



HATIGAON TIDINGS

MSMHC GENERALATE - LITTLE FLOWER CONVENT, HATIGAON



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FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful
(Lk 6:36)

As the year of consecrated life has come to an end, we are invited to enter into another year of grace with the opening of the extraordinary year of mercy. It is a journey that calls for a spiritual experience of receiving and extending mercy. Pope Francis calls us to live this year in the light of the Lord's words: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36).

God's love and goodness permeates the world. He gives us all things, natural and spiritual, temporal and eternal. It is not that we ought to receive all such things, but God out of pure goodness, gratuitously gives us all we need. We could have been led to eternal damnation, but His great mercy frees us from all evils, making us His own. Today, we are certain of the life that is eternal through Jesus His beloved Son. The Father's love is made visible in the face of His beloved Son. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 16).

Indeed, this holy year invites us to choose the path that Jesus lived. It requires a change of life by accepting Jesus into our lives. According to Saint Paul anyone who receives Jesus becomes a new creation. "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the

new has come" (2 Cor 5: 17). In this new life, one is set to experience a changed state of life in which there is fullness. It is all about living in Christ Jesus and not merely knowing and loving him. In it there is newness, and that there springs new aspirations and desires, resulting in new delights and new joys. It calls for a life centred on Christ which leads to wholeness and perfect order.

Living a Christ centred life impels us to be merciful like Him. The entire life of Jesus was a manifestation of God's loving mercy. The Gospels speak about his unconditional love and mercy. He was moved with compassion and went about doing good to all the people. Gospel of Mark tells us, "When he saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things" (Mk 6:34). Jesus had compassion whenever He encountered the suffering humanity. Therefore, He went about doing good, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, forgiving sins and freeing the oppressed.

This holy year invites us to be like the Father and to continue the mission of Jesus with greater zeal and commitment. It is an opportune time for us to show the visible face of Jesus to the humanity. Today, the



world stands in need of liberation much more than anything else. It is important that we become aware of the existing reality around and do all that we can within our power. Whenever we reach out to alleviate the sufferings of others, especially those considered least in our society we become the channels of God's mercy and our genuine actions become salvific. Gospel of Mathew stresses on the importance of reaching out to the least in the society. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25: 40).

May this holy year of mercy lead us to understand the great mercy which God has for us and may it urge us to become Christ like in all our endeavours.

Sr. Philomena Mathew
Superior General



Editorial



A year to love mercy

We are at the crossroads, encountering the old and new! As we come to the close of the year 2015 and enter into the new year 2016, it calls us for a pause. We will certainly find that the bygone year has been a year of numerous experiences. Perhaps, for most of us, it has gifted us with an abundance of blessing and for some of us it might have offered a trying time. But, whatever may be, taking stock of the past will let us realise that we have grown. The time has come for us to have a fresh outlook and right understanding to embrace the coming year with hope. Every new year dawns with another chance to change.

This time we are drawn to celebrate life on a different note. By opening the 'Year of Mercy', Pope Francis invites us to have a new spiritual experience, an experience that confirms the certainty of reaching our ultimate goal in life. The Psalmist says, "With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption" (Ps 130:7). Understanding the prize of our own redemption should lead us to remain eternally grateful and true to the one who made it possible.

According to the belief of the Catholic Church, the Holy Door denotes the path to salvation, a way to a new and eternal life, which was opened to the humanity by Jesus. Pope Francis by opening the Holy Door, welcomes everyone to receive the great gift of God's loving mercy. He so desires that the humanity may experience the boundless love of God in all situations of life. In this aspect, he makes clear that God makes no distinction between people.

How can we respond to the invitation of Pope Francis? Can we become the agents of God's love and mercy, reaching out to those reeling under the power of darkness ... the burden of sin? Are we ready to march towards the fullness of life, mending our own brokenness and helping to mend the brokenness of those travelling alongside us?

