

DIOCESE OF KARWAR

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Dear Rev. Fathers, Sisters, Brothers and Lay Faithful,

GREETINGS FROM BISHOP DEREK

At the outset let me wish you all a very fruitful season of Advent and then a very happy Christmas. May the Babe in the manger bless us all.

ADVENT BEGINS – DECEMBER 3

The joyful season of Advent is near. This marks the beginning of a new liturgical year. The season of Advent has a character that is slightly different from that of Lent. While Lent is an intense preparation for the celebration of the Paschal Triduum, Advent is not entirely a time for the preparation for the celebration of Christmas. The time of Advent is divided into two parts – from the first Sunday of Advent to the 16th of December, and from 17th to 24th of December. While the second part is a preparation that looks towards the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem, the first part of Advent is a time of joyful expectation of the second coming of the Lord in glory at the end of times. “So, there is always this double sense of *adventus* – a double sense of the Lord’s coming. The season prepares us for his coming of the graces of the Christmas feast and his coming in judgment at the end of time. The scriptural texts of the mass should be expounded with this double sense in mind” (*Homiletic Directory*, n. 79). Let this season of Advent help us all to live with our eyes turned towards Jesus Christ who will come again to definitively establish His kingdom of love.

Christmas: The second part of Advent concludes with the Solemn celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in humility in Bethlehem two *millenia* ago. This great feast shows us the real face of God. He is not a God who is outside human history and is indifferent from it. He is not even a God who is interested in mankind and directs its history from afar. He is a God who has entered into history, verily as a man, assuming on Himself all the facets



of that human nature except sin, and has decisively transformed human existence and history by the Passover He had accomplished. Christianity is historical in every sense of the word. Thus, this celebration of the Birth of the Saviour is also the celebration of our own Christian lives.

Christmas season also presents us with a good opportunity to spread the message of our Lord to those who do not know Christ. To this end, I encourage all the parish priests to prepare a good and meaningful crib in the churches, to organize the carol singing wherever possible, and to present well prepared Christmas programmes and gatherings to which people of all strata could be invited.

THE ORDINARY JUBILEE 2025

It was heartening to note that there were combined as well as individual celebrations of the Solemnity of Christ the King as well as the inauguration of the preparation of the Jubilee 2025. Some of the photographs as well as the videos posted on the WhatsApp were indeed impressive.

I request all to pay more attention to the directives given regarding the study of the 4 Constitutions of the Vatican II Council, namely, *Dei Verbum* – the Word of God, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which speaks on liturgy, *Lumen Gentium* – The light of the nations and *Gaudium et Spes* - "Joy and Hope", the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. These have remained unexplored by and large even after 60 years of the Council, though a few references are made about these.

The four Constitutions are indeed interconnected. These are:

- ***Dei Verbum* – the Word of God.** ‘The Word of God is transmitted both through the canonical texts of Sacred Scripture, and through Sacred Tradition, which includes various forms such as liturgy, prayers, and the teachings of the Apostles and their successors. The Church looks to Tradition as a protection against errors that could arise from private interpretation. Hence, there exists a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore, both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.’
- ***Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which speaks on liturgy.** ‘The main aim was to revise the traditional liturgical texts and rituals to reflect more fully fundamental principles, and be more pastorally effective in the changed conditions of the times, clarifying not only the role of ordained ministers but the modalities of appropriate participation of lay faithful in the Catholic Church's liturgy, especially that of the Roman Rite.’

