
In this Holy Year of Mercy, the savings through fasting and abstinence should be collected for charity activities. Every parish should make the arrangements for the same. The amount collected through the Lenten Campaign in each Parish has to be utilized for charity endeavours in consultation with the Parish Committee.

We should prepare ourselves in this Lenten Season to obtain complete indulgence declared in the Holy Year through pilgrimage to the Holy Door. The pilgrimage should culminate in general confession, reception of Holy Qurbano, recital of the Nicene Creed, meditative reading of the Holy Bible, reciting the prayer of mercy and one *kauma* in the intentions of the Holy Father.

Wish you all a blessed Lenten Season. May God bless you abundantly!

May God bless you all abundantly! May all these be fulfilled through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and of the Apostles, especially the Blessed Apostle St Thomas, our Guardian, and all the saints