



Simla Chandigarh Diocese

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Advent Pastoral Letter – December 2021

To All the Lay Faithful, Religious and Clergy of Simla-Chandigarh Diocese

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

On 28th November, we commence the new Liturgical year with the first Sunday of Advent. The punch words for Advent 2021: Keep Watch, Keep awake, Keep alert and Keep Listening.

You will recall that, Pope Francis proclaimed a special "Year of St Joseph," beginning on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 8th December 2020, and extending to the same feast in 2021. We will conclude the year of Saint Joseph on 8 December 2021. In his Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris Corde* ("With a Father's Heart"), Pope Francis describes Saint Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father and a father in the shadows. He was an exemplary person especially in times of difficulties and sufferings. One of the standout qualities that we observe in St Joseph is his prompt obedience to the voice of God, St Joseph was ever attentive, listening and obedient to the voice of God.

- He listened to the Angel, in moments of dilemma, and obediently took Mary as his wife (Mt 1:20-24)
- He listened to the Angel, in moments of danger, and obediently took the Mother and Child to Egypt (Mt 2:13-15)
- He listened to the Angel, in moments of doubt, and obediently settled the Holy Family in Nazareth (Mt 2: 20, 22b)
- St Joseph was able to let go of his personal choices and his desired comforts and give top priority to do what God wanted him to do. Holiness consists in doing what God wants - when and where He wants. Joseph was watchful, awake, listening and alert.

May his life inspires us to face any eventuality which comes to our life and make us committed to take care of our families and to be at the service of others.

In the readings during advent we will come across: The punch words: Watch, Keep awake and Keep alert and Keep Listening.

The prophet Jeremiah says, "He might come in the evening or midnight or early morning. . exhorts his people not to lose hope"; for, "Behold, the days are coming ... when I [God] will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah"-Jeremiah 33:14. There is always the possibility of losing sight of the goal and giving in to pessimism and hopelessness. Can we all be a little more like Jeremiah who, though undergoing many difficulties in his life as a prophet, never lost hope in God and continued to be a beacon of hope to his people?

Pope Francis convened a synod in Rome with the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission" from October 2021 to 2023. In his opening address he called us as church to engage in this synod as an opportunity "to become a listening church, to break out of our routine and pause in order to stop and listen." The Synodal Church is always a hopeful community, waiting and longing: Alert, watchful, hopeful, praying and reading the 'signs of the times and the places'. A Synodal Church is ever on the move—looking and seeing, listening and hearing the prompting of God's Spirit at every step of the road. One ought to ask: What is God saying to me, today, as a person, and what is God's Spirit saying to us, today, as community-church? To those who are alert, watchful and prayerful, Jesus says, "Stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk21:28). Let us prepare ourselves internally and get ready to meet Jesus! Truly, blessed are those who journey watchfully, attentively and prayerfully!

In our Diocese we started the Synodal process, we had an important consultation of laity, youth, Catechists, religious and priests on 20th October at Saint Anne's High School, Sector 32 Chandigarh and subsequently the consultation continued likewise, in the five deaneries of our Diocese: Simla, Karnal, Chandigarh, Bathinda and Patiala. The reports of all these deanery gatherings have been submitted to the Diocesan core committee which met on 24th and 25th November to collate these deanery reports./findings. This core committee has summarized and formulated the questions according to these findings and incorporated these into 10 themes/ topics suggested by Rome in their preparatory document (Lineamenta).



The questions based on these 10 themes/topics in turn, will be forwarded to all of you in the parishes in English, Hindi and Punjabi as required. Do ponder and reflect on these and when you meet in your respective small neighbourhood parish communities, you can share your personal insights, opinions and suggestions on these themes with honesty and openness in your group and reflect together on what the Holy Spirit might be revealing through what you shared with one another.

The roadmap for this synodal process is attached with given dates and events. Do give importance to the Synodal process of Listening before speaking.

I wish you a Holy Christmas and a Blessed New Year 2022.

This Advent Pastoral Letter is to be read out or its contents to be explained in Hindi or Punjabi in all Churches on 1st or 2nd Sunday of Advent.

Given on Friday 26.11.2021 at the Bishop's House, Chandigarh.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+Ignatius L. Mascarenhas
Bishop of Simla Chandigarh



NB:

1. On 8.12.2021, Wednesday, we will have twin celebrations, viz: conclusion of the Year of St. Joseph and the Diaconate Ordination of two brothers.

The Diaconate Ordination of Bros. Sukwinder Masih and Robert is on 08.12.2021 at 4pm at Yesu Daya Sagar Prarthana Bhawan, Kauli. Religious Priests and nuns in and around Kauli along with all the Diocesan priests are invited for the same and kindly inform Fr. Powlish as to how many persons are coming for the same from your communities so that he can make arrangements for Dinner.

2. We have a new Congregation of Oblate Sisters of St. Antony of Padua (OSAP), who have joined the Diocese and are serving in St. Francis Ashram, Renuka, Himachal Pradesh with the Capuchin Priests Fr. Alex OFM Cap and team.

3. Due to rise of corona cases in the region, I again recommend not to have the carol singing in neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, if any Priest still wants to have the carol singing, please keep it on a low key with precautions following strict Government protocols for Covid-19. Please be sensitive to the people of other faiths in your parishes and with respect to Covid protocols.

4. Christmas Get-together for the Priests and religious working in the diocese will be intimated to you depending on the Covid situation.