- ***Lumen Gentium* – The light of the nations** - The Constitution on the Church from within, ‘affirms the absolute necessity of the only Church, founded by the Lord Himself, as the means of our salvation in Christ. Without the Church, we do not have the New Testament, the sacraments, sanctifying grace, the magisterium, the saints and their intercession, and the salvific efficacy of the Holy Mass. The eight chapters of the document can be paired thematically: chapters one and two treat the church's nature and historical existence, chapters three and four treat different roles in the church, chapters five and six treat holiness and religious life, while chapters seven and eight discuss the saints and Mary.’
- ***Gaudium et Spes* - "Joy and Hope"**, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – ‘clarified and reoriented the role of the church's mission to people outside of the Catholic faith. It was the first time that the church took explicit responsibility for its role in the larger world. The constitution's creation was necessitated by the concern over the church's irrelevance in the modern era due to its ignorance on problems that plague the modern world. The Constitution represents an inner examination of the church by the Council and features a response to problems affecting the modern world. The reception of *Gaudium et spes* today marks the document as a turning point in the Church's focus on the world. With the inability of the Church to respond promptly to major global events that took place just before the Council, such as World War II and the Holocaust, the Vatican II took upon itself the task of examining the role of the church in the world. This culminated with the creation of *Gaudium et spes* to address the role of the church in serving the world outside of Christianity. It covers a wide range of topics examining the inner workings of the church and its interactions with the world as a whole. Such topics include marriage and family, the development of culture, economics, politics and peace and war. Today the emphasis also is laid on the issues of environment, poverty and terrorism.’

The Committee appointed to plan and disseminate information regarding the Jubilee 2025 will be sending you the required information time to time. I request all to help each other in making a study of these documents, so that all, the priests, religious and the lay faithful alike, are prepared to launch into the celebration of the Jubilee 2025 with new vigor and as renewed people.

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

Since the first Sunday of Advent falls on December 3 this year, the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, Patron of India is moved to Saturday, December 2 in our diocese. This Jesuit missionary continues to inspire and intercede for all the missionaries to this day. It is said that after he left his ancestral castle in Javier, Northern Spain to depart as a missionary to the East, he never went back home or met his mother till he died. In one of his letters to St. Ignatius of Loyola, which is read in the Office of the Readings of the Feast he says that the fact that many still do not know of the love of Christ because there is no one to announce the Good News, “would certainly stir most of them to meditate on spiritual realities, to listen actively to what God is saying to them. They would forget their own desires, their human affairs, and give themselves over entirely to God’s will and his choice. They would cry out with all their heart: Lord, I am here! What do you want me to do? Send me anywhere you like – even to India.”

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION – DECEMBER 8

On the 8th of December, we celebrate another important Solemnity – the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The readings of the Mass of the Solemnity raise our minds to the ‘Woman’, who is “full of grace” and who crushed the head of the serpent through her complete gift of self to the Lord: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word.” Blessed Pope Pius IX, in his encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*, through which he defined the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, encourages us to “fly with utter confidence to this most sweet Mother of mercy and grace in all dangers, difficulties, needs, doubts and fears... she presents our petitions in a most efficacious manner. What she asks, she obtains. Her pleas can never be unheard”. Let us entrust our lives to her, so that, what God has accomplished in her, He may bring to fulfilment in us and in our society too.

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY – DECEMBER 31

Christmastide is filled with several feasts – St. Stephen, the first martyr, St. John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents and the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Feast of the Holy Family is the feast of our families. Family is the most fundamental institution among all other human institutions. From good Christian families come good Christian children, and therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the pastoral care of the families should be our utmost concern. Especially in this new age where attacks against the family in form of divorce, abortions and the whole ‘culture of death’, it is the need of the hour to strengthen the relationships within the family especially through family prayer and also the relationships within the ‘family’ of the parish. Some parish level events could be organized, through which the faithful can grow gradually in their sense of belonging to the Church.

MONTHLY RECOLLECTION:

Monthly Recollection this month will be held in Puneeth Sadan, on 13-14 December, 2023.

Please collect your copy of the Bible Diary and the Directory of Catechists as a Christmas gift.

Please come prepared to sing the Carols.

Wishing you all once again every blessing from the Babe in the Manger,

Yours fraternally in Christ,

✠Derek Fernandes
Bishop of Belgaum