



MESSAGE

Bishop’s Message

Dear Rev. Fathers, Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings!

With a heart full of gratitude to God and sincere thanks to the clergy, religious and the lay faithful, I write this month’s column on the occasion of the ninth anniversary of my episcopal ordination, which I gratefully celebrated on 29 June, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. As I look back on these nine years of episcopal ministry, I am deeply convinced that it is God who has faithfully accompanied me every step of the way. Through His abundant grace, I have been strengthened in moments of joy and sustained in times of trial. Throughout these years, I have continually entrusted myself to the loving providence of God and sought the maternal intercession of our Blessed Mother.

At the same time, I have experienced the genuine understanding and fraternal support of my brother priests, the generous commitment of the religious and the loving affection of the lay faithful. Your encouragement, collaboration and prayers have been a constant source of strength in carrying out the mission entrusted to me. For all the countless blessings of the Lord and above all for your faithful prayers, I express my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you. As I continue this journey of episcopal service, I humbly ask you to keep me in prayers so that together we may continue to build the Church of Kottar in faith, hope and charity and bear witness to the coming of the Reign of God.

In this message, I wish to bring to your kind attention a new phenomenon that has increasingly become a matter of pastoral concern of our diocese. It relates to the unprecedented challenges our parishes are facing in imparting catechism to our children. During my pastoral visits, I invariably hear catechism teachers and others lamenting the sharp decline the number of children attending catechism classes. It is quite saddening to observe that not only many children but, at times, even their parents tend to take lightly or take for granted the importance catechism in the faith formation of their children. It is with this concern that I wish to address this important issue.

There was a time when almost every Catholic child, without exception, attended Sunday catechism in the parish. In addition, the majority of our children studied in Catholic schools where they also received systematic catechetical formation. Thus, both the family, the parish and the school worked together in nurturing the faith of our young people. Over the years, however, the educational landscape in Tamil Nadu has undergone significant changes. The present situation poses serious challenges to ensuring the regular participation of children in both Sunday catechism and school catechetical instruction. Today, unlike in the past, many parents choose to send their children to schools that are far from their homes and often outside the Catholic educational system. Parents naturally have the freedom to make educational choices for the future of their children and we fully respect that freedom. However, this becomes a matter of grave pastoral concern when Catholic children study in institutions where no catechism is taught. Consequently, the parish remains the only place where they can receive a systematic formation in the Catholic faith. Yet, we increasingly notice that many children either attend Sunday catechism irregularly or do not attend it at all. As a result, a growing number of our young people lack even the basic knowledge of the faith, the teachings of the Church, the Scriptures, the Sacraments and the moral values that should shape their Christian lives.

This situation raises a serious question regarding our sacred responsibility to bring up our children in the Christian faith. The obligation to provide catechetical formation belongs first and foremost to parents who are the primary educators of their children in faith (Gravissimum Educationis, 3). The parish and the Church assist them in fulfilling this sacred duty but they cannot replace them. If we neglect this responsibility, we risk raising a generation of Catholics who are sacramentally initiated but insufficiently catechized and inadequately formed.

I therefore earnestly appeal to all our parish priests, religious, teachers and especially parents to recognize the urgency of this challenge. We need to explore creative and practical ways of ensuring that every Catholic child receives sound and regular catechetical formation. Parish catechism should not be viewed as an optional activity but as an essential dimension of Christian formation. Parents, in particular, must give priority to their children’s faith formation with the same seriousness with which they value academic education. At the same time, this pressing concern deserves to be discussed seriously in our Parish Councils, Basic Christian Communities and other participatory structures of our parishes so that together we may discern effective pastoral responses. The faith of our children is a shared responsibility entrusted to the whole Christian community.

Let us therefore renew our commitment to catechesis with faith, zeal and creativity. I entrust this important mission to the loving intercession of our Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom and invoke God’s abundant blessings upon all who generously dedicate themselves to this noble ministry.