Let this year of grace lead us to love mercy, which is a surpassing gift of God for each of us and to the whole of humanity. May we become the channels of God's mercy, leading everyone to the true path of life eternal.

Sr. Shiji James

TITBITS

Novices begin Second Year at Hatigaon



Thirty Novices who completed the first year of Novitiate at Mawroh, Shillong arrived at Hatigaon for the second year of Novitiate. Sr. Rani Mathew is their Mistress and Sr. Veronica Lalthanmawii continue as the Assistant.

Salesian Family Meet at Kolkata



Salesian Family Congress held from 26 to 28 September at Liluah, Kolkata concluded the Bicentenary celebrations of Don Bosco's birth. Over 1900 delegates from all over South Asia participated in the event. It was an occasion for which the Rector Major, Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime made his maiden visit to India. Around fifty MSMHC Sisters, including Superior General and General Councillors, and Provincial Superiors of various provinces made their presence felt by their active participation.

MSMHC at NESCOM Northeast Regional Convention

MSMHC actively participated in the NESCOM Northeast Regional Convention held on 4-6 December, organised in collaboration with the India Catholic Press Association at Guwahati. During the three-day programme, Sr. Christine Mynsong, General Councillor for Evangelization presented a paper on "Communication Media - An Effective Tool in Evangelization" and Sr. Shiji James presented a paper on "Using Communication Media Effectively in Educational Institutions".

The panel discussion on "Media Ministry - Looking Back, Looking Ahead", held on the last day was chaired by Sr. Philomena Mathew, the Superior General of MSMHC. Ms. Patricia Mukim and Fr. George Plathottam SDB were the panelists.



Twenty-nine Sisters made Final Commitment



Twenty-nine Sisters made Final Profession on the occasion of the feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December at MSMHC Generalate, Hatigaon.

The Holy Eucharistic celebration began at 10.00 am, officiated by His Grace, Most Rev. Dominic Lumon, Archbishop of Imphal. In his homily, Bishop Lumon spoke about the meaning of consecrated life and congratulated the Sisters for their courageous response to God's call. He said, "God has destined us to be sons and daughters in Jesus Christ." Underlining the meaning of three vows he reiterated the words of Pope Francis and said, "The religious with their three

vows can wake up the world."

Prior to the event, the Sisters had a two-month long intensive programme of prayer and special classes at Bethel, Barapani under the guidance of Sr. Nancy Augustine, General Councillor for Formation.

The group arrived at Hatigaon on 6 December and continued their prayer and reflection until the awaited morning, 8 December.

On the same day in Shillong, 34 Novices made their first profession. Congratulations to the Sisters who bring in freshness, vitality and holiness to the Church and the Congregation.

Festive Oratory

The community of Hatigaon had the 'Festive Oratory Day' on 11 October at its School campus. About 600 children from various centres which were given assistance by the Junior Sisters during their Sunday apostolate came for the programme.

The day's function was organised by the Junior Sisters under the guidance of Sr. Christine Mynsong, General Councillor for Evangelization.

The opening ceremony began with the lighting of the lamp by the Superior General, Sr. Philomena Mathew, the Chief Guest of the day, along with the representatives of each centre. She addressed the children and

spoke to them about Bishop Ferrando who loved children and showed much interest in their welfare.

Various games and competitions were held after the inaugural function. The winners of the competitions were awarded during the concluding function. The day came to a close with a sumptuous meal shared by all present.





Inter-Provincial Council Meet

The annual meeting of the Inter-provincial council (IPC) 2015 was held at Bethel, Barapani with the theme, 'Renewal in Religious Life, Spirit and Charism' from 4 October to 10 October. The five days animation programme began with a day's prayer and reflection, during which Fr. Thomas Manjaly from Oriens Theological College, Shillong, spoke on "Reclaiming a space for the MSMHC", and challenged the participants to remain rooted in their charism and become relevant in today's world.

