

Dear Friends,

1. At the start of the month of August we remember our National Feast, the Independence Day on 15 August. We will complete 70 years of our independence. We remember on that day all our forefathers and freedom fighters who brought us freedom. Let us pray on that day for our country and our political leaders that they may lead the country towards peace, harmony and progress. August 15 is not only a historical day for our motherland but also is dear to us as Catholics. While we rejoice over the singular privilege granted to our heavenly Mother to be assumed into heaven body and soul, we, the citizens of India, joyfully celebrate our political independence, granting to ourselves a sacred Constitution and a democratically elected government. On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma that the Virgin Mary “having ended the course of earthly life, was assumed into heavenly glory in soul and body.” Let us entrust ourselves to her maternal care and seek her blessing on our motherland so that all of us may enjoy the freedom of the Children of God as enshrined in our Constitution and live in harmony and peace as brothers and sisters. The Solemnity of the Assumption is one of the days of obligation for the Church in India. Let us commend our country to the protection of Mother Mary whose assumption we celebrate on the very day.

May I urge all parish priests to exhort the faithful about this day of obligation and to arrange Masses so that all the faithful are able to participate in the Holy Eucharist. In addition, I exhort you, as responsible and patriotic citizens of our nation, to organize meaningful Independence Day celebrations in the church campus and in all our institutions by hoisting and saluting the National Flag.

2. This year there was no sufficient rain in our region and in the entire country. This has a bearing on the crops and drinking water. Let us continue to pray for sufficient rains for agriculture and drinking purpose. Whenever a natural calamity happens, we must pray for God’s mercy on us and pray for peace and good climate.

3. The process of compilation of the Archdiocesan Directory 2017-2018 is in its final stage. We are already in the month of August and since transfers and appointments are over, we need to get ready with our Directory soon. Hence, it is an earnest request to all of you to send any addition or deletion of your parish/institution/community to the Chancellor by 10th August, 2017. Otherwise the information already printed in the Directory of 2016-2017 will be reprinted.

4. The Archdiocesan Board of Education (ABE), as in the past, will honour all the Catholic boys and girls who have secured more than 80% marks in 2017 SSLC/ICSE/CBSE and XII/II PUC examinations. The concerned candidates are requested to send their applications by attaching the Xerox copy of their marks card to: The Secretary, Archdiocesan Board of Education (ABE), Paalanaa Bhavana, No. 5 Nandidurga Road, Bengaluru 560 046.

5. On August 10, 2017, I will be celebrating my 76th Birthday, and on August 20, 2017 the feast of my patronal saint, St. Bernard. While thanking God for the gift of life and the opportunities he has given me to shepherd the flock entrusted to me in this Archdiocese, I also thank him for your love and affection to me. As you are well aware, it is not easy to shoulder this burden without the blessings and grace of God, and your support and cooperation.

I will remember you and pray for you in a special way on these days. I will always remain grateful to you for your cooperation and assistance in my pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese. And I also take this opportunity to thank you for your prayers and goodwill.

Reflection: A psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired: "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. to 20 oz.

She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralyzed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

She continued, "The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything."

It's important to remember to let go of your stresses. As early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the evening and into the night. Remember to put the glass down!

An individual's inability to cope with stress and strain and without letting go of things may cause unhappiness. What affects our capacity to deal with stress in life? A person's capacity to face anxiety depends on how much energy is available to face the stress. The mental energy available is less when there are undesirable characteristics in *personality defects* and *unfinished business/work*. Personality defects are characteristics such as anger, fear, laziness, indecisive, lying, and being pessimistic. Such undesirable characteristics consume our thoughts during the day robbing us of mental energy.

Unfinished work refers to unpleasant incidents in the past, which one is still fearful about and which causes one anxiety. For example, when a student failed in an examination, it caused him severe anxiety, stress and depression. He remembers how he suffered then and is afraid that in case he fails again in life, he may have to suffer as in the past. So his mind continues to be burdened with unfinished business/work. Unfinished business also conditions the mind to react to the stress and strain of life in a particular way. Taking the same example, failure in an examination, which resulted in stress may condition one to react to failure in other fields of life as well, in the form of being depressed or becoming an addict. So when there are many personality defects and some unfinished business, more mental energy is utilised to neutralise the anxiety caused by undesirable qualities and the unfinished business. Therefore the inability of a person to cope with stress in life and the causes of his unhappiness arise mainly from basic undesirable qualities in his personality and anxiety caused due to past incidents or unfinished work.

We need to be realistic in our dealings with persons and things around us. Expecting too much from others also might cause stress for us. As Christians we need to place our trust in God and to face the challenges with more equanimity, resilience and mental resolve. Let us remember these two Bible quotes: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (*Lk. 1:37*), and "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (*Phil. 4:13*).

With best wishes and God's blessings,

+ **Bernard Moras**
Archbishop of Bangalore