

Bishop's Message

Dear Fathers and Sisters,

I take this opportunity to greet you all again in the new year that has just dawned. May the good Lord bless all and each one of us abundantly throughout this year.

Let me also request you to pass on my greetings to your parishioners and members of the religious communities.



I would like to describe this year as a year of Great Expectations. We expect changes in our own individual lives, in the lives of the people to whom we are serving and to the people of our nation at large. Primarily we expect a political change to take place this year. In his message of Peace issued on the occasion the 52nd World Day of Peace, celebrated on the first day of January, Pope Francis called for **“good politics at the service of peace”**. Reading in our context, the entire message of the Holy Father appears like a pointer to define our current national and regional politics. Politics in our country has become threatening and oppressive to the common man and woman. The *Hindutva* ideology exercised by the central and many of the state governments has scant regard for our Constitution. Religious fundamentalism has taken center stage. Freedom of individuals to practise their own religion and the freedom to express their views are under constant threat. Hate politics is let loose freely and it has brought about havoc everywhere. The fringe elements of certain political parties are on the streets to lynch and murder the innocents on flimsy grounds.

The economic power of the corporate bodies has gained so much political power that it dictates terms to the governments in their policy making. Existence of the common man like the farmers, the fisher folk, women, the minorities the *dalits* etc. has become v[^]ry precarious.

This scenario cannot continue. Nor can it be left to continue any further. It has to change. The call of Yahweh to Moses to make a definite intervention in the history of Israel's Egyptian slavery made a revolutionary change in their lives. Similarly, in this new year we are all called to play a definitive political role to effect a regime change in our country. Our people have to be made aware of their political responsibility to exercise their power by voting out the anti-people governments. Not alone of course, but in solidarity with the people of good will, groups and movements which are aspiring for change and for good days to arrive. Election for change should become the slogan of the day.

On January 15 we shall be celebrating the Tamil festival of *Pongal*. Pongal is a festival of thanksgiving to God for the gift of nature and the fruits of nature extracted through hard work. Not only farmers but also the livestock which help the farmers to plough the land are honoured during

Pongal. We all join the farmers of Tamil Nadu in thanking God for the innumerable gifts bestowed on us. Farming operation has become an arduous job in India. The delta region, hitherto known as the food basket of India is dry. Farmers are in deep distress. Let the festival of Pongal bring them renewed hope and joy in their lives.

Wanton destruction of nature in the name of development is another evil that is tarnishing mother earth. The rapacious selfish intent of the corporates in collusion with the political class in projecting this kind of pseudo-development has to be fought against. In our diocese we had coined 'Save Nature and Live with Nature' as the theme for our annual reflection and action last year. All the pastoral commissions have done a commendable job in getting the theme across our people. In our homilies also we have been highlighting it. As a continuation of this theme, we have focused on 'Health and life with Nature' for reflection and action this year. On 29th December 2018, representatives of all the diocesan commissions sat for a day in planning their work for this year. I am confident that all of us will study and explain this theme to our people throughout this year.

Let me once again wish you all an eventful year and a joyous Pongal.

In the mind of Christ,

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Bishop Nazarene Soosai.