

MESSAGE
OF THE 27th PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE
Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI)
HELD AT BENGALURU
FROM 3-9 FEBRUARY, 2015

“I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10)

We, the 130 members of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India gathered for the 27th Plenary Assembly at St. John’s National Academy of Health Sciences, Bengaluru from 3-9 February, 2015, wish to convey our greetings of joy, peace and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ to our Priests, Religious, Lay Faithful and all People of Good Will.

In the light of the theme of the Plenary Assembly, “Liturgy and Life”, we deliberated upon liturgical renewal in the Church in India and reflected on the intrinsic relationship of liturgy to the life of the People of God. We were encouraged and inspired by the message of the Holy Father, Pope Francis to our Conference in which, quoting *Evangelii Gaudium 24*, he invites us to reflect that “the Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving”.

Thanks to the Second Vatican Council, liturgical renewal has enabled us to value and experience the beauty, splendor and majesty of the liturgy of the Church.

While considering the relationship between liturgy and life, we could not ignore the fact that our country is going through challenging times. Even as the Country has progressed economically, the benefits have not reached the poor and the marginalized, and at times have even worsened their situation. We are anxious about the increasing

marginalization of the poor, the Dalits and the Tribals often in the name of development.

Rising fundamentalism and communalism threatens to tear the social fabric and the secular nature of our beloved Country. We feel sad that the law abiding Christian community appears to be especially targeted. It was in this spirit that we bishops took part in a “Peace and Harmony March” in order to express our solidarity with Christians in different parts of our country who are affected by these atrocities, especially with the Church in Delhi where recently several churches have been vandalized and desecrated.

We were conscious of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10). In the light of this Conciliar vision, many suggestions and recommendations were proposed for a liturgy that is celebrated in a proper, effective and relevant manner. Accordingly the National Liturgical Commission has been entrusted with the task of bringing out comprehensive liturgical guidelines. However, at this juncture, we would like to state:

- 1. In order to promote a full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebrations of the Paschal Mystery, we urge all ministers and faithful to celebrate the liturgy, with due sense of the sacred and of beauty and with joyfulness, leading to a personal and communitarian encounter with God and transformation of life. Care should be taken to observe the prescribed norms in order to maintain the dignity and decorum of the celebrations. The holiness of the priest is the leaven of the liturgical celebration.**
- 2. At the National, Regional, Diocesan and Parish levels, and in the Formation and Religious Houses, well planned measures have to be**

undertaken to help the communities to celebrate the liturgy in all its richness.

3. An extensive and regular liturgical catechesis will prepare the faithful to participate actively in the liturgy and allow the transforming power of the liturgy to flow into their lives.
4. We are convinced that inculturation is demanded by faith in accordance with the exigencies of human nature (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 37-40). At the same time, given the multi-cultured nature of our society and keeping in mind that cultures are ever evolving and transforming, the sensitivities of the people and of various groups are to be addressed when efforts are made to promote inculturation.
5. Heeding the Holy Father's exhortation that sometimes there is "an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God's faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time" (*Evangelii Gaudium* #77), we shall strive to make the liturgical celebrations also opportunities for catechesis on our missionary and social responsibilities, especially through Homilies and Prayers of the Faithful.
6. As the Universal Church prepares herself for the Synod on the Family in October 2015, we recognize the importance of the communion of families in neighborhoods which are the Small Christian Communities (SCC) that always relate liturgy to life and vice versa. It is through the communion of families in the neighborhood, that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church becomes Eucharistic like the early apostolic communities (Acts, chapters 2 and 4). We therefore pledge ourselves to strengthen the SCC as the true way of being the living Church.

May this Year dedicated to Consecrated Life be also a time of liturgical renewal in the Communities of the consecrated persons.

This Plenary Assembly was celebrated in a year full of grace with the recent canonization of three more Indian saints: St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, St. Euphrasia Eluvathingal and St. Joseph Vaz. We are grateful to the Church for giving us saints as models for imitation and as our intercessors in heaven.

May Mary, the Mother of the Word Incarnate, be our guide and our protector.