Superior General, Sr. Philomena Mathew presented a paper on "Renewal in religious life, spirit, and charism". She presented the present state of the congregation and its major concerns. There were also presentations from the General Councillors and Provincials of all the Provinces so

that the participants are made aware of the present situation and the challenges the MSMHC face today.

Besides the joint meetings which dealt with common concerns of the Congregation, the general team had exclusive meetings with the provincial teams to chalk out concrete ways to live the charism and spirit of the Congregation more meaningfully.

They also had an input session on 'mission' by Fr. TC George SDB of Bangalore Province. It helped the group to focus on MSMHC Mission and its set priorities. He helped the participants to probe into the present situation of the Missionary Animation Centre (MAC) and how to make use of it effectively to further the mission.

On the final day, the group assembled at St. Margaret's Convent, Peachlands for the Holy Eucharist and to offer special prayers at the tomb of Bishop Stephen Ferrando, the Founder of the Congregation. They also visited Mary Immaculate Novitiate at Mawroh, Mawlai.



A Time for Reminiscing the Past

Batches of 1969 - 1974 meet at Bethel, Barapani

The Sisters comprising of six groups, belonging to the batches from 1969 to 1974 gathered at Bethel, Barapani for a two weeks programme. The group arrived at the venue on 1 September and they were welcomed by Sr. Mary Perunilam,

Assistant General, the organiser of the programme.

Coming together after many years brought in lot of excitement and joy to everyone. The programme began with an hour of adoration, wherein the group was guided to thank God for the occasion of togetherness. It was also a time of surrender and seeking God's blessings for the days ahead.

During the introductory session, Sr. Mary Perunilam once again welcomed the Sisters, appreciated and thanked them for their rich contribution to the congregation during their

40-45 years of membership in the congregation. She also spoke to them about the purpose of coming together and stressed on the need to be submissive and open.

The entire programme was planned to give the group an experience of renewal, sharing and learning from each other. The spiritual retreat animated by Fr. James Mathew SDB from Kolkata gave them an enriching experience. It was a Marian retreat in preparation for the birthday of Our Blessed Mother. The group was guided to enter into deep contemplation and total surrender to God like

Our Blessed Mother.

Fr. Julian SJ spent a day with the group reflecting on the call and mission. He reminded them of their call to be apostolic religious, who are to be the visible signs of the Church. He also dealt on 'prayer' and explained about the prayer of silence, prayer of presence and prayer of contemplation.

Sr. Philomena Mathew, the Superior General, enlightened the group on the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. She spoke about the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within a person and His empowering assistance one can experience by be-



ing docile to Him. She then exhorted the Sisters to grow gracefully to become the inspiration for all.

Besides the sessions on different topics, the group had a day of outing during which they visited Si-loam, Umroi, Mawroh Novitiate and Peachlands. They had the joy



of seeing Sr. Margaret Kessa, who is spending her evening of life at Ferrando Convent, Umroi. Visit to Peachlands and spending time near the mortal remains of Bishop Ferrando, the Founder, brought them happy memories of meeting him on several occasions.



Ten-month Juniorate Programme ends with Certificate Ceremony

Thirty-one Junior Sisters were awarded Diploma for one-year course in MSMHC Spirituality under Ferrando Institute of Spirituality (FIS) on 10 October, 2015. The ceremony was held

in the evening at the Conference Hall, in the presence of all the members of the community of Hatigaon. Sr. Jancy Joseph, the Junior Mistress, welcomed everyone and presented a detailed report of the year's programme. Junior Sisters expressed their gratitude to everyone who contributed to their growth during their stay at Hatigaon.

The certificates were presented to them by the Superior General, Sr. Philomena Mathew and the mark sheets were distributed by the Assistant

General, Sr. Mary Perunilam.

The Juniorate programme is an intensive course held at MSMHC Generalate, Hatigaon, meant to strengthen the Sisters who have completed their two years' experience in various communities after the first profession.

