

The Herald

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MISSION SUNDAY IS REMINDER: ALL CATHOLICS ARE MISSIONARIES

DOMINIC J. AZAVEDO



Divya Deepti Bible Students from Jeevan Dham Faridabad getting Certificates from Fr. Varghese N. SVD & Jeevan Dham Charismatic Prayer Centre's Director Mrs. Manie & Others

Just before ascending to Heaven, Jesus told his eleven disciples: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore make disciples of all nations, baptise them in the name of the Father and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you." Then Jesus promises: "And look I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Mat: 28: 18-20).

Mission Sunday should remind every Catholic that Jesus' command must be followed not only by priests and religious but every baptised Catholic too.

We, in India, are blessed as the missionaries in early days started the Catholic Enquiry Centres (CEC) to work in the Lord's Vineyard reaching out and teaching and keeping in

touch with the seekers of the Lord, many of whom are true believers in the Lord, though they are not formally baptized Christians. Even though, at times, it is difficult to speak openly about Christ, most people respect and appreciate Christianity in our country. In general, most people in India recognize the Christian community as peace-loving and service minded. Christians are honest and hard-working. "Missionary spirit" is understood as the spirit of selfless dedication and service. Many of our National Leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Radhakrishnan have been deeply influenced by Jesus and His teachings. They have been encouraging the people to

emulate the example of Christian missionaries in the service of the poor in the country. Today many people sincerely seek to know Christ and come closer to Him. Thousands of people visit our churches, pilgrim centres, charismatic centres and join Bible Study programmes for this purpose.

From Delhi, the ACECI Headquarters, Fr. Varghese Nediakalayil SVD, Secretary & Executive Secretary, ACECI (Association of Catholic Enquiry Centres-India) says: "our model is the Lord's parable of the Sower: 'The Sower went out to Sow' (Mt. 13/1-9)" "Divya Deepti" from ACECI National Office carries out Evangelical ministries in different ways. The aim of the National Office is to promote, animate, and assist the ministries of the direct proclamation of the Gospel through the Catholic Enquiry Centres. For this purpose, the Center keeps in touch with the existing CECs by visits, phone-calls, letters, e-mails, and regional and national meetings. The staff of the Delhi Headquarter goes out to help the dioceses and parishes which want to establish new Catholic Enquiry Centres. In order to update the evangelical communication, the Headquarter has launched a website with inputs in Hindi, English and Urdu and also has its presence on Facebook. In order to promote the primary evangelical reach out, "Divya Deepti" conducts Bible Correspondence Courses, as a model for others to follow, especially for the new CECs.

Since 1948, The Catholic Enquiry Centres, the Institutes for Home Study, as initially called by its founder late Fr. Peter Sontag SJ, have now become a great movement to share the story of IHS (Iesus Hominum Salvator) with all those who are sincerely seeking to know Him. Today, the National Office in New Delhi, for the past 26 years has been coordinating and promoting the Correspondence Course work in India, under the dynamic guidance of Fr. Varghese Nediakalayil SVD. The vast majority of 1.25 billion people in India have not yet heard about Jesus Christ and his message of love, service, forgiveness, compassion, etc., so on this Mission Sunday, every Catholic has a



CEC Bandra, St. Andrews Church, Bandra

great and challenging task to do.

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium – "The Joy of the Gospel" says: The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading then with the heart." (No 264 p.193).

In India today, we have over 52 Catholic Enquiry Centres working together to share the Good News with the people of other Faiths. These Centres, situated in the dioceses of India reach out to educated people of our country in English, Hindi and all the regional languages of our country.

In Kolkata Archdiocese, the Catholic Enquiry is in Christ the King Church, Park Circus, Kolkata 700017. We want to work closely with the Small Christian Community members who are doing great work even during this corona virus period, through online

Gospel Sharing meetings and is helping in kind the poor and the marginalized through the guidance of Fr. Ignatius P. Sarto, SCC Coordinator for the Bengal region and in the Kolkata Archdiocese under Fr. Dominic Gomes, Vicar General and SCC Coordinator of the Kolkata Archdiocese.

We are in touch with Fr. Gnana Peppin, Priest In-Charge of the Marriage Preparation Course so that he introduces the Free Bible Correspondence Course to the non-Catholic partners in mixed marriages. In 1989, Pope John Paul II said in Chile: "When we say that the Church is Catholic, we mean that she is evangelizing, missionary and apostolic. If she lacked these qualities, she would not be the true Church."

