

DIOCESE OF KARWAR

Puneeth Sadan, Shirwad, Karwar 581 306
KARNATAKA, INDIA



MOST REV. DEREK FERNANDES
AP. ADM OF KARWAR

Tel.+918382282 363 (P)
282 364 (O)
Mobile: (O) 9448014136

CIRCULAR

Cir: 01/2024

January 1, 2024

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

GREETINGS FROM BISHOP DEREK

At the outset let me wish you all a very Happy New Year. May you enjoy the love of God all through the year.

DECLARATION: *FIDUCIA SUPPLICANS*(SUPPLICATING TRUST)

This Declaration was given by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on December 18, 2023. Having seen the anti-propaganda in certain sections of the media, and even by certain ecclesiastics, I feel I should apprise you of the truth regarding this Declaration.

This declaration which merely speaks of the pastoral meaning of the blessings has been shockingly misunderstood and misinterpreted. It speaks merely of the blessings and does not promote in anyway the recognition and the nuptial blessing of couples who are in irregular relationships or same sex marriages. The church vehemently opposes these unions and this has been already clarified in the *Responsum ad dubium* that the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith published on 22 February, 2021 (n. 4).

The present declaration is very clear in saying that what is required is **a fatherly and pastoral approach as the Church does not have the power to impart (nuptial) blessings on unions of persons of the same sex.** (n. 5) What is blessed must conform to God's Will (n. 11)

There are two types of blessings: descending and ascending. God's blessing descends on us; in thanksgiving to God, our blessing ascends to God. This declaration enumerates the blessings in the Scriptures: "*May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace*" (Num 6:24-26). This "priestly blessing" we find in the Old Testament, specifically in the Book of Numbers, has a "**descending**" character since it represents the invocation of a blessing that descends from God upon man: it is one of the oldest texts of divine blessing. Then, there is a second type of blessing we find in the biblical pages: that which "ascends" from earth to heaven, towards God. Blessing in this sense amounts to praising, celebrating, and thanking God for his mercy and his faithfulness, for the wonders he has created, and for all that has come about by his will: "*Bless the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*" (Ps 103:1) (n. 16). To God who blesses, we also respond by blessing. Melchizedek, King of Salem, blesses Abram (cf. Gen 14:19); Rebekah is blessed by family members just before she becomes the bride of Isaac (cf. Gen 24:60),

who, in turn, blesses his son, Jacob (cf. Gen 27:27). Jacob blesses Pharaoh (cf. Gen 47:10), his own grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. Gen 48:20), and his twelve sons (cf. Gen 49:28). Moses and Aaron bless the community (cf. Ex 39:43; Lev 9:22). The heads of households bless their children at weddings, before embarking on a journey, and in the imminence of death. These blessings, accordingly, appear to be a superabundant and unconditional gift (n. 17). The blessing found in the New Testament retains essentially the same meaning it had in the Old Testament. We find the divine gift that “descends,” the human thanksgiving that “ascends,” and the blessing imparted by man that “extends” toward others. Zechariah, having regained the use of speech, blesses the Lord for his wondrous works (cf. Lk 1:64). Simeon, while holding the newborn Jesus in his arms, blesses God for granting him the grace to contemplate the saving Messiah, and then blesses the child’s parents, Mary and Joseph (cf. Lk 2:34). Jesus blesses the Father in the famous hymn of praise and exultation He addressed to Him: “I praise you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (Mt 11:25) (n. 18). In continuity with the Old Testament, in Jesus as well, the blessing is not only ascending, referring to the Father, but is also descending, being poured out on others as a gesture of grace, protection, and goodness. Jesus himself implemented and promoted this practice. For example, he blessed children: “And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them” (Mk 10:16). And Jesus’ earthly journey will end precisely with a final blessing reserved for the Eleven, shortly before he ascends to the Father: “And lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven” (Lk 24:50-51). The last image of Jesus on earth is that of his hands being raised in the act of blessing.”

The blessing proposed for those in illicit relationships and the same sex unions is in the above line and in no way a nuptial blessing. The declaration is very clear about this. There is no rite proposed. In fact, the Declaration bans having any rite of blessing in this regard.

Many people come and ask for blessing from us. Do we in any case ask the person seeking blessing if he or she is in grace, or an adulterer or gay or in an illicit relationship... and then impart our blessing? No. We bless anyone who seeks blessing. This is exactly what the declaration proposes. It is very clear in saying that the one who asks for blessing shows himself/herself to be in need of God’s saving presence (n. 20) and presents him a petition for his assistance (n. 21). One who is seeking blessing is not expected to have prior moral perfection. (n. 25). Prisoners, those in the rehabilitation groups are blessed notwithstanding their serious mistakes (n. 26). They entrust themselves to the Lord and his mercy (n. 30).

There is no Rite fixed for the blessing of those in irregular situations and the same sex union and, therefore, it is not to be confused with marriage. It is a blessing that they may be freed from their imperfections and frailties (n. 31). The Grace of God works not in those who claim to be righteous but in those who acknowledge themselves humbly as sinners. Therefore, the blessing proposed is a simple gesture of blessing which is not to be confused with marriage.

I am giving this explanation because the secular as well as some Christian media are full of contrary views which are not foreseen in the Declaration. We need to be careful and at the same time educate our brothers and sisters lest they are led astray by certain anti-propagandists.

Ordinary Jubilee – 2025 – Pastoral Letter

A Pastoral Letter addressed to the priests, religious and the lay faithful of Belgaum and Karwar dioceses has already been published in the January issue of Krista Prakash. The

copies of these in the form of a leaflet will be sent to all the priests, religious and some of the lay faithful shortly. I request all to plan out programmes in the light of this Pastoral Letter, especially, taking into account the 6 suggestions mentioned at No. 5.

