

**Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, Australia
and
Apostolic Visitation to the Syro-Malabar Faithful in New Zealand**



Prot.No.EPL: 11/21/54

**PASTORAL LETTER
Lent – 2021**

Dear Reverend Fathers, Dear Brothers and Sisters, and young friends in Jesus Christ,

With the liturgical celebrations of *Vibhoothi* on Monday, we are entering into the season of Lent, commemorating the Paschal mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ, his passion, death and resurrection. It is the words of Jesus: “Behold, we are going to Jerusalem” (Mt 20:18), that Holy Father Pope Francis chose as the light motive for his 2021 Lenten Message. The subsequent verses that we read from the Gospel of Mathew, explain the motive and goal of this journey. “The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles, to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised” (Mt 20:18-19). Lent is a spiritual journey. A spiritual journey, commemorating and following the one who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, the death on the cross, for us and for our salvation.

May the feast of the Resurrection give us the grace, through the anointment of the Holy Spirit, to be reborn as new persons, forsaking sin and sinful ways! Let us go ahead practising fasting, prayer and almsgiving. In this season for conversion, Pope Francis invites us to intensely renew the divine virtues: Faith, Hope and Love.

1. Let us confess our Faith. Christian faith is the confession of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. The one who was sent by the Father to this world, anointed by the Holy Spirit, entered into the glory of the resurrection as our Saviour and Lord. Through fasting and controlling our senses, let us follow Jesus who for our sake practised obedience and humiliation. Through self-denial, walking in the way of grace, we shall practise faith. Keeping ourselves away from evil, let us make our hearts the dwelling place of God.

We have to live proactively, controlling ourselves against the overdose of consumerism and excess of information media. In this secular culture let us bear witness to our living faith in Jesus as the only Saviour! We have to grow in communion with the Holy Trinity, deepening our personal faith experience.

2. Inviting us to grow in Hope, Pope Francis presents before us the icon of the Samaritan woman. When that poor woman was thinking of the water that quenches the physical thirst, Jesus offers her the spiritual water gushing forth from the Holy Spirit. The risen Christ is the fulcrum and foundation of our hope; He, who went through poverty, rejection, suffering, even the cruel death on the cross, which, in a human way of thinking, makes anyone hopeless. At this time of *Coronavirus*, when humanity is going through a multitude of crises, and when an unknown and apparently obscure future confronts us, to us believers the resurrection of Jesus is the light of Hope. We are called to console and heal the troubled minds around us, strengthening them by

sharing our Hope. Jesus Christ, who wipes away tears from the eyes of the crying, makes the sad happy, quietens the mourning, consoles the suffering, creates the new heaven and new earth in the place of the old, is our Hope (Rev 21).

3. Let us acknowledge that Love, the fulfilment of faith and hope, is the greatest virtue (1 Cor. 13). One who follows the footsteps of Christ has to have care and concern for everyone; has to experience, practise and share Love, which is the fulfilment of faith and hope. Love leaps with joy at the welfare of others. Love suffers at the suffering of others. As we pray in the Holy *Qurbana*, we have to be before the Lord, in communion with “those who suffer and are in distress, the poor and the oppressed, the sick and the afflicted”.

Love is the greatest gift of God that gives meaning to our life. We are commissioned to share love with everyone. Almsgiving enables us in this pursuit. We, who receive in the *Qurbanba* the Bread of Life offered by the Lord, have to be ready to share the bread of our everyday life.

The season of Lent invites us to grow daily through Faith, Hope and Love, into the Risen Jesus, by the practice of fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

In this pilgrimage we shall have as our guide the Blessed Mother, who always followed Jesus, stood at the foot of the cross as witness for everything and accompanied the apostles in the upper room at the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the two recent declarations of Pope Francis. They are regarding the observation of the Year dedicated to Saint Joseph and the Year for the Sanctification of Family.

In this year let us strive in a special way to commemorate Saint Joseph, imitating his example and seeking his paternal intercession. Keeping the spirit of Lent and observing the local COVID Protocols, on 19 March we shall celebrate solemnly the Feast of Saint Joseph, who was ever obedient to God, humble and just. He is the Protector of the Universal Church, Protector of the Holy Family, Patron of workers and Patron of the dying. I exhort our Reverend Fathers, and *Kaikars* to organize in advance so that such a celebration with Holy *Qurbana* takes place in all the communities on the feast day itself. Let this be a special experience of God’s grace to our country of migration, to our Eparchy, to our parishes and families.

I remind you also of the invitation of Pope Francis to inaugurate on St, Joseph’s feast day the Year for the Sanctification of the Family (19 March 2021 – 26 June 2022). The example and intercession of Saint Joseph shall inspire us to sanctify our families. During the year we shall make the subject of our study the thoughts and reflections of the *Joy of Love*, the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis. The monthly meetings of the Family Units shall take up the *Joy of Love* for special discussion and sharing. We shall intensely strive to grow in daily family prayer and warm personal relationship in the family. Thus we shall strengthen the value, unity and love of the family.

As we pray during Lent in the Holy *Qurbana*, may the Lord “help us to observe the Lenten season fruitfully through the grace of prayer, love towards our neighbours, and self-denial”!

With love,
+Bosco Puthur

11 February 2021 (Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes).

NB: This Pastoral Letter is to be read out in our parishes and communities on Sunday, 14 February 2021.