

The Shepherd Speaks

Let me at the outset greet all of you as we are in the Holy Season of Easter! May the joy and peace of the Risen Christ be our unfailing support in our everyday life.

I prayed, especially at the Easter Masses, for you and for the members of your communities and families,

Last month, on the 26th March at the Chrism Mass, we formally inaugurated The Year of Consecrated Life and Family. At the Inaugural Function the Deans, along with the Representatives from 14 Deaneries were present and also received the Logo, Banner and prayer cards.

The Archdiocesan CRI and the Zonal units, and the Family Commission of the Archdiocese will organize during this Year of Consecrated Life and Family a few special programmes for the religious to motivate them to actively participate in the parish and diocesan ministries, and for the families to deepen their faith and make them cradles of vocation. The other Archdiocesan Commissions such as Vocations and Religious Formation, Family and Laity will also collaborate with them.

In my April circular, I have requested the Parish Priests and the Heads of the Institutions to organize for our School and PU College students (boys and girls), the Bible Camps, Career Guidance, Vocation and Altar Servers' Camps to help them plan for their future, especially to inspire the X Standard and College students to think about their vocation to priesthood and religious life. It is true that holidays give us the opportunity to visit our relatives and friends, and to see the new places. But still, we cannot undermine the importance of the summer camp. I strongly encourage all our children and youth to participate in the Camps organized by their parishes and Institutions. The Camps enliven the spiritual, moral, ethical and social values in our teenagers.

I request all the Parish Priests / Deans/Heads of the Institutions to take maximum interest in organizing these summer camps for our children and youth, and to get assistance from our Archdiocesan Commissions, particularly from Bible and Catechetics, Vocation, Youth and Social Communication (ACC) Commissions.

The Heads of the educational Institutions in our Archdiocese have been advised to give admissions to all the Catholic children and help those who need financial assistance by giving them maximum fee concession. I request the parents to seek admissions for their children on time and not to wait till the last minute. My wish is that no Catholic child should be left out of our Institution because of poverty or low marks.

Every summer, I exhort our young boys and girls to pray that they may respond to God's loving call by opting to become priests and religious in order to serve him and his people. Parents, clergy and religious should also take keen interest in promoting vocations from their families, parishes and institutions.

On Easter night, I will be travelling to the Holy Land for a Retreat, and may I assure all of you of my special prayers at the sacred places. Kindly keep me also in your prayers.

Story and Reflection time

A store owner was tacking a sign above his door that read "Puppies for Sale." Signs like that have a way of attracting small children, and sure enough, a little boy appeared under the store owner's sign. "How much are you going to sell the puppies for?" he asked.

The store owner replied, "Anywhere from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000."

The little boy reached in his pocket and pulled out some change. “I have Rs. 300,” he said. “Can I please look at them?”

The store owner smiled and whistled and out of the kennel came out the mother dog followed by five teeny, tiny puppies.

One puppy was lagging considerably behind. Immediately the little boy singled out the lagging, limping puppy and said, “What’s wrong with that little dog?”

The store owner explained that the veterinarian had examined the little puppy and had discovered it didn’t have a hip socket. It would always limp. It would always be lame.

The little boy became excited. “That is the puppy that I want to buy.”

The store owner said, “No, you don’t want to buy that little dog. If you really want him, I’ll just give him to you, and you needn’t pay anything for it! “

The little boy got quite upset. He looked straight into the store owner’s eyes, pointing his finger, and said, “I don’t want you to give him to me free of cost. That little dog is worth every bit as much as all the other dogs and I’ll pay full price. In fact, I’ll give you Rs. 300 now, and Rs. 25 a month until I have paid the full price for the puppy.”

The store owner countered, “You really don’t want to buy this little dog. He is never going to be able to run and jump and play with you like the other puppies.”

To his surprise, the little boy reached down and rolled up his pant leg to reveal a badly twisted, crippled left leg supported by a big metal brace. He looked up at the store owner and softly replied, “Well, I don’t run so well myself, and the little puppy will need someone who understands!”

What we all need is someone who understands us! To do this, we should first and foremost understand ourselves: the positive and negative aspects of our lives. By doing this, we not only understand ourselves, but also others and love them as we love ourselves. We do agree that understanding how and what we are all about as an individual is very important. Knowing who we are and not trying to be someone we aren’t goes a long way towards real happiness and allows us to live a better life.

With every good wish and God’s blessings during this Easter Season,