promote the formation of our people as missionary disciples. Communio is from us, for us and by us.

5. In and through Communio we have begun to share our resources for evangelisation programmes, catechesis, formation of the lay faithful, seminars and training sessions, construction of chapels and presbyteries as well as for ecumenism and interfaith initiatives. We invite you to celebrate Communio not only today, on this Sunday, but every day. There are five ways in which you could collaborate with Communio: (i) donate for a specific cause; (ii) leave a legacy by making a note in your will; (iii) sponsor the formation of a seminarian or a religious candidate; (iv) support a mission and (v) volunteer by giving your time and energy. Communio reaches your hands and hearts through regular videos on saints, feasts and the Pope’s prayer intentions; you can access us through our website (www.communio.in), our Diocesan Coordinators and our Bishops.



6. As we thank you on this occasion for your magnanimity and generosity, we also encourage you to celebrate Communio Sunday in your parish, institution, religious community and family, in the following ways: (i) have the Communio Sunday poster or logo adorn your parish noticeboards and bulletins; you may have it on your profile in the social media – that all may hear and see the word Communio; (ii) organize a meaningful liturgical celebration to pray for mission and missionaries; (iii) make a pledge to contribute towards Communio with your resources, time and energy. And start today – here and now!

May Our Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Missions, and Saint Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church, intercede for us.

CCBI General Secretariat, November 1, 2023.

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

+ George Antonyamy
Vice-President, CCBI
Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore

+ Anil J.T. Couto
Secretary General, CCBI
Archbishop of Delhi

N.B.: It is recommended that this Circular be read and its contents explained on Communio Sunday (December 3, 2023) in all the parishes, religious communities and institutions of the 132 dioceses of the Latin Catholic Church in India.



FIVE WAYS TO CELEBRATE COMMUNIO SUNDAY

1. **Pray:** Celebrate Holy Mass for the missionaries in India and pray for our missions and missionaries. Add special prayers of the faithful. Encourage every family to pray, at least today, for our missionaries.
2. **Educate:** Read the Communio Sunday Circular to the faithful or explain its contents. Make your congregation aware about the missionary activities of the Latin Church in India. Educate your faithful about what is happening in mission dioceses.
3. **Solidarity:** Express solidarity with our brothers and sisters where the Church is new, young and poor. Build a culture of sharing and take a special offering to support and assist our missionaries. Encourage everyone to contribute as all our contributions, big or small, would be of great help for the missionary work of the Church in India.
4. **Encourage:** Encourage missionary vocations and inspire our faithful to become missionary disciples. We believe that every baptized Christian is a missionary. Motivate our faithful to participate in the mission of the Church, wherever they live.
5. **Celebrate:** Celebrate Communio Sunday in parishes with various events, like meetings, missionary shows, exhibitions, competitions, etc. Invite some missionaries and listen to their witness. Honour families or parents who gave their members or children for the missionary work of the Church as priests, religious or and lay missionaries.

LITURGICAL- PASTORAL RESOURCES

I. Mass Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,
 We have three reasons to celebrate this day of the Lord: first, we inaugurate the new liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent; second, we commemorate Saint Francis Xavier, the missionary who came to our soil proclaiming the Good News of Christ; and third, our Church in India celebrates this Sunday as Communio Sunday, inviting everyone to prayer, solidarity, and mission, which are the three pillars of Communio, an initiative of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), since 2018, which assists all our Dioceses and Religious Congregations working in rural and mission areas, in their pastoral ministry.

As we have come together to prepare for the celebrations of the nativity of our Lord, let us pray that we become persons of hope, journeying with one another building communion, promoting participation, and being committed to mission. At this Holy Mass, let us pray for the Church in India, her mission, and her missionaries in rural areas. May we continue to build the mystical body of Christ in solidarity. Being thankful to God for his blessings in our lives, let us resolve to share our resources, time, and energy with the needy.

II. Introduction to First Reading [Isaiah 63:16b-17, 64:1, 3b-8]

The first reading is taken from the Trito-Isaiah of the Book of Isaiah which offers hope to the exiled Israelites. The people of Israel who have experienced the absence of God in their exile, seek his face and his presence, calling to him as their father, redeemer, and maker.

III. Introduction to First Reading [Isaiah 63:16b-17, 64:1, 3b-8]

The second reading is taken from the opening passage of Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Before addressing the various problems of the community, Paul, at the outset, underscores the richness of their faith, grace, gifts, and charisms.





IV. Homily Notes [Mark 13:33-37]

Enriched in Every Way

Let us begin our reflection with the Second Reading. The apostle Paul expresses gratitude for the Corinthians and emphasizes the blessings of God. This passage provides a beautiful reminder of the richness of God's grace in our lives. Paul begins by acknowledging that all blessings come from God, our Father. This reminds us that every good thing in our lives is a gift from God. Our very existence, our talents, and the love we receive are all manifestations of His grace. We should start by recognizing God as the source of all our blessings, fostering a heart of gratitude.

Paul highlights the Corinthians' enrichment in every way - enriched in speech and knowledge, receiving all spiritual gifts. These verses remind us of the diverse and abundant ways God blesses us. He equips us with spiritual gifts to serve Him and others. The lesson is that we should reflect on the gifts God has given us, recognizing our responsibility to use them for His purposes and the enrichment of the community. Paul assures the Corinthians that they do not lack any spiritual gift while they wait for the revelation of Christ. He emphasizes God's faithfulness and invites them to be hope-filled people.