Sr. Philomena Mathew, the Superior General, exhorted the group to be responsible and enthusiastic in whatever work they will be entrusted with in the communities and emphasised on the need to be exemplary and committed, always remaining rooted in Jesus and His Word. She also encouraged them saying, "Our Blessed Mother, Don Bosco and our holy Founder will enable you to pursue the path of holiness."

The programme ended with an audio-visual presentation which compiled the various events of the year by Sr. Shiji James.





Training Programme for Women Apostles for Catechesis Rangapara

Women Apostles for Catechesis (WAC) at Rangapara had a training programme on 21-22 September under the guidance of Sr. Christine Mynsong, General Councillor for Evangelization and Sr. Helen Barla, Provincial Councillor for Evangelization.

The group was privileged to welcome Most Rev. Michael Akasius Topo, Bishop of Tezpur on the second day of the programme for the Holy Mass. In his homily Bishop Akasius spoke on the importance of faith formation in families and family prayer to bring up the children in Christian faith.



The group had sessions on different topics by the resource persons. Sr. Christine took a session on missionary activities and founding Charism of the MSMHC with the help of a documentary film. She had another session on family counseling during which she gave tips for maintaining relationships

based on the Word of God.

Sr. Helen's session was on the sacrament of Holy Eucharist and its importance for the Catholic families. Fr. Vijay Topno animated the group on the sacrament of marriage and spoke about the family life and Sr. Swati Tirkey dealt with the sacrament of reconciliation.

WAC Office Bearers Meet Ravulapalam



Office bearers of WAC at Ravulapalam, Andhra Pradesh had a meeting on 12 November. The programme had a grand opening at 9 a.m. with the Bible procession, lighting the lamp, Scripture reading and a brief sharing of reflection on

the Word of God. Fr. Raju, the Parish Priest, Sr. Christine Mynsong, General Councillor for Evangelization, Sr. Mercy Scaria, the Provincial and Sr. Maria Manmadha, Provincial Councillor for Evangelization were

present for the inaugural function. Fr. Raju and Sr. Mercy Scaria gave a short message on the role of mothers in faith formation in the family and the Church.

Sr. Christine Mynsong took a session on the Founding Charism of

the Congregation and with the help of the documentary film on the activities of the Congregation she explained the role of Women Apostles for Catechesis for the primary mission of the Congregation. She also spoke about the need of family prayers and faith formation.

The day's Holy Eucharist was offered at 11.30 a.m. by Rev. Raju, the Parish Priest. In his homily, he spoke about the life and activities of Jesus' followers as explained in the Acts of the Apostles. He also shared his positive experiences with the WAC in the parish and noted that it has helped in improving the life in the Church, enhancing family relationships and encouraging youth activities within the parish and villages.

Sr. Maria Manmadha took the session on the sacraments, giving emphasis on the Holy Eucharist. There was also a special session during which the office bearers of the WAC were elected by secret ballots and the elected members made their promise in the presence of the Provincial Superior, Sr. Mercy Scaria.

Evangelization and Social Apostolate Core Team Meet

For the first time, the core teams of Evangelization and Social Apostolate met together at Hatigaon on 11-13 September to discuss and plan the various activities at the central and province levels. Addressing the members gathered, Sr. Philomena Mathew spoke of the importance of joint ventures and collaboration for achieving the goals. She stressed on the need to uplift the status of women and children who takes the primary place in our ministry.

The group had a detailed study on the ongoing programme of Evan-



gelization and Social Apostolate, and discussed about the possible means to promote an integral ap-

proach to the mission of the Congregation. They also drew up plans for implementation.

Thank You and Welcome



Thanks to Sr. Lily Changsan who has completed four years as Secretary General. She had been enthusiastic and committed to the task entrusted to her. Best wishes and prayers as she moves ahead to take up her new responsibility in the Congregation.



Welcome to Sr. Jancy Joseph, the newly appointed Secretary General. Prayerful wishes as she begins her life in the new office.

