

We have begun the second half of the year-2016, and by now many of our educational Institutions have commenced their new academic year and also have scheduled their programmes for the whole academic year. May I wish them success in all their endeavours. Since many years, I have been mentioning, both in my *Archdiocesan Circulars* and the *Shepherd Speaks*, Faith Formation and Value education are to be given importance and should be promoted in all our schools and colleges. The Managements, with the help of the staff and parents, must ensure of its effective implementation in their institutions. For assistance and guidance, the Institutions may contact the Archdiocesan Faith Formation Commission and the Archdiocesan Communications Centre (ACC).

On 3rd July, we celebrate the Feast of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India, who brought the Good News of Jesus Christ to our country and had sown the seed of faith in our mother land. Although Christianity was brought to our country in the first century, its impact and growth are not very encouraging as we are not taken seriously the responsibility of deepening of our own Christian faith and of its sharing with others. We should bear in mind that unless we work with focused mind and heart, the future of the Church in India and particularly of the Archdiocese would be bleak, and *we are answerable to God for it*. Let us take our Christian and the Religious commitments very responsibly.

In this month, we also celebrate the feast of St. Joachim and St. Anne on 26th July, the parents of Mother Mary and grandparents of Jesus Christ. Someone, in a lighter vein, once said: *"Parents could not be available for their children all the time, so God gave grandparents to them!"* Yes, it is true to some extent as today's parents are very busy with their work. Grandparents also feel very happy to look after their grand kids. Read this short humourous incident. "There were these two boys who lived with their Grandma. They were about to go to bed but before they slept they prayed. The older son started to pray. He prayed about the day he had and about everything he had done. The younger son then started to pray, he prayed much louder than his elder brother, he prayed for bikes and toys, and when he finished the older brother asked him "Why are you praying so loud? God is not deaf" and the younger son responded and said, "Yes, God is not deaf, but Grandma is!" We should be grateful to our grandparents and the senior citizens. They have and are still sacrificing their time, energy and money for their children and grandchildren. In their old age, it is our responsibility to make their lives easy and comfortable.

On the feast day of St. Joachim and St. Anne, let us very specially pray for them and also for all the aged persons. May God give them cheer, good health and long life.

Reflection: Once upon a time, there lived a big mango tree. A little boy loved to come and play around it daily. He climbed to the tree top, ate the mangoes, and took a nap under the shadow... He loved the tree and the tree loved to play with him.

Time went by... The little boy grew, and he no longer played around the tree. One day, the boy came back to the tree with a sad look on his face. "Come and play with me," the tree asked the boy. "I am no longer a child, and I don't play around trees anymore." The boy replied, "I want toys. I need money to buy them." "Sorry, I don't have money... but you can pick all my mangoes and sell them so you will have money." The boy was so excited. He picked all the mangoes on the tree and left happily. The boy didn't come back. The tree was sad.

One day, the boy grown into a man returned. The tree was so excited. "Come and play with me," the tree said. "I don't have time to play. I have to work for my family. We need a house for shelter. Can you help me?" "Sorry, I don't have a house, but you can chop off my branches to build your house."

So the man cut all the branches off the tree and left happily. The tree was glad to see him happy but the boy didn't come back afterward. The tree was again lonely and sad.

One hot summer day, the man returned and the tree was delighted. "Come and play with me!" The tree said. "I am sad and getting old. I want to go sailing to relax myself. Can you give me a boat?" "Use my trunk to build your boat. You can sail far away and be happy."

So the man cut the tree trunk to make a boat. He went sailing and didn't come back for a long time. Finally, the man returned after he had been gone for so many years.

"Sorry, my boy, but I don't have anything for you anymore. No more mangoes to give you." The tree said. "I don't have teeth to bite," the man replied. "No more trunk for you to climb on." "I am too old for that now," the man said.

"I really can't give you anything... the only thing left is my dying roots," the tree said with sadness. "I don't need much now, just a place to rest. I am tired after all

these years,” the man replied. “Good! Old tree roots are the best place to lean on and rest. Come sit down with me and rest.”

The old man sat down and the tree was glad and smiled.

The story is very inspiring. It is good, and it should be an eye opener for the younger generation, who only receives everything from others. The tree in the story represents our parents and grandparents. When we are young, we love to play with them. When we grow up, we leave them and only come back when we need help. Parents and Grandparents sacrifice their lives for us. As mentioned above, we should always remain grateful to them. Let us pray for them and love them always. Let us also remember that joy comes in giving and giving tirelessly. True happiness is in giving and not receiving.

I invoke God’s abundant blessings upon you and your families.

+ Bernard Moras
Archbishop of Bangalore