Paul underscores that God has called us into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This fellowship unites believers across time and space, forming a diverse yet harmonious family. Thus, we are called to live in gratitude for the gift of unity in Christ. Our thanksgiving should manifest in our love for one another and our service to the world.

In today's reading from the book of Isaiah, we find the prophet pouring out his heart in a passionate prayer, expressing the deep longing for God's presence. Isaiah's words resonate with our own hearts, especially during the Advent season when we prepare for the coming of Christ. Isaiah begins by addressing God as 'Our Father' and 'Our Redeemer.' This intimate language reflects a profound relationship between God and His people. The prophet acknowledges that even though they have strayed, they still belong to God, and He is their Father. Isaiah cries out for God to 'rend the heavens and come down.' This vivid image conveys the deep yearning for a powerful manifestation of God's presence. Isaiah acknowledges the people's sins and their need for God's forgiveness and mercy. Isaiah ends with a beautiful reminder that God is the potter, and we are the clay. He shapes us with love and care.

God's providence for us makes us enriched in every way. Despite our unfaithfulness, God remains faithful to his promise, and stands close to us as our father, redeemer, and potter (maker).

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks to His disciples about the importance of vigilance and readiness for His second coming. As we enter the Advent season, this message is particularly timely, reminding us of the need to prepare our hearts for Christ's return. The text divides into two sections: (a) the call to watchfulness. We, as Christ's disciples, are called to live in a state of watchfulness, knowing that our Lord could return at any moment. Our lives should reflect this readiness; and (b) the warning of unpreparedness. Unpreparedness can lead to missed opportunities and blessings. We must not grow complacent in our faith but be vigilant, anticipating Christ's return with joy.

Waiting for Christ's return is not a passive activity. It involves living out our faith actively, demonstrating our love for God and neighbour. We should be engaged in acts of love, justice, and mercy, as if Jesus were present with us every moment. The Advent season provides a unique opportunity for us to intensify our spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ. It's a time for prayer, reflection, and self-examination, allowing us to draw closer to God and align our lives with His will.

Today, as we celebrate the Communion Sunday, let us be reminded of our own spiritual and material richness in Christ. Our material resources are for Christ and for the people in need. When we call God as our Father, we have a duty to call everyone as our brother and sister. We belong to a single household of God. God has appointed us stewards of his family.

We have a lot of mission needs to be met in our Country: construction of worship places or churches, lack of church supplies, unavailability of funds to support priestly and religious formation, and absence of trained catechists, and lay ministers. A thought about these needs will inspire a word, and the word will become an act of sharing. We are enriched in every way, and on every day. Because we, as members of the Church in India, are together in prayer, solidarity, and mission.





VI. Ideas for Celebrating Communio Sunday

1. Special Mass or Liturgy: Organize a special Mass or liturgy dedicated to Communio Sunday. Invite missionaries, if possible, to share their experiences and insights during the service.
2. Communio Fair: Set up a Communio Fair in the campus. Parishioners can learn about the work being done and even participate in hands-on activities or simulations related to mission work. Raise special collection through funfair activities.
3. Prayer Vigil: Organize a 24-hour prayer vigil, where members of the congregation take turns praying for missionaries and their missions in the Church in India.
4. Children's Activities: Host special activities for children, teaching them about mission work through stories, crafts, and games.

V. Prayers of the Faithful

1. Let us pray for the Church throughout the world, that during this Advent season, we may be renewed in faith and hope as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ; that the Church in India may expand her mission in dialogue with other Christians and people of neighbour religions.

Response: Lord hear our prayer

2. For families, that they may use this Advent season to grow closer to one another and to God, and that their homes may be places of peace, love, and understanding. For this parish family, that we may be grateful to God for the enrichment of resources and may share them with others in need.
3. For missionaries around our country, that they may be filled with zeal and courage as they share the Good News of Christ with those who have not yet heard it. That everyone of us, being reminded our baptismal call, may partake in the mission of the Church.



4. For those who support Communio through their prayers, financial contributions, and volunteer efforts, that their generosity may bear abundant fruit in the spread of God's Kingdom.

5. Young at Heart: Instil the spark of vocation to priesthood and consecrated life in the hearts of the young people. Create a curiosity in them to know about the Church in India, and commitment to reach out to all

6. Become a Communio Partner: visit www.communio.in to become a member of Communio family, the largest Catholic network in India for prayer and mission.



PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the Week before Communio Sunday:

Next Sunday we will celebrate Communio Sunday. The Church in India invites all of us to support mission dioceses, where priests, religious and lay leaders serve the most vulnerable communities. Please keep in your prayers the appeal of the Church in India for the missions and be generous in coming Sunday's collection for Communio.

On Communio Sunday:

Today is Communio Sunday. We celebrate this day by remembering our baptismal call to bring the Gospel to all. The collection taken today for the Communio supports the work and witness of the mission dioceses in our country, as it provides for priests, religious and lay leaders who offer the Lord's mercy and concrete help to the most vulnerable communities in the missions. Thank you for your generosity.

In the Week after Communio Sunday:

Thank you for your generous response to the collection for the Communio last week on Communio Sunday. Our parish raised an amount of _____ (insert amount). You may stay connected the year round to the Church's missions, continuing the commitment of Communio Sunday by networking with the Communio Secretariat.



ST. TERESA OF KOLKATA

PATRON SAINT OF COMMUNIO



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