Welcome back to Sr. Mary Thadavanal



The Congregation is glad to welcome back Sr. Mary Thadavanal, the former Superior General after her three-year of training in Counselling and Spirituality at the Institute of St. Anselm, Kent. Sr. Thadavanal, besides having had a rich learning experience, had been serving the Institute of St. Anselm as a resource person.

The Institute of St. Anselm provides special training for formators, leaders, evangelists and others in order that they become charged with the sacred task of supporting and nourishing the spiritual life of the members of their congregations, dioceses and parishes. The Institute's fully experiential Courses in Community and Pastoral Leadership have helped many thousands of religious leaders gain or enhance the skills necessary to carry out the complex and demanding task of guiding their community's life and interaction.



Animation Programme for Staff and Students

Sr. Jane Francis, General Councillor for Education conducted animation programme for the staff and students of Schools at Karuvenchal, Kannikalam, Iritty and Periyattadukkam in Kerala from 17 to 29 September. In each centre, she animated the sisters in the community, conducted orientation programme for the Teachers in the School and addressed the students. She also made assessment of the education mission in those schools and made suggestions for improvement.

On 17 October Sr. Jane conducted



an orientation programme for the staff of St. Mary's School Naharkatia, Namrup and St. Xavier's of Naharkatia. She also had a day's programme for the Centre at Mahadevpur in Arunachal Pradesh. Besides the animation and assessment of the education mission at the centre, she spent time with the members of the community to sketch out concrete plans for

helping out evening school children and to reach out to the poor and the marginalized of the area.

From 25 to 31 October Sr. Jane had the animation programmes in various centres of Mizoram: Zemabawk, Champhai, Seiling and Ramthar. Similar programmes were held in the centres of Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya during the month of November.



NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

Fifteen Young People Received Confirmation Swaziland

18 October was a special day for Malkerns Parish as Bishop Jose Luis Ponce De Leon confirmed fifteen active, young people who are ready to serve the parish by taking part in the various activities of the church. Sr. Susan Soren was part of the team that prepared the candidates for the sacrament of confirmation.

Ready and willing



The community of Swaziland welcomed Ncobile Masina, the first Swazi aspirant on 30 August. An hour of adoration was specially organised by Sr. Susan Soren to welcome her to the community. Ncobile Masina is to have her formation at Johannesburg under the guidance of Sr. Bina Basumatary.



Foundation Day cum Festive Oratory

MSMHCs at Malkerns solemnized the 73rd Foundation Day of the Congregation on 24 October. To mark the event they organised Festive Oratory for the children of Malkerns and Ntondozi village. Sr. Dimaya Amdep, in charge of the oratory, conducted Bible quiz, a few games and competitions and awarded



the winners. There were also some of the YAC members to join the programme. Sr. Elsa Joseph and Sr. Theresa



Krocha spoke to the oratory children about the Congregation and its Founder, Bishop Stephen Ferrando.

World AIDS Day

The World AIDS Day was commemorated in Hope House organized by Sr. Elsa Joseph, the Programme Manager, on 26 November. The day's function began with the lighting of the lamp and reading a passage from the Bible. The Master of ceremonies was Mr. Machawe Ngcamphala from the Caritas Orphanaid Programme.

The Chief Guest of the function, Mrs. Joys Nkambule, the Deputy Director of health in her address to the gathering said, "HIV is no longer a death sentence. The rate of HIV has gone down because patients are now able to access ART and also there is political Will from the Government of Swaziland." She further stated that the goal of Swaziland is to have an HIV free nation by the year 2022.

Bishop Jose Louis lighted a candle which symbolised Christ and the suffering humanity and spoke about the power of Christ's light which



gives hope to all.

Mrs. Faith Dlamini the Chairperson of the Hope House committee welcomed everyone and Mrs. Lungile Dlamini, the CEO of the town Council delivered a short message. She encouraged the clients to be ever hopeful and remain positive in the face of suffering. Dr. Dube from AIDS Health Foundation, Mr. Sydney Nkambule from NERCHA



from Manzini and Mrs. Dudu Mbuli, the Director of Health were the others who addressed the gathering on the occasion.

