

THE SHEPHERD SPEAKS

We know that the month of September is a special month for us as we celebrate the Teachers' Day on 5th September and Mother Mary's Birthday on 8th September.

Teachers are one of the greatest people whom we come across in our lives. Not only are teachers the selfless givers, but also are the mentors of our lives. At every step of our life, we come across teachers who devote their entire life in the enlightenment of their students. Many times in life, we feel like thanking our teachers, but we do not find a proper occasion. So the celebration of Teachers' day on September 5th is an occasion for us to gratefully remember their efforts and sacrifices, and thank them for being the guiding light in our lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate, appreciate and thank all our teachers, especially those working in the institutions run by the Archdiocesan Board of Education (ABE) for their dedicated and committed service.

On September 8th, we particularly remember the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is the one woman in the entire Bible who makes the claim, "Behold, from now on all generations shall call me blessed" (*Lk. 1:48*). And this claim was confirmed by Elizabeth when she greeted Mary in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (*Lk. 1:42*). Well, we believe because she was preserved from sin by a special privilege of God. "Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception" (*CCC 491*). That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

"The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin" (*Dogma: Ineffabilis Deus*).

Dear Devotees of Mother Mary, whenever you get an opportunity, you should speak about Mother Mary's love and tell your relatives and friends that she is all powerful-intercessor before her Adorable Son Jesus, as she had pleaded with her Son for the couple at Cana in Galilee. If possible, bring one or two non-Christian and/or non-Catholic families to Mother Mary's Basilica during the novena or on the Feast day. Please tell them that we don't worship her as a goddess, but honour her as a special person chosen by God from all eternity, and that she is not only the Mother of Jesus, but she is also our loving and dearest Mother. When you come to St. Mary's Basilica, Shivajinagar, collect the handouts distributed by the Catholic Enquiry Centre and give to them to know more about Jesus and Mary. I am sure Mother Mary will bless you for it. Please promote the Marian devotion in your neighbourhood and parish whenever possible.

There is one more point I would like to share with you. We all know that Pope Francis released his Second Encyclical on the environment, '***Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home'** on 18th June, 2015. It is considered to be one of the popular Encyclicals published by the Popes. It is our responsibility to read this document with diligence, to develop spiritual bonding with the environment and to take the utmost care for its rightful utilization and careful preservation. Pope Francis says: "*Safeguard Creation, because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us! Never forget this!*"

The Archdiocese organized a day-long *Orientation-cum-Consultation Meeting* on Wednesday, 5th August 2015 to familiarize ourselves with this Encyclical and also to chalk out a few concrete action plans in the Archdiocese in response to the clarion call given by His Holiness. A small committee has been set up to organize programmes in our parishes, communities and institutions. I hope such programmes would help us implement the proposals made by the Pope in our Archdiocese.

As regards the TABOR Magazine, I would like to tell you that, due to some unavoidable reasons, the Issues were not published on time. Hence, in order to ensure their regular publication, I have appointed an Editor in Chief to supervise the overall functioning of the TABOR Office, such as publishing the Magazines as per schedule, giving more publicity to promote advertisements and subscribers, bringing out special issues as and when required, improving the standard of the articles, etc. May I request all of you to strengthen the hands of the editorial team by extending your support to make these magazines as our Archdiocesan Family Magazine.

How can you help the TABOR Team? First of all, each family, community and institution in the Archdiocese should subscribe to these magazines; secondly, recommend your relatives and friends to do the same; thirdly, if you are a writer, send articles or, at least, send a short report of the event happened in your parish/institution/ community. For the upkeep of the TABOR Office and to make the magazines more cost-effective, we need funds; so kindly advertise in these magazines as they are widely circulated in all the six districts of the Archdiocese.

Reflection time: The following conversation between the Pencil & the Eraser gives us a big message:

Pencil: I'm sorry . . . I made a mistake again . . .

Eraser: Never mind, my dear . . . you didn't do anything so wrong that it cannot be corrected . . .

Pencil: I'm sorry . . . because you get hurt because of me. Whenever I made a mistake, you're always there to erase it. In making my mistakes vanish, you lose a part of yourself. You get smaller and smaller each time.

Eraser: That's true. But I don't really mind. You see, I was made to do this. I was made to help you whenever you do something wrong. I want you to be correct . . . always.

Pencil: I am happy that you are always there to correct me. I do not know how I will do without you . . .

Eraser: I know one day I'll be gone. But you'll replace me with a new one or an alternative. I love to be with you and I'm actually happy doing my job. So please, stop worrying. I hate seeing you sad. I wish, eventually you will learn to do your job without the need for me.

This conversation between the Pencil and the Eraser is very inspiring. Parents and teachers are like the Eraser whereas their children/students are the Pencil. They're always there for their children, cleaning up their mistakes and encouraging them to correct themselves. Sometimes along the way . . . they get hurt, become reduced, older and brittle and, in the end, pass on. The parents are aware that the children will eventually find someone new (friend, guide, spouse), yet they are always happy doing their bit for their children. They hate to see their precious ones worrying or sad; rather they wish their children do a good job and make a lasting mark in this world.

I am conveying this message to all those loving parents and teachers, and also to their loving children and students who are striving hard, as never before, to make their mark in this world. Children, be always grateful to your parents and teachers! Time doesn't wait. Take the lead to say thanks today to your Eraser!

With best wishes and God's blessings,

+ **Bernard Moras**
Archbishop of Bangalore