



Simla Chandigarh Diocese

Bishop's House, P.O. Box No: 709, Sector 19-A Chandigarh - 160 019, INDIA.

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Ref. DSC/Cir. 10/2016

25.11.2016

ADVENT PASTORAL LETTER

To All the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of Simla-Chandigarh Diocese.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

The Advent season invites us: To be watchful. To be ready. To be holy.

Donald Trump's election as US President and Prime Minister Narendra Modi abolishing Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes in India arrived like conjoined twins on 9th November 2016. And we are well aware that the birth of conjoined twins brings with it immense challenges, in coping with nurturing responsibilities, anxieties in supporting and sustaining them and so on.

All over the world and in many nations citizens as in India, were totally surprised with these 2 developments and this generated many divergent reactions in conversations in homes, neighbourhoods markets, bus stands, railway stations, in news channels, newspapers and social media.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi demonetised Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes – which accounts for 86% of the currency in circulation by value was a shock announcement in a bid to stamp out illegal cash and counterfeit currency. But the Bumpy rollout of the new currency has seen people, the poor, the small traders and farmers the worst hit standing in long queues with hope and at times with anxiety outside banks and ATMs across the nation. The measure of waiting in long serpentine queues extending to roads, some making the trip 2 to 3 times covering long distances, the anxiety, the pain is almost tangible to behold. The PM has said wait 50 days, it is a short period, but for the poor and deprived, even 50 days can bring about disastrous effects, already 60 or 65 people have lost their lives, possibly more. This development has altered the future in ways we cannot predict or control. The pall of uncertainty hangs heavy over the country.

As our nation waits with hope and expectation that things will turn out better, the church begins the NEW LITURGICAL YEAR on 27 November 2016 the 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT and concludes it on the Solemnity of Christ the Universal King in November 2017. Advent is a season observed as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the coming of Christ, and the Birth of Jesus at Christmas. The term meaning "coming" is all about hope and expectation. Before Jesus was born, men awaited, desired, wished for.....a "Messiah". And millions of men and women are still in a state of expectation, new life is about to appear.

And yet no birth happens suddenly, but only after a necessary time of development and gradual preparation. Expectant mothers wait for 9 long months and are conscious of all the changes that are going on within their bodies and within their hearts. As pregnancy begins to "show" at a certain stage and anticipation builds in the parents and family toward the day when the baby will arrive. Who will this new person be? What will the impact of this life have on us and on the world?

What are we preparing for during advent? Most people would say very simply we are preparing for Christmas, the birth of Jesus. It is true to a certain extent. The excitement in the air, the television and newspapers, well decorated malls and shopping centers will point to that. But going by the gospel passage of this Sunday what advent is all about is something greater and deeper than commemoration of the birth of Jesus. The Advent season invites us; To be watchful. To be ready. To be holy.



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The voices of Evangelist Matthew and Prophet Isaiah take up the story of salvation, warning us to be awake and alert lest the coming of God overtake us like a thief in the night. To resist needed change is to risk an axe to the root of the tree, a winnowing fan that separates the wheat from the chaff. A door has opened.

Even though the Holy Year of Mercy formally ended on November 20th, the essential practice of mercy and forgiveness continue because they are the essence of the Gospel and every disciple's way of life. The divine face of mercy revealed by Jesus comes to stay in our lives, entering through the door of our hearts only to lead us out again to share God's unconditional love.

There is no better season to appreciate the benefits of waiting than Advent and Christmas. And so I pray "Lord strengthen me to wait upon you with courage and faith." As Advent dawns, St Paul calls us to wake and prepare to greet the Lord at his coming. Let us always live our lives in such a way that we may not dread this coming but await it in joy.

"Come, let us go up to the mountains of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.... Let us walk in the light of the Lord!"

With all good wishes and praying for God's blessings on you.

This Advent Pastoral Letter is to be read out or its contents to be explained in Hindi or Punjabi in all Churches on 1st or 2nd Sunday of Advent November-December 2016

Given on Friday 25th November 2016 on the Feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria at Bishop's House, Chandigarh

Yours sincerely in Christ,



+Ignatius L. Mascarenhas,
Bishop of Simla Chandigarh

NB:

1. The Diocese is indeed blessed to have two more brothers as Deacons. Bros. Lawrence Benedict and Bibin T. Varghese have finished their Theological studies from St. Albert's College, Ranchi and their Diaconate Ordination will be at Little Flower Church, Sector 14, Panchkula on Sunday 11th December 2016 at 5.00 pm. Please keep these brothers in your prayers.
2. There will be a CHRISTMAS CIVIC FELLOWSHIP GATHERING on Monday 19th December 2016 at 6.00 pm at Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Chandigarh (For Government Officials and Special Invitees).
3. Christmas Get-Together for Priests and Religious is on Tuesday 27th December 2016 at 10.00 a.m. in Diocesan Pastoral Centre (DPC), Chandigarh.