

# VOX NOSTRA

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*Dear Rev. Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,*

## **1. HOLY WEEK AND EASTER**

After 40 days of Lenten prayer, fasting, penance and almsgiving, the Holy Mother the Church invites us to rejoice in the solemnity of the Resurrection of our Lord. During the Holy Week the Church celebrates the mysteries of salvation accomplished by Christ in the last days of his earthly life, from his messianic entry into Jerusalem until his blessed Passion and glorious resurrection. The feast of Easter is the zenith of the season of Lent, particularly the Holy Week. I urge all parish priests to plan and prepare well for the Holy Week with due attention to the liturgical guidelines given for the week as found in pages 93-114 of the *ORDO 2022-23* and celebrate the Holy Week with the devotion associated with it so that the faithful may be able to conclude their Lenten exercises with the experience of the peace and joy of the Risen Lord on Easter Sunday.

Dear Rev. Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, I extend to all of you my best wishes for a Happy Easter. Please extend my Easter wishes to your dear parishioners and members of your religious communities. May the Risen Lord fill us all with his gifts of joy, peace and hope in our daily lives as we carry forward the mission entrusted to us by him through the most precious gift of his call to priesthood and consecrated life.

## 2 DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

The Church celebrates the Second Sunday of Easter as the Divine Mercy Sunday which falls on **16th April** this year. This feast is based on the Catholic devotion to the Divine Mercy that St Faustina Kowalska reported as per her encounter with Jesus and is associated with especial promises to her from Jesus. “As a gift to humanity, which sometimes seems bewildered and overwhelmed by the power of evil, selfishness and fear, the Risen Lord offers His love that pardons, reconciles, and reopens hearts to love. It is love that converts hearts and gives peace. How much the world needs to understand and accept Divine Mercy!” said St Pope John Paul II. I wish that all parishes celebrate this day with the devotion associated with the day, such as Divine Mercy Chaplet (Rosary), Prayers to St Faustina and Litany of Divine Mercy, and also encourage the devotion to Divine Mercy.

## 3 VOCATION SUNDAY

We celebrate the IV Sunday of Easter as Vocation Sunday which falls on **30 April** this year. The purpose of the Vocation Sunday is to publicly fulfill the Lord’s instruction to “Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his vineyard” (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). As a climax to a prayer that is continually offered throughout the Church, it affirms the primacy of faith and grace in all that concerns vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. While appreciating all vocations, the Church concentrates its attention this day on vocations to the ordained ministries (priesthood and diaconate), consecrated life in all its forms (male and female religious life, societies of apostolic life, consecrated virginity), and secular institutes in their diversity of services and membership and to the missionary life. 2023 marks the **60th Anniversary** of the **World Day of Prayer for Vocations**. I request all parish priests to identify suitable boys from the High School itself and motivate them to join as

candidates to the Diocese after completing their High School. Please give their names and contact details to Rev. Fr Anil Cornelio for further follow up. Let us also earnestly pray for vocations for our Diocese so that the Lord of the harvest may send enough labourers to work in his vineyard.

#### **4 APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW VICAR GENERAL**

I am very thankful to you my beloved priests serving in the parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Udupi who, in response to my request proposed names of priests whom you have considered most suitable to the office of the Vicar General. While the Code of Canon Law empowers the Diocesan Bishop to freely appoint his Vicar General without necessarily having to consult anyone (cf. Can. 477 & 157), I decided to use my pastoral discretion to seek the opinion of priests.

Having obtained the opinion of the priests and having given due consideration to it, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. Fr Ferdinand Roque Gonsalves, the present Parish Priest of St John the Evangelist Church, Pangala, as the Vicar General of the Diocese of Udupi. Rev. Fr Ferdinand Roque Gonsalves will assume the charge of the office of Vicar General from 01 April, 2023, after having made before me the Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity and Secrecy according to the formula approved by the Apostolic See and having promised to fulfill faithfully the office entrusted to him.

Till the annual transfers take place, Rev. Fr Ferdinand Gonsalves will be discharging his duties as the Vicar General of the Diocese from Pangala.

I am confident that Rev. Fr Ferdinand Gonsalves will place at the service of the Diocese his vast pastoral experience, talents and energies as we are walking together as the Synodal Church. Please join me in congratulating him. I kindly request you to remember him in your prayers

and give him your full co-operation and support in his new ministry. Please announce to your parishioners about his appointment.

## **5. GRATITUDE TO MONSIGNOR BAPIST MENEZES**

Our Vicar General, Msgr Baptist Menezes, has submitted his resignation to the office of Vicar General and expressed his inability to continue in the office and fulfil his responsibilities as Vicar General due to his continuing ill health for a long time and asked to be relieved from the office. With a heavy heart, we accept his resignation and relieve him from the office of the Vicar General w.e.f. 01 April 2023.

