

CIRCULAR

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The Significance and Relevance of the Franciscan Year Currently Being Observed in the Universal Church

Venerable Priests, Consecrated Religious, Dear Brothers and Sisters, and Dear Little Children, dearly beloved in Jesus,

May the grace, mercy, and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

On this holy day when the Universal Church devoutly observes the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council extends its festal greetings and prayerful wishes to all of you. The 'Franciscan Year' that we have been observing pursuant to the call of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV in Rome provides a rare opportunity to renew our spiritual lives. On this occasion of celebrating the eighth centenary of Saint Francis departing from this earthly life and entering the heavenly abode, the Holy Church invites us to meditate upon how relevant his life and messages remain in contemporary society.

Although the world in which we live today is witness to great technological advances and material growth, peace and joy are increasingly being lost in human hearts. We live in an era where selfishness, consumer culture, violence, and the exploitation of nature have become part of daily life. Precisely speaking, today's world is passing through a condition largely similar to the moral degeneration and disquiet that prevailed eight hundred years ago during the era in which Saint Francis lived and ministered.

It is in such dark circumstances that the life of Francis of Assisi serves as a guiding light for us. Born as the son of a wealthy merchant, Francis completely renounced the pleasures, statuses, and prospects of the world, choosing instead to embrace the poverty and simplicity of Christ. He regarded the values of the Gospel as a treasure far greater than all the worldly gains he could have attained. Described as the "Second Christ" by virtue of living out the true example of Christ on earth, the saint provides us with a model for a major course correction against today's consumerist culture.

Dearly beloved, one of the greatest lessons Saint Francis taught us is a 'life of simplicity'. In today's world, where people compete to acquire beyond their needs and to display their possessions, Francis's lifestyle was to 'be content with the minimum'. We must be prepared to eliminate unnecessary luxuries and extravagance in our homes and families. We ought to recognise that only a simple life enables us to maintain a closer relationship with God and fellow human beings.

Beloved parents, do not rear your children to become individuals who merely chase after material gain. Raise them to be God-fearing, humble, and compassionate, after the example

of Saint Francis. Teach them to assist those who suffer without hesitation. It is our responsibility to cultivate in children from an early age an attitude of loving and safeguarding nature.

Dear young people, let the life of Saint Francis inspire you to build a meaningful existence rather than pursuing the temporary luxuries and fleeting pleasures of the world. Come forward without fear to dedicate your lives for Christ. Utilize your creative talents and energy for the service of the poor, and to sow goodness and peace in society.

The observance of this Franciscan Year must not conclude as a mere ceremonial formality. A new wave of transformation must begin through this within our parishes and families. Let every family become a model of simplicity. If we can avoid extravagance in our parish feast celebrations, family functions, and similar occasions, and instead set aside those funds to assist the destitute, that would constitute the greatest tribute we can pay to Saint Francis.

May the intercession of the Blessed Mother, Saint Francis of Assisi, and all the Saints be our perpetual support. May the peace and joy of Christ abide in our families and society at all times.

(Sd/-)

Archbishop Varghese Chackalakal

President, KCBC

(Sd/-)

Bishop Samuel Mar Irenios

Vice President, KCBC

(Sd/-)

Archbishop Thomas Tharayil

Secretary General, KCBC

N.B.: On Sunday, 4 October 2026, the Feast Day of Saint Francis of Assisi, this circular shall be read out or its main points explained in all churches and institutions where Holy Mass is celebrated across the Syro-Malabar, Latin, and Malankara Catholic Churches in Kerala.

Headquarters of the Kerala Catholic Church

P.O.C., Kochi – 682025