

**MESSAGE FOR
THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC YOUTH DAY 2015**

A Circular Letter from the Most Rev. Dr. Vincent Mar Paulos,
the Chairman of Commission for Youth of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church,
on the Occasion of the Malankara Catholic Youth Day 2015

“You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living” (wis 11:26).

Dear Reverend Fathers, Reverend Sisters & my beloved young friends,

Youth Day celebrations every year help us to reflect on the role of the youth in building up a just and humane society and invite the youth to get ready to face the challenges ahead. The universal Church celebrates the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on 4th October, and we celebrate this day as Malankara Catholic Youth Day. On this occasion, let me greet all of you, my dear young friends, with great joy and hope. In a very special way, my greetings go to all our Reverend Fathers, Sisters and lay volunteers involved in the youth ministry of our Church, too.

The Malankara Catholic Church looks at her young people with great hope. The Church recognizes that not only the future, but also the present of the Church lies in their hands. Holy Father Pope Francis, in his concluding message for the Sixth Asian Youth Day, clearly stated what the role of the young people in the Church today is: "As young Christians, whether you are workers or students, whether you have already begun a career or have answered the call to marriage, religious life or the priesthood, you are not only a part of the *future* of the Church; you are also a necessary and beloved part of the Church's *present*! You are the present of the Church." We are a pilgrim people. Often in our pilgrimage what matters is the goal. Though we move towards the ultimate goal, we live entirely in the present. We are called to become witnesses of Christ in the here and now of our existence.

Instant Culture

A self-centered culture of instant gratification permeates the digitalized and globalized society that we are living in, which we may rightly call, an ‘instant culture’. With its arrival, the very concept of culture as the way of life of a particular people of a particular area becomes anachronistic; together with it, all the various aspects that serve as subsets of a culture, namely, language, communication, courtesies, rituals, roles, customs, expected behaviors, values, thoughts, manner of interaction, etc., too. The values of patience and persistence are totally extraneous to this culture. Everything moves around the word 'touch'. Span of attention is limited to less than a few minutes, and concentration becomes impossible. It enslaves us and makes us simply products out in the market. Anything really human or divine is alien to it.

Without losing sight of the positive values of the diverse cultures in the world, the young people must discern what is incompatible with Catholic faith and identify and keep themselves away

from the sinful and corrupt aspects of contemporary culture. Pope Francis tells: "You and your friends are filled with the optimism, energy and good will which are so characteristic of this period of life. Let Christ turn your natural optimism into Christian hope, your energy into moral virtue, your good will into genuine self-sacrificing love! This is the path you are called to take. This is the path to overcoming all that threatens hope, virtue and love in your lives and in your culture. In this way your youth will be a gift to Jesus and to the world" (Homily, Sixth Asian Youth Day).

Culture of Care

In order to live a meaningful life we need to move from an instant culture of self-gratification to a culture of mutual care which only can build up a better world. Holy Father Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, calls us to commit ourselves for the common good, to create a 'culture of care' and build an ecological spirituality. In this respect, I wish to indicate four kinds of care we must initiate.

1. Care for personal holiness

Jesus is not looking for more devotees; he needs missionary disciples. When we are saved, we are saved from our heathen desires and practices and are called to live a life of holiness. This call to holiness comes very early in St. Peter's first epistle in chapter 1, verses 14-16. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" In the Book of Leviticus, chapter 19, holiness is not merely symbolized by avoiding that which is declared to be ceremonially unclean. Rather, it is defined in terms of respect for one's parents (19:3), generosity towards the poor (19:9-10), honesty (19:11), justice (19:11-18), and love for one's neighbour (19:17-18). Holiness encompasses the entire spectrum of human conduct and all the laws God has laid down (ch. 20). Holiness is a way of life that affects everything we do. It is a lifestyle, rather than mere conformity to a list of rules. This lifestyle is nurtured through the Word of God, active participation in the liturgical celebrations, sacramental life and other faith practices.

2. Care for those who do not know Christ

In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI invited the young people to become modern day evangelizers. "The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel" (EN20). Missionary dimension is a constitutive element of the nature of the Church, and of every single Christian. Servant of God Mar Ivanios, the pioneer of Re-Union movement, wanted to take the light of Gospel to the whole of India. In order to fulfill his longing, now the door is open to all of us. With the establishment of new ecclesiastical structures with jurisdiction all over India, the Church is presenting before the young people a

difficult but essential task to become modern day evangelizers. Jesus' greatest command to proclaim the good news is still beckoning us: "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). "Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine" (EN21). Let us take Jesus' call into our heart and witness him in our words and deeds.

3. Care for the Poor and Needy

"He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honors him" (Proverbs 14: 31). Serving others and taking care of the less fortunate must be part of our life. Holy Father Pope Francis has a magnanimous heart towards the poor and sick people. It is possible also to encounter Christ through serving and taking care of the poor and the sick. God can be seen in the face of our brothers and sisters, especially those who are most forgotten: the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, strangers, the sick, and the imprisoned (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Jesus said to the young man who wanted to follow him: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me (Mt 19: 21-22). If Jesus felt it important to give to the poor and take care of them, it is important for us, too, if we want to truly follow Jesus as his disciples. As committed disciples of Jesus Christ, our faith urges us to act and advocate for the least ones among us.

4. Care for our Common Home

A dangerous warming of the climate system, water scarcity and loss of biodiversity, decline of quality of human life are some of the threats the present generation is confronting. Today the fertile land is surrounded by all kinds of digital waste produced by the throwaway culture. Our rich nature is exploited by a very few for their selfish motives, and many are left empty handed. This will definitely lead us to an unstable and uncertain future. Therefore, the care for nature is of vital importance for humanity's present and future. Looking at these aspects of ecological crisis, the Holy Father in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, addressing the whole world, considers how our care for our common home impacts future generations. He calls for a profound interior conversion and to live the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. He decided to celebrate the "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation" every year on 1 September to encourage us to reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of creation and to implore God's help for the protection of creation. It will be an occasion to ask pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live. The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity, and it is the responsibility of everyone to protect it.

Therefore, the Holy Father asks us to create a civilization of Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care. "Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also "macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones". That is why the Church sets before the world the ideal of a "civilization of love". Social love is the key to authentic development. "In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity". In this framework, along with the little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a "culture of care" (n. 231).

I invite all the young people to celebrate this Youth Day with gestures of mutual care, care for our personal holiness, commitment to the missionary endeavours of the Church, care for the poor and needy and care for our mother nature. Make an in-depth study of *Laudato Si* the current social teaching of the Church and build an ecological spirituality.

The common Youth Day celebrations of our Church will be held at Mariagiri in the eparchy of Marthandom. I wish to remind all concerned to remit the offerings of the Holy Qurbano of this day to the respective eparchial finance offices. The offerings are used for our youth activities at the eparchial and ecclesial level.

On this Youth Day, I assure all the youth and all who are dedicated to the ministry to the youth, that the Church appreciates their valuable service in building up the youth, the Church and society as a whole. Let us accompany the youth to make a generation that cares for each other.

May God bless you abundantly!

Yours lovingly in Christ

Sd/- + Vincent Mar Paulos
Chairman, Synodal Commission for the Youth
Bishop of the Eparchy of Marthandom

20-09-2015

Catholicate Centre, Pattom Trivandrum

N.B. :This circular should be read in all our churches, mission centres and centres of worship during the Holy Qurbano on 4 October Sunday.