



THY KINGDOM COME (Mt. 6:10)
DIOCESE OF CHANDA (CHANDRAPUR)

Phone : (07172) 240537, 241068 (P.)



Bishop's Home
Ballarpur P.O. - 442 701
Chandrapur Dist., M.S.
India.
E-mail : bishopchanda@gmail.com

Ephrem Nariculam
Bishop, Diocese of Chanda
E-mail : bishopephremnariculam@gmail.com
Mob. No. 9130702331 (Idea)
9423261891 (BSNL)

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PASTORAL LETTER ON LENT

Dear Rev. Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people,

**Thy Kingdom Come!
Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!**

Once again, we are at the threshold of Lent in preparation for the commemoration of paschal events of Christ - Passion, Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. This year the Holy Mother Church is celebrating the Holy Year reflecting on the theme, "the Pilgrims of Hope". The tiny star at Bethlehem brought to the world 'a ray of hope' (Mt 2:2). The teachings of Christ and the Paschal Mystery fortified the hope in the world. St. Paul affirmed when he exclaimed "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rm 5:5).

The salvation is brought to the world by the death and resurrection of Jesus our Lord. The temptations of Jesus (Mt. 4: 1-11 & Lk. 4:1-13, Mk 12:12-13) points to the fact that everyone has to go through trials and temptations in life. Though the Son of God, Jesus had to face temptations, yet being fully human he successfully overcame them by his reliance on divine providence. The prayer, fasting and sacrifices enabled Jesus to overcome the temptations. It preceded forty days of fast and prayer (Mt 4:2, Lk 4:2, Mk 1:14). Fasting and prayer-experience empower one to overcome temptations in life is a categorical teaching of Christ (Mk 9:29).


The season of Lent once again invites us to fasting and prayer. Like Jesus may they strengthen our body and spirit to face eventualities in life and create rapport with God and with everyone else, starting with our family members and others. It paves the way for personal holiness and grow proper in human relations. Jesus asserted categorically his unshakable faith in God, the Father when he had to face the temptation: "You shall not tempt God the Father (Mt:4:1-7) and You shall adore only God, the Holy One (Mt 4:10) are but clear indications of Jesus' love for God and his uncompromising reliance on God's providence.

Lent for every Christian is a season to express ones' deep love for God and the humankind. Fasting, prayer, almsgiving and acts of charity are means to express our love for God and others. Holy Qurbana, Stations of the Cross, reading of Holy Scripture, Calvarygiri pilgrimage (Lakkadakot) etc. are also some means to avail the Lent in a meaningful way. In this Jubilee Year we have also other means such as Cathedral pilgrimage and Plenary Indulgence to grow in faith and holiness. Whatever the acts of faith or devotional practices we do, it is ultimately the conversion of heart that matters the most (cf. Mk. 1:15 & Lk. 13:3). "Be holy as your heavenly Father is Holy" (Mt. 5:48) is the perennial invitation God gives us. To be holy means to be on God's part and in His direction. It is partaking the divine spark and radiating it in our daily life. It is to set a rapport of relationship within our family, in neighborhood, in the parish, in work place and in the society. It plays pivotal role for our life witness and it is the yardstick of measuring our holiness. Some biblical quotes prove it beyond doubt. "Those who say, I love God, and hate their brothers or sisters are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1Jn.4:20). All Laws and Prophets are summarized in two commandments - love God and love neighbor (Cf. Mt. 22:37-40). The greatest of all commandments is "to love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for the other (Jn. 15:13).

Thus, in the teachings of Christ, again and again, we are reminded and invited not to limit our path to grow in holiness within some rubrics or devotional practices. It consists not only in our living relationship with God but also with others (cf. Mt. 22:37-39). The devotional practices and rubrics prepare the way and directs us to the right path. Born from deep faith and sound experience of God like that of Jesus (cf. Jn. 10:30) one shall be able to assert and ascertain our rapport with God and our integrity. Then the others shall sense it and feel it by their interaction with us on daily basis.

In the 'Jubilee Year 2025' and 'the Year of Sanctity of Life', we shall resolve to develop an integrity of character, good rapport with others and above all grow in personal holiness by our Lenten practices. God bless you all.

Yours devotedly in Christ



† Ephrem Nariculam
Bishop, Diocese of Chanda



NB: Kindly read the translation of this pastoral letter in local languages on 02 March 2025.