Msgr Baptist Menezes, hailing from Shirva, was born on July 28, 1948 and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Mangalore on 25 October 1974. He has a Doctorate in Moral Theology from the Lateran University, Rome. After being an assistant Parish priest at the Most Holy Redeemer Church at Agrar and Assistant Director at St Antony's Charitable Institutions at Jeppu, Mangalore, he was deputed for higher studies in Moral Theology to Rome in 1977. On the completion of his doctoral studies in 1982, he joined the staff of St Peter's Pontifical Seminary at Bangalore, where he served till 1994. Thereafter he was appointed Administrator of St Joseph's Inter-diocesan Seminary at Jeppu, Mangalore, in 1995 and Director of Father Muller Charitable Institutions in 1997, the post he held till 2007. He was appointed Episcopal Vicar of the District of Udupi by the Bishop of Mangalore on 6 July 2007, an office he shouldered till Udupi was canonically erected into a new Diocese on 15 October 2012.

He was appointed the first Vicar General of the new Diocese of Udupi on 14 December 2012. He took charge on that day in the presence of the Bishop of Udupi at Mother of Sorrows Church, Udupi. From the day one, Msgr Baptist Menezes served as the Vicar General with utmost zeal, commitment and dedication, and spent himself in the

service of the Diocese. A Vicar General is called to work *ad nutum episcopi* in a diocese. Accordingly, being faithful to the canonical role and responsibilities of the Vicar General, he worked as a humble servant and faithful collaborator of the Bishop for the good of the diocese for the last ten years. There was a never an occasion for clash or conflict of ideas as there was harmonious blending of the two minds in unison. He was always available to the Bishop, priests and the faithful of the Diocese.

His untiring service and cooperation in the preparation of the Pastoral Plan *Mission 2025* for the Diocese and its efficient implementation, mobilizing resources for the diocesan projects, guiding the pastoral work of the parish pastoral councils and parish finance councils in the Diocese, courageous, creative and innovative suggestions during the meetings of various participatory structures in the Diocese, a listening and understanding ear to whoever came to his office, editing the Diocesan monthly news bulletin for four years, serving as the defender of Bond and the Promoter of Justice in the Diocesan Ecclesiastical Tribunal, meticulously recording the history of the Diocese, attending to the Diocesan Curial work could be highlighted only as a tip of the iceberg of the enormous services he rendered to the Diocese and the Church. Being a man of deep faith and convictions, he never refused to offer his mite whenever the call of duty came on his way. He always remained obedient to his superiors throughout his tenure. Thus, despite his health-related difficulties, like a burning candle he spent himself totally in the service of the Diocese. His services as the first Vicar General of Udupi Diocese will always be cherished in the annals of the history of the Diocese.

On behalf of the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the diocese, I sincerely thank Msgr Baptist Menezes for his services as Vicar General in the formative decade of the Diocese. Personally, I ever remain grateful to him for shouldering and sharing the responsibilities in the Diocese

both in good times and challenging times as a trustworthy, reliable, and strong pillar of support in the pastoral governance.

Dear Monsignor, we wish you good health, long life, and joyful days ahead. May God shower you with His choicest blessings of health and happiness for your dedicated service as Vicar General of the Diocese of Udupi.

## **6. SPECIAL SEMINAR FOR 10TH STD STUDENTS AND PARENTS**

The Family Commission is organizing a treasured and most valued one-day seminar on family life only for 10th Std students and their parents. This is a first-of-its-kind event happening at the deanery level with insightful sessions. The whole day seminar will cover almost everything, from parents-children relationships to how to handle and guide those blooming yet delicate teenagers in their family life. The Commission is ready with expert qualified priests and laity to lead talks, interactive sessions, and panel discussions. Parents and children get to learn from the best and come away with a whole new set of skills to help strengthen their family bonds. I request all parish priests to spread the word and encourage all the parish children and their parents to join this unique event.

## **7. SUMMER HOLIDAYS AND CAMPS**

As months of April and May draw near, parents and children plan for holidays. Summer vacation is an excellent time to gather children for faith formation activities and to teach them life skills. Hence, I invite all parish priests to organise summer camps to all children in the parish for at least a week. Do concentrate on faith related themes such as Creed, Sacraments, Liturgy, Commandments, Prayer during these summer camps.

## 8 TRAINING FOR PPC OFFICE BEAERS AND PFC MEMBERS

During the last month, we held a series of training programmes for PFC members at different parishes in five deaneries and for PPC office bearers at Anugraha Pastoral Centre. The participation of our laity in these training programmes would definitely help all parishes in the days to come to coordinate effectively and implement the Pastoral Plan and other programs in the parishes in a true ecclesial spirit of communion in the service of all the faithful in the parishes. I remain ever grateful to all the parish priests for encouraging their parishioners to participate in these training programmes. Do convey my thanks to all the participants for their active participation and for their time and efforts in the service of the Church. A special word of thanks to the Director of Anugraha, Deans of the five deaneries and Parish Priests who made all the necessary arrangements for the training in their parishes. As citizens of the country, we need to keep in mind the civil laws while dealing with the government, especially in the handling of our temporal goods in our parishes. As members of the Church, let us also administer the spiritual and temporal goods in the Church as per the ecclesiastical laws with particular attention to the particular laws made through statutes and decrees for the Diocese of Udupi. I convey my best wishes to all the members of the PFC and PPC in the parishes and pray God's abundant blessings on them and their families for their time and sacrifice in the service of the Church.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

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+ Gerald Isaac Lobo

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