Students from St. John Bosco Pre-School presented a prayer dance and performed a drama on Zero discrimination, which stressed on the need to love those with HIV Positive and not to stigmatize and discriminate them.





Pre- School Graduation Swaziland

St. John Bosco Pre- School graduation day was held in Bosco Hall on 14 November. Inspector Sindi Ginindza was the chief guest. In the guests' list, there were SDB fathers, MSMHCs, Head teachers from few schools, members of the school committee, parents, guardians and well-wishers.

In her speech, the chief guest, Sindi Ginindza, conscientised the parents on the importance of Pre-school education which is the foundation of their future life. Out of 89 children 60 of them received their pre-school



certificates. Sr. Susan Soren, Sr. Theresa Krocha and the teachers: Xolile Mathola, Lungile Khumalo and Nqobile Vilakati made utmost care in preparing the children for their

graduation and to qualify them for joining the primary school. Different colourful items performed by the Pre-school kids' added colour to the day's function.

Blessing of St. Stephen's Convent, Ponta Do Ouro



The auspicious day finally dawned on 10 November 2015, when the newly built residence (St. Stephen's Convent) of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians was blessed and inaugurated by His Excellency Francisco Chimoyo, Archbishop of Maputo Mozambique.

The blessing of the Convent was preceded by a solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by the Archbishop and concelebrated by Fr. Petrus Kullu MSFS, the Delegation Superior of



Mozambique, Fr. Henry, Parish Priest of Bela Vista, Fr. Jijo Thomas, Chaplain of Our Lady of Fatima Church, Ponta Do Ouro and two newly arrived missionaries - Fr. Vineesh Thomas and Fr. Peter Thomas. The liturgical celebration was animated by the faithful of the Ponta Do Ouro community with the help of Bro. Poomagan.

The blessing of the Convent which is about three kilometres away from Ponta Do Ouro was witnessed by faithful and special invited guests. The ceremony was officiated by the Archbishop Francisco Chimoyo with a special prayer and cutting of the ribbon at the entrance, while the people intoned a hymn invoking the Holy Spirit. Sr.

Mary Clara and Sr. Saroj, the pioneers, accompanied the Archbishop for the blessing of the house and its premises.

Sr. Mary Clara Topno, the Animator of the Community voiced the sentiments of gratitude to His Excellency Francisco Chimoyo for inviting the MSMHC to his diocese and for all his support and encouragement. She then thanked Fr. Petrus Kullu MSFS, the Delegation Superior, Fr. Ranjit Tirkey MSFS, the Delegation Bursar and the entire Fransalian family of Mozambican Mission for their initiatives, whole-hearted cooperation and support.

The ceremony came to a close with a fellowship meal prepared by the people themselves.

New Presence in Köln Diocese Germany

Having received an invitation from the Diocese of Köln to work in an old age home, the MSMHC set off on 13 December, 2015 to begin the mission there. Sr. Lucy Augustine, Sr. Anita Albert and Sr. Susheela Basumatary are the pioneers of this new venture. Sr. Marta D' Rosario, the Delegation Superior was there to initiate the process.

At present, the Sisters are engaged in a language course and making the necessary preparations to undertake the work in an old age home.



They are staying in an apartment in St. Anna, belonging to Cellitinnen, where about 200 old people are looked after. There are also Augustinian sisters through whose initia-

tive the MSMHC sisters were able to launch into this mission. They are helpful and provide them timely assistance. They stay in a nearby apartment and render services at St. Anna.

Jubilation at MSMHC Italian Delegation

Celebration of MSMHC Italian Delegation Day cum Silver Jubilee of Sr. Regina Gongmei was held at Turin on 15 October 2015. To mark the day, there was a solemn Eucharistic

celebration at the chapel of St. Francis De Sale at the campus of Basilica of Mary Help Christians, Valdocco, presided over by Fr. Jerome SJ, from Vatican Radio for Tamil Language along with Fr. Nalayan SDB, from the Community of Valdocco for English-speaking group. Sisters representing the various communities in Italy, including students, participated in the celebration.

