Dear Priests/Brothers/Sisters & Lay Faithful in the Diocese:

1. Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis DESIDERIO DESIDERAVI

Pope Francis has written an Apostolic Letter entitled DESIDERIO DESIDERAVI on the liturgical formation of the people of God. The title of the letter is taken from the Latin text of Luke 22:15: “Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum, antequam patiar” — In English, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”. It is a 15-page Apostolic Letter, published on June 29, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, in which the Pope said he wanted “to invite the whole Church to rediscover, to safeguard, and to live the truth and power of the Christian celebration. I want the beauty of the Christian celebration and its necessary consequences for the life of the Church not to be spoiled by a superficial and foreshortened understanding of its value or, worse yet, by its being exploited in service of some ideological vision, no matter what the hue,” he said in the document.

“Liturgy is not about “knowledge,” and its scope is not primarily pedagogical, even though it does have great pedagogical value. (Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 33) Rather, Liturgy is about praise, about rendering thanks for the Passover of the Son whose power reaches our lives. The celebration concerns the reality of our being docile to the action of the Spirit who operates through it until Christ be formed in us. (Cf. Gal 4:19) The full extent of our formation is our conformation to Christ. I repeat: it does not have to do with an abstract mental process, but with becoming Him.”(#41)

“It should be clear that the art of celebration is not something that can be improvised. Like every art, it requires consistent application. For an artisan, technique is enough. But for an artist, in addition to technical knowledge, there has also to be inspiration, which is a positive form of possession. The true artist does not possess an art but rather is possessed by it. One does not learn the art of celebrating by frequenting a course in public speaking or in persuasive techniques of communication. (I am not judging intentions, just observing effects.) Every tool can be useful, but it must be at the service of the nature of the Liturgy and the action of the Holy Spirit. A diligent dedication to the celebration is required, allowing the celebration itself to convey to us its art.”(#50)

“I would like this letter to help us to rekindle our wonder for the beauty of the truth of the Christian celebration, to remind us of the necessity of an authentic liturgical formation, and to recognize the importance of an art of celebrating that is at the service of the truth of the Paschal Mystery and of the participation of all of the baptized in it, each one according to his or her vocation.”(#62)

(The full text of the Apostolic Letter is at the end of this Circular Letter.)

2. Second World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly on 24th July

Sharing his Message on the occasion of the second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, the Holy Father wrote that it “is an occasion to say once again, with joy, that the Church wants to celebrate together with those whom the Lord - as the Bible says - has ‘satiated with days.’ Let us celebrate it together! I invite you to announce this Day in your parishes and communities; to visit the elderly who are most alone at home or in the residences where they are guests. Let us make sure that no one lives this day in loneliness.”

“In old age they will still bear fruit” (Ps 92:15). These words of the Psalmist are glad tidings, a true “gospel” that we can proclaim to all on this second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. They run counter to what the world thinks about this stage of life, but also to the attitude of grim resignation shown by some of us elderly people, who harbor few expectations for the future."

Many people are afraid of old age. They consider it a sort of disease with which any contact is best avoided. The elderly, they think, are none of their concern and should be set apart, perhaps in homes or places where they can be cared for, lest we have to deal with their problems. This is the mindset of the “throw-away culture”, which leads us to think that we are somehow different from the poor and vulnerable in our midst,
untouched by their frailties and separated from “them” and their troubles. The Scriptures see things differently. A long life – so the Bible teaches – is a blessing, and the elderly are not outcasts to be shunned but living signs of the goodness of God who bestows life in abundance. Blessed is the house where an older person lives! Blessed is the family that honors the elderly!

The World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is an opportunity to proclaim once more, with joy, that the Church wants to celebrate together with all those whom the Lord has “filled with days”.

3. 1,950th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India

The 1,950th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India, was on 3rd July 2022. “It is our duty to celebrate this Great Jubilee of the Martyrdom of St. Thomas in a fitting way so that we witness to faith in Christ in the present era”, says Mar Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop of Trichur. According to the strong and living tradition of the last 2,000 years, St. Thomas, the Apostle landed at Crangannore in 52 AD, started his mission from Palayur in the same year and suffered martyrdom for the sake of faith in the year 72 AD at Mylapore (Madras/Chennai). We are celebrating this Great Jubilee of the Martyrdom of St. Thomas at Palayur, Trichur on 3rd July 2022. We have arranged Eucharistic Celebration at 3.00 pm followed by Public Meeting and Cultural Programs. [The usual Dukrana Festival and Oottuthirunal of 3rd July at the Palayur Major Archiepiscopal Shrine will be in the morning.]

4. World Day of Prayer for Families at Rome from 22nd to 26th June

The X World Meeting of Families (WMOF) in Rome was attended exclusively by delegates from Episcopal Conferences from all over the world as well as representatives from international movements involved in pastoral care for families. Fr. Milton Gonsalves, Executive Secretary of CCBI Commission for Family and two couples were delegates of the Indian Bishops’ Conference, who attended the World Meeting in the Vatican from 22nd to 26th June 2022.

At the conclusion of the X World Day of Families, Pope Francis addressed his “missionary mandate” especially to the participants in the X World Meeting of Families, with a joyful Eucharistic liturgy celebrated by Cardinal Kevin Farrell in St Peter’s Square. In his Mandate, the Pope invited young families to “be guided by those who know the way,” and more established families to “be companions on the journey for others.” And for families who have lost the way, he encouraged them not to be overcome by sadness, but to “trust in the Love that God has placed in you, [and] beseech the Spirit each day to revive it.” Finally, Pope Francis said, “Be the seed of a more fraternal world! Be families with big hearts! Be the welcoming face of the Church! And please pray, always pray!”

5. Praedicate Evangelium = Preach the Gospel

The growth of any organism involves change and it would necessarily involve a tension between giving up something and taking up something else. The present Apostolic Constitution “Praedicate Evangelium” = “Preach the Gospel” of Pope Francis that replaced “Pastor Bonus” (1988) of Pope John Paul II is symptomatic of such growth in the self-understanding of the Church. As the title itself indicates, it is not the person of “the Good Shepherd”, but the communitarian task of “preaching the Gospel” that is central to the new Constitution. “Pastor Bonus” contained almost ten years of experience and involvement of Pope John Paul II; similarly, almost nine years of pontifical experience and directives of Pope Francis is behind the present Constitution “Praedicate Evangelium”. The new Constitution, promulgated on 19th March by Pope Francis, came into force on 5th June 2022.

What is new in the Constitution?

On the basis of “Pastor Bonus” the various departments of Roman Curia were organized into two Secretariats (Secretariat of State, Secretariat of Economy), nine congregations, three dicasteries, three tribunals, five Pontifical Councils and three offices, etc. The present Constitution “Praedicate Evangelium” brought together most of the above offices into a standard nomenclature “dicasteries” (16), which means simply departments, by merging some of the old areas of administration or raising some of them from offices to independent ‘dicasteries’.

Praedicate Evangelium, underscores the missionary dimension and core duty of evangelization, proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel, which regards all the offices assisting the Pope in his pastoral ministry.
Among the most significant developments in this regard contained in the document is the unification into the Dicastery for Evangelization of the former Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization. The two heads of these offices both become pro-prefects, because the prefecture of this new department is reserved to the Pope. In fact, the Constitution reads: “The Dicastery for Evangelization is presided over directly by the Roman Pontiff.”

6. In conclusion, here is a tribute to Most Rev. Raul Nicolau Gonsalves (95), Archbishop Emeritus of Goa e Damão, who passed away on 1st July 2022 at JMJ Hospital in Alto-Porvorim, Goa. Archbishop Raul had led the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman for 37 years. He was born June 15, 1927, as the fifth of eight children in Bambolim. He joined the Patriarchal Seminary of Rachol for his philosophical studies. In 1947, he was sent to Rome for his theological studies and was ordained a priest in Rome on December 21, 1950. On January 5, 1967, he was appointed the auxiliary to the then Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese Francisco da Piedade Rebello. He was ordained bishop two months later by Archbishop James Robert Knox, the apostolic internuncio in India. On January 30, 1978, Pope Paul VI appointed him Archbishop of Goa and Daman and Patriarch of the East. He became the first son of the soil to hold the post. He retired from episcopal ministry on December 12, 2003. He was a priest for 71 years and a bishop for 55 years. The revered Archbishop had confirmed me in my home Parish of Calangute and then in 1980 had ordained me a priest in the same Parish. He had been a mentor and a spiritual father to me, especially during the years of my episcopacy. To a gigantic church leader, an understanding pastor, and an elder brother in the episcopate, I bow my head in tribute and pray for his departed soul. RIP dear Archbishop Raul.

Yours in the Good Shepherd,

Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC
Bishop of Agartala