In Evangelii Nuntiandi, we read: "The most beautiful testimony of life will reveal itself powerless unless it is made explicit by a clear and unmistakable announcement of the Lord Jesus" (EN. No. 22). This is Mission Sunday message.



Bishop Agnelo Gracias and Bishop Bosco Penha of Bombay with Royce D'sauza, Director, CEC, Bandra, his wife Gilda and Sister Claire who was Director in Bangalore



Group Photo of 16th ACECI General Body Meeting at Bangalore Fr. Varghese Paul SJ., Fr. Varghese N. SVD with Fr. Paneer Silvam CCBIProclamation Secretary & Other Participants.

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We, in India, are blessed as missionaries with a movement in early days known as 'Catholic Enquiry Centres (CECs)' to work in the Lord's Vineyard, reaching out and teaching, and keeping in touch with the seekers of the Lord; many of whom are true believers in the Lord, though they are not formally baptised Christians. In the mission of the Catholic Enquiry Centres, the whole Church, namely the Catholic faithful, religious, priests and the bishops are involved. Even though, at times, it is difficult for us to speak openly about Christ, most people respect and appreciate Christianity in our country. In general, most people in India recognise the Christian community as peace-loving and service-minded. Christians are honest and hard-working. "Missionary spirit" is understood as the spirit of selfless dedication and service. Many of our national leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Phule and Dr Radhakrishnan have been deeply influenced by Jesus and His teachings. They have been encouraging the people to emulate the example of Christian missionaries in the service of the poor in the country. Today, many people sincerely seek to know Christ and come closer to Him. Thousands of people visit our churches, pilgrim centers, charismatic centres and join Bible Study programmes for this purpose.

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with the existing CECs by visits, phone-calls, letters, e-mails, regional and national meetings. The staff of the Delhi Headquarters goes out to help the dioceses and parishes which want to establish new Catholic Enquiry Centres. In order to update the evangelical communication, the Headquarters has launched a website: www.knowlordjesus.org, with inputs in Hindi, English and Urdu, and has a presence on Facebook. To promote the primary evangelical reach out, *Divya Deepthi* conducts Bible Correspondence Courses, as a model for others to follow, especially for the new CECs.

Since 1948, the Catholic Enquiry Centres (the Institutes for Home Study, as initially called by its founder, late Fr Peter Sontag SJ) have now become a great movement to share the story of IHS (*Jesus Hominum Salvator*), with all those who are sincerely seeking to know Him. This movement was later led by Fr Ted Bowling SJ who became the first President of Catholic Enquiry

Centres-India (ACECI). The National Office in New Delhi, for the past 26 years, has been coordinating and promoting the Correspondence Course work in India, under the dynamic guidance of Fr Varghese Paul SJ (ACECI President) and Fr Varghese Nediakalayil SVD (Secretary, ACECI). The vast majority of 1.25 billion people in India have not yet heard about Jesus Christ and His message of love, service, forgiveness, compassion, etc., so on this Mission Sunday (October 18), every Catholic has a great and challenging task to do. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), says: "The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading them with the heart." (No. 264 p. 193).

In India today, we have over 52 Catholic Enquiry Centres (CEC) working together to share the Good News with people of other faiths. These Centres, situated in the dioceses of India, reach out to educated people of our country in English, Hindi and all the regional languages of our country. In Mumbai, Mr Dick Pereira and the Sodalists of St Andrew's Parish, Bandra, started the CEC in 1958, and the table ministry, managed solely by the laity, goes on even today at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Mount and Fr Agnel Ashram, Bandra. The CECs post the Free Bible Correspondence Course in English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Telegu, Malayalam, Tamil and Oriya.

The present Managing Committee consists of Mr Mervyn Noronha (Director), Mrs Brenda Pereira, Mr Royce D'Souza, Ms Geraldine Gonsalves and Mr Sydney Pereira. A copy of the New Testament in a language of their choice is handed over to the enquirers, free of cost. Religious articles like rosaries, medals and holy pictures, daily prayers in English, Hindi, Marathi, and novena prayers are also given, and are extremely popular and well appreciated by the pilgrims. Some of the other leading CECs in India today are CEC Bangalore, Su-Sandesh Kendra Belgaum, Arutchudar Chennai, Prakashalaya Mangalore and Catholic Information Service Society (CIS) Ahmedabad. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, we read: "The most beautiful testimony of life will reveal itself powerless, unless it is made explicit by a clear and unmistakable announcement of the Lord Jesus" (EN No. 22). This is the task for us on Mission Sunday. ■