

MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF KURUNAGALA/PRESIDING BISHOP

“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.” 1 Cor. 15:13-14

The period of Lent leading into Easter is a very special time for all Christians. In one way it is the remembrance of the most important aspect for our Christian faith as we reflect on the above verse from one epistle of St Paul. On the other, it is a time of reflection, retracement and renewal. In all of our great religions this aspect of taking a moment away, to look at our faith is present. Sometimes it can be in a long fast like our Muslim brothers and sisters or a series of preparations for festivals like in the Hindu faith. It can also be the period of preparation as we find as a cultural practice in the New Year celebrations in Sri Lanka which we will encounter in a few weeks time.

The very reason that such a time exists is for all the faithful to take a step back and look at ‘my faith’ in a constructive manner. The season is structured in such a way that we are led day by day, week by week with readings, prayers, liturgical practices in which we are prepared to be one with the risen Christ on Easter day. The Lenten period in which we abstain from what we would normally be involved in, is the time we look at the life of Our Lord who being incarnated among humanity looked at perspectives of human life in a new manner. The lens that was used by Jesus encapsulated everything from the cultural to the social, to the political to the economical and it spiritual and the religious. His message was indeed radical for the context at that time and even to us now. We must journey with Jesus who brought good news to a context of suffering and pain.

We as a Diocese a Church and a Communion must deliberately and prayerfully undertake to journey in the life and ministry of our Lord during this time. The pandemic and the ongoing debate on Eater attacks are but two of the most pressing events in which we look to the Lord for consolation. We also need to see the struggles of our Lord against institutions and the society which brought on negative vibes. And as we enter the Holy week we must journey with Jesus of Nazareth who possibly felt every negative human emotion ye this did not deter him from the greatest sacrifice a person could do and that was to sacrifice oneself for the other. We try to emulate a portion of that suffering through fasting, prayer and self denial. The suffering of Jesus must be embedded in us who follow him and we must be prepared to suffer as well as it is through such, that new life and hope is promised.

The resurrection event is the high point of this season. It is in order for us to journey the season before personally, as a family and as a Church through varied activities in order to experience the joy of Easter. Some theologians reflect on the resurrection of Jesus as the response of God or God’s reflective action. We as faithful, almost two thousand years later will also need to look at the resurrection in awe and amazement. It is done not as an act of superficiality but rather as the fulfillment of God’s promises and indeed the words of Jesus himself. The resurrection must also not be confined as just a day’s celebration but it must be inculcated into our very self as an element through which we hope for transformation. It must guide us in our

prayer and church life, it must guide us in our families and relationships, it must guide us in our interactions with the world and our witness. We need to witness to the Christ now risen and is in majesty. We need to leave the old and be renewed as new persons in Christ. My God guide us to do the same.

From the Diocesan events we are most pleased to announce that St Thomas church Aranyake was consecrated to God's Glory on the 9th of January 2020. We are glad to receive Bishop Dushantha who shared God's word with us this day in his first visit to our Diocese. This parish building is a witness to the courage and witness of the people and the dedicated ministers who served in this area through chaotic ethnic struggles. It also goes on to show the realities at the Diocesan level with the communities who struggle with day to day issues but are consistently focused on their witness and mission. We thank all our well wishers too numerous to be listed by names who helped us in various aspects of this completion.

We have earmarked several more house parishes we hope to transform into fully fledged buildings together with other social support to the community as well. Mawathagama is one such region which is now under construction. We also welcome two new Deans into our two deaneries; Fr Nishantha Fernando and Fr Nuwan Seneviratne have been appointed as deans respective of the Kandy and Kurunagala deaneries. It is also with great pleasure that we report that a comprehensive training programme for all levels of laity and clergy has been formulated through which we aim to build capacity of our future congregations and ministers. We completed the first stage of the programme with a motivational programme held for clergy and lay workers at Mowbray College in Kandy.

We also request your prayers and participation in the mission of CMS Mowbray College as it gears to celebrate her 100th year from this May onward. A school founded for the mission of upcountry region girl student populations, it weathered many a storm in the years gone by and prepares to receive the centenary in gratitude and thanksgiving. We also record several self sufficiency projects that we have conducted across the more economically hard hit regions of the diocese. This includes the rural village mission areas and the plantation sectors. Livelihood and Poultry farming has been introduced in this regard.

We continue to develop our missions and build links both locally and on the international level and we request your prayers as we proceed from the post pandemic context.

We wish all our readership a meaningful Lent and a Blessed Easter..