

The 33rd Plenary Assembly of the CBCI: The 33rd Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) will take place at St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences (St. John's), Bengaluru, from 2nd to 9th February, 2018. The Theme of the Assembly is: *'United in Diversity for a Mission of Mercy and Witness'*.

I will be attending this Meeting. Please pray for all the Bishops that the Holy Spirit may guide them in their deliberations and help them to take practical decisions for the welfare and growth of the Church in India, and for their respective Dioceses.

Ash Wednesday & Lenten Season: Lent begins rather early this year. Ash Wednesday falls already in mid-February. We are used to look upon the season of Lent as a season of mourning and gloom whereas it should be the other way about as it is indeed a season of joy and spiritual renewal. This Year Ash Wednesday falls on 14th February, and we are going to begin the holy season of Lent.

During Lent, we imitate Jesus through self-denial, to free ourselves from selfishness in order to be more available to the needs of others. Gandhiji also fasted, but for Gandhiji it was a period of purification from violence to non-violence, from anger to be tolerant. Fasting enabled him to be a better person. At times our focus is on external fasting by abstaining from meat, alcohol and food. It is stomach-fasting. We need to move from stomach-fasting to mind-fasting and heart fasting. Mind-fasting means say no to Ego and prejudices; and Heart-fasting means, say no to anger, resentments, and unforgiveness, which paralyses our heart. Fast from anger and prejudices and become more loving and caring. Fast from laziness and become more studious and hardworking. Fast from dishonesty and lies and become more sincere in our approach. Fast from gossips, criticism and become constructive in our praise and appreciation. Fast from alcohol, smoking and junk food and develop healthy food habits. Fast from hatred, grudges, and return good for evil. Fast from complaining and become more grateful. Fast from resentment and become more forgiving. Fast from media, addiction to social networking sites, T.V., extensive mobile-phone usage and become more personal in our relationships by spending more time with our near and dear ones. Fast from pessimism and become more hopeful and optimistic, give up anger and become more patient, give up gloom and become more joyful.

The Year of Faith Formation of Youth and Laity: It was decided at the College of Consultors' Meeting held on 29th December to proclaim a **Year of Faith Formation of Youth and Laity** in the Archdiocese commencing **from January 24, 2018 to November 25, 2018** to coincide with the Christ the King Feast. May I request all the parish priests, heads of the institutions and the religious communities to take initiative in organizing liturgical and para-liturgical services, and other programmes to celebrate the Year of Faith Formation of Youth and Laity meaningfully.

Holy Childhood Day and the 26th World Day of the Sick: Holy Childhood Day is celebrated on Sunday, 11th February this year. If it was not a Sunday, 11th February would have been the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, which is the day of the sick. Therefore, this year while focusing our prayerful attention on all the children, let us specially bring the children who are ailing, disabled and mentally challenged to the Lord and beg for His abundant favour to these little innocent victims of the ravages of illness.

Let us help our children celebrate this day meaningfully and motivate them to pray and raise funds for their less fortunate brothers and sisters worldwide. As usual, the collections made at all the Masses on 11th February will be sent to the Holy Childhood Society.

BCCRS – Lenten Programme - “Fast & Pray”- 2018: 40 Days round-the-clock Prayer at the BCCRS Chapel, St. Mary's Orphanage Premises, 2nd Cross, Da Costa Square, St. Thomas Post, Bengaluru.

Bangalore Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services, in association with the Proclamation and Evangelization Commission of the Archdiocese of Bangalore, is organizing the sixth annual Prayer and Intercession, running 24 hours of 40 Days of Lent. In the past years, we have had the participation from religious Organizations under CRI, Seminarians, School Children, Nurses from various hospitals, Youth and Laity from all language groups.

Salvation Run: A SALVATION RUN is being planned on Palm Sunday starting from St. Francis Xavier Cathedral at 6.30 a.m. with the participation from Christians of all denominations. I encourage all Christians to participate in large numbers uniting to proclaim our salvation through Jesus Christ. The theme " I BELONG to JESUS " The Author & Finisher of Our Faith (*Heb. 12:2*) will be marked on T-shirts for those who register. Those willing to participate may register online on www.salvationrunners.com

Reflection: A Sage was passing through the capital city of the famous king. While he was walking, he noticed a single currency coin on the road. He picked it up. He was satisfied with his simple living and he had no use of that coin. So, he planned to donate it to the one who is in need of it. He strolled around the streets throughout the day but didn't find anyone such. Finally, he reached the rest area and spent a night there.

Next morning, he wakes up in the morning for his daily activities and sees that a king is going for his invasion of another state with his war ready army. When the king saw the sage standing, he ordered his army to be stopped. He came to the Sage and said, "Oh Great Sage, I am going to war to win another state so that my state can be expanded. So bless me to be victorious".

After thinking, Sage gave a single currency coin to the king! The king was confused and annoyed with this because what use he has for a single coin while he is already one of the richest kings! He curiously asked a sage, "What's the meaning of this one coin?"

A Sage explained, "Oh Great King! I found this coin yesterday while strolling around the streets of your capital city. But I had no use of it. So, I had decided that I will donate it to someone needy. I strolled around till the evening in your capital, but found no one such. Everyone was living a happy life. It seemed that they were satisfied with what they had. So I found no one to give this coin. But today, the king of this state, still have the desire to gain more and not satisfied with what he already has, I felt you were in need of this coin." The King realized his mistake and gave up the planned war.

This story has a beautiful lesson for all of us. We all should learn to be happy with what we have. Yes, we all desire more or better than we already have, but do not waste a chance of enjoying what we already have. There are those who may not have what we have, and there will be some who have lots more than we have. St. Paul tells us: "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength (*Phil: 4:12-13*). Let us not always compare, and let us be happy and lead a healthy life!

With best wishes and God blessings,

✝ Bernard Moras
Archbishop of Bangalore