Fr. Jerome, in his homily empha-

sized the importance of 'the sense of belonging'. He said, "We are in the Sanctuary of Mary Help Christians, the source of strength for Salesians and Salesian Family". He further said, "people come to this Sanctuary not only just to spend vacation but they revere Don Bosco, Domenic Savio and Mary Mazzerello who lived and worked here." He also made a brief reflection on the life of two women, Mary and Elizabeth and pointed out how the impossible for men is made possible with God. He spoke about the power of God's intervention and the importance of remaining submissive to Him.

The Basilica of Mary Help Christians, Valdocco, where the celebration held is significant as it is a common heritage of the great Salesian Family. The chapel of St. Frances de Sales stands between the Magnificent Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and the Chapel of the Pinardi Shade. The chapel of St. Francis de Sales is the second chapel built for the oratory children of Valdocco. Its foundation stone was laid on 20 July 1851 and consecrated on 20 June 1852. For 16 years (until 1868), it remained as the heart of the newly born Salesian Congregation.





The Jubilee Year of Mercy: A Year of Grace

Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica on Tuesday, 8 December, 2015, marking the beginning of the Jubilee of Mercy, a special Holy Year for Catholics. The ceremony took place after he celebrated Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in St. Peter's Square. In spite of the rain that day, over 50 thousand arrived, including the President and Prime Minister of Italy, Sergio Mattarella and Matteo Renzi as well as King Albert II of Belgium with Queen Paola.

Pope Francis, during his homily on 8 December highlighted the primacy of grace. He said, "Were sin the only thing that mattered, we would be the most desperate of creatures, but the promised triumph of Christ's love enfolds everything in the Father's mercy...The Immaculate Virgin stands before us as a privileged witness of this promise and its fulfilment." Stressing the importance of the occasion he commented that the Holy Year is "itself a gift of grace." He further said, "To pass through the Holy Door means to rediscover the infinite mercy of the Father who welcomes everyone and goes out personally to encounter each of them."

Christ the Bearer of Good News Cathedral at Dispur, Guwahati, along with the cathedrals around the world opened the Holy door on 13 December. His Grace, Archbishop John Moolachira offered solemn prayers, opened the Holy Door and guided the entire faithful gathered to pass through the door.

The members of Hatigaon community along with the Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Archdiocese witnessed the ceremony and walked through the 'Holy Door' to obtain God's Mercy.

Followed by the solemn event was

"May every Church and Christian community be a place of mercy amid so much indifference."

the Eucharistic celebration officiated by Archbishop John, concelebrated by a number of Priests from various parishes of the Diocese.

Emphasising the importance of the year which offers an opportune time for all the faithful to receive graces from God, Archbishop John said, "At this juncture may I remind you that a mere walking through this 'Holy Door' will not grant one forgiveness or divine blessings! It has to be accompanied by an inner desire for conversion of one's heart and a thirst for God's intervention. Walking through this door is very symbolic. Just as the Israelites crossed through the red sea, leaving behind their memories of slavery and other pagan practices so too one who passes through this door should have a real desire for conversion of heart and to receive God's blessings in abundance." "Mercy is not an abstract term but one which

expresses the face of God," he added.

Speaking about the existing situation around the world, he said, "Today's world more than ever stands in need of God's Mercy. We live in a world shattered by violence, corruption, crimes, theft, etc. People are up in arms waiting to create a world order through violent means." Saying that no arms can secure one's life and give peace and tranquillity, he stressed on the need to show mercy and compassion to the broken world in order to restore the harmony that existed at the time of creation. He called on the faithful to contribute to make this event an occasion for our brothers and sisters to experience God's mercy.

The Jubilee year which began on 8 December 2015 on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin will conclude on 20 November 2016 on the Feast of Christ the King.