CHRISTMAS/ NEW YEAR BEACH PROGRAMME

A Christmas and New Year Beach Programme has been arranged entitled “*Krista Jayanthi Sambhramotsava 2023-24*” on 3rd January 2024 at 6.15 p.m. The group “Symphony” from Honavar will lead the entertainment programme with innovated Carols, dances and kits. This will take place on the “*MayuravarmaVedike*” on Tagore Beach in Karwar. I request all to see that people attend this programme in large numbers.

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD – 7 JANUARY

As Christmastide enters its second week, we will soon celebrate another important Solemnity – the Epiphany of the Lord. This Solemnity actualizes three important events – the Visit of the Magi, the Baptism of the Lord and the Wedding at Cana. The Liturgy of the Hours of this day presents this very synthetically: “Today the Church has been joined to her heavenly bridegroom, since Christ has purified her of her sins in the river Jordan; the Magi hasten to the royal wedding and offer gifts; the wedding guests rejoice since Christ has changed water into wine, Alleluia” (Antiphon for *Benedictus*, Morning Prayer of the Solemnity). The thread that runs common to all these three events is the revelation of Christ to all nations. He who was adored by Jewish shepherds, now is sought by the pagan wise men. “Christ... by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22). Christ is the answer that the whole world is looking for desperately, and, like the Scribes of Jerusalem who guided the Magi, it is our duty to guide people around to the Holy Infant of Bethlehem so that He can change our water into new wine.

FEAST OF INFANT JESUS – JANUARY 14

On the 14th of January, we celebrate the Feast of Infant Jesus of Prague. The devotion to Infant Jesus is very widespread all over the world and among our people too. Several saints starting from St. Theresa of Avila nurtured a great piety towards Infant Jesus. One of the more recent saints notable for this is St. Therese of Lisieux, the “Little Flower” who had a deep and abiding love for the Divine Child. One of her prayers to the baby Jesus is: “O Little Infant Jesus, my only treasure, I abandon myself to Your every wish. I seek no other joy than that of calling forth Your sweet smile. Grant me the graces and the virtues of Your Holy Childhood, so that on the day of my birth into Heaven the angels and saints may recognize me as Your little spouse.” Let us abandon all our wishes and desires to our Lord so that He may lead us in this New Year. Let us also renew our commitment to care for the material and spiritual well-being of every child in our parishes and in our institutions and to providing a safe environment for them to grow in wisdom and favour of God.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY – 18 TO 25 JANUARY

Ever since the promulgation of *UnitatisRedintegratio* by the Second Vatican Council, where the Church proclaimed that “It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the Church as a whole, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful. He brings them into intimate union with Christ, so that He is the principle of the Church’s unity” (*UnitatisRedintegratio*, n. 2), the ecumenical movement has gained renewed zeal and impetus. Every year the Church puts a special emphasis on Ecumenism during 18 to 25 January, known as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year too, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity together with the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches has prepared and published “Resources

for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and throughout the year 2024” on the theme “You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27).” This document can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/settimana-di-preghiera-per-l-unita/semaine-de-priere-pour-l-unite-des-chretiens-2024/anglais.html>

This text is based on the question of the lawyer to Jesus about what he “must do to inherit eternal life?” and the parable of the Good Samaritan. The heart of this Gospel passage is the proclamation of the *Shema*, the commandment to love God above all, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself. The Introduction of the theme of this year reads thus: “Love is the ‘DNA’ of Christian faith. God is Love and “the love of Christ has gathered us into one”. We find our common identity in the experience of God’s love (cf. Jn 3:16) and reveal that identity to the world by how we love one another (Jn 13:35).” It continues to speak about ecumenism: “Some can be anxious that ecumenism may lead to a loss of denominational identity and prevent church ‘growth’. Such rivalry between churches is counter to the prayer of Jesus. Like the priest and the Levite in the gospel passage, Christians often miss the opportunity to connect with brothers and sisters because of fear. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we ask the Lord to come to our assistance, to tend our wounds and so enable us to walk the way of ecumenism with confidence and hope.” I encourage each one of you to pray in a special way for this and to plan some ecumenical activities through which Christian unity can really shine forth.

REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA – JANUARY 26

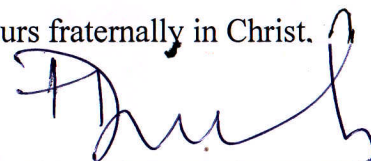
On 26 January, we commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of India as the Republic Day. The Preamble which reads thus, “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens: Justice... Liberty... Equality... and to promote among them all Fraternity”, shows that it is not only the duty of the elected representatives, but it is the duty of each one of us, ‘the people of India’, who have undertaken the responsibility of being true to the spirit of our Constitution. We, as Christians, have to be exemplary in this regard, first of all by offering “petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving for all people - ... for all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tm 2:1-2), and by living the spirit of the Constitution inspired by the Spirit of Christ Himself. Since this year is also the year of General Elections, it is also important that we exercise our right to vote sincerely and prudently. May God lead our country in paths of peace and harmony.

NECROLOGY

Mrs. Santan Ladru Fernandes, aged 90 years, mother of Rev. Fr. Sebastian Fernandes, expired on 31st December, 2024 in Upper Kasarkod. Please pray for the repose of her soul.

With kind regards,

Yours fraternally in Christ.



✠Derek Fernandes
Ap. Adm. Karwar

Please note: The monthly recollection and meeting for priests will be on 10 – 11 January 2024 in the respective deaneries.