

1 January 2014

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## ***HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS***

ON THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD  
47th WORLD DAY OF PEACE

*Vatican Basilica*  
*Wednesday, 1st January 2014*

In the first reading we find the ancient prayer of blessing which God gave to Moses to hand on to Aaron and his sons: "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace" (*Num* 6:24-25). There is no more meaningful time than the beginning of a new year to hear these words of blessing: they will accompany our journey through the year opening up before us. They are words of strength, courage and hope. Not an illusory hope, based on frail human promises, or a naïve hope which presumes that the future will be better simply because it is the future. Rather, it is a hope that has its foundation precisely in God's blessing, a blessing which contains the greatest message of good wishes there can be; and this is the message which the Church brings to each of us, filled with the Lord's loving care and providential help.

The message of hope contained in this blessing was fully realized in a woman, Mary, who was destined to become the Mother of God, and it was fulfilled in her before all creatures.

The Mother of God. This is the first and most important title of Our Lady. It refers to a quality, a role which the faith of the Christian people, in its tender and genuine devotion to our heavenly Mother, has understood from the beginning.

We recall that great moment in the history of the ancient Church, the Council of Ephesus, in which the divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary was authoritatively defined. The truth of her divine maternity found an echo in Rome where, a little later, the Basilica of Saint Mary Major was built, the first Marian shrine in Rome and in the entire West, in which the image of the Mother of God – the *Theotokos* – is venerated under the title of *Salus Populi Romani*. It is said that the residents of Ephesus used to gather at the gates of the basilica where the bishops were meeting and shout, "Mother of God!". The faithful, by asking them to officially define this title of Our Lady, showed that they acknowledged her divine motherhood. Theirs was the spontaneous and sincere reaction of children who know their Mother well, for they love her with immense tenderness. But it is more: it is the *sensus fidei* of the holy People of God which, in its unity, never errs.

Mary has always been present in the hearts, the piety and above all the pilgrimage of faith of the Christian people. "The Church journeys through time... and on this journey she proceeds along the path already trodden by the Virgin Mary" (*Redemptoris Mater*, 2). Our journey of faith is the same as that of Mary, and so we feel that she is particularly close to us. As far as faith, the hinge of the Christian life, is concerned, the Mother of God shared our condition. She had to take the same path as ourselves, a path which is sometimes difficult and obscure. She had to advance in the "pilgrimage of faith" (*Lumen gentium*, 58).

Our pilgrimage of faith has been inseparably linked to Mary ever since Jesus, dying on the Cross, gave her to us as our Mother, saying: "Behold your Mother!" (*Jn* 19:27). These words serve as a testament, bequeathing to the world a Mother. From that moment on, the Mother of God also became our Mother! When the faith of the disciples was most tested by difficulties and uncertainties, Jesus entrusted them to Mary, who was the first to believe, and whose faith would never fail. The "woman" became our Mother when she lost her divine Son. Her sorrowing heart was enlarged to make room for all men and women, all, whether good or bad, and she loves them as she loved Jesus. The woman who at the wedding at Cana in Galilee gave her faith-filled cooperation so that the wonders of God could be displayed in the world, at Calvary kept alive the flame of faith in the resurrection of her Son, and she communicates this with maternal affection to each and every person. Mary becomes in this way a source of hope and true joy!

The Mother of the Redeemer goes before us and continually strengthens us in faith, in our vocation and in our mission. By her example of humility and openness to God's will she helps us to transmit our faith in a joyful proclamation of the Gospel to all, without reservation. In this way our mission will be fruitful, because it is modeled on the motherhood of Mary. To her let us entrust our journey of faith, the desires of our heart, our needs and the needs of the whole world, especially of those who hunger and thirst for justice and peace, and for God. Let us then together invoke her, and I invite you to invoke her three times, following the example of those brothers and sisters of Ephesus: Mother of God! Mother of God! Mother of God! Amen.

### **Bishop's New Year Greetings**

*Look behind and thank God*  
*Look ahead and trust in God*  
*Look around and serve God*  
*and his people*  
*Look within and find God*  
*within you*

I wish all of you a God-filled, Love-filled, Peace-filled days in this New Year 2014. May you be a Gospel of Joy every moment of your life.

### **Rev. Fr Jenson Puthenveetil**

I am very happy to inform you that Rev. Fr Jenson Puthenveetil has returned to the diocese after successfully completing his Doctorate in Philosophy. Congratulations and best wishes to him in his future ministry. May he be a channel of God's love and mercy.

### **Rev. Fr Milton Jacob**

Rev. Fr Milton Jacob successfully defended his Doctorate in Biblical Theology. Hearty Congratulations to him.

### **January 18-25, 2014: The Week of prayer for Christian Unity**

From 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January is held the week of prayer for Christian unity. I urge all the faithful to pray for the Christian unity especially on these days. The 2014 theme for the week of Prayer for Christian Unity is selected from the words of St Paul to the Corinthians "Has Christ been Divided?" 1 Corinthians 1:1-17.

### **New Priests**

Congratulations and best wishes to our new Priests Rev. Fr Vimal Francis Veliathuparambil, Rev. Fr Sajeev Varghese Udhikattil, Rev. Fr Lal Philip Kadavilparambil, Rev Fr Majo Joseph Kannothe and Rev. Fr Paul Joseph Arukulassery. They were ordained by me on December 30, 2013 at Mother of God Cathedral, Calicut.

### **Fr Victor Piovesan, S. J.,**

Fr Victor Piovesan, S. J., an Italian Jesuit Missionary who had long time association with our Diocese and the former Rector of St Joseph's Seminary Mangalore,

passed away on 1 January 2014 in Italy. His funeral service was conducted on 03 January 2014. May God grant him eternal rest.

### **Birthdays**

January	01	Rev. Fr Jerome Chinganthara
	04	Rev. Fr Milton Jacob
	05	Rev. Fr Martin Elanjiparambil
	16	Rev. Fr William Mendonza
	23	Rev. Fr Jacob Kulangara
	28	Rev. Fr Sebastian Karakkatt
	31	Rev. Fr Mathew Adatt

We join you dear fathers in thanking the Lord for the gift of life and wish you a very happy Birthday and God's blessings. "***Ad Multos Annos***"

### **Obituary**

Rev. Sr Mary Ernest A.C., passed away at Providence Convent on December 07, 2013. She was buried at Carmel Hill Cemetery on December 08, 2013.

### **Holy Father's Prayer intentions**

**Universal:** That all may promote authentic economic development that respects the dignity of all peoples.

**For Evangelization:** That Christians of diverse denominations may walk toward the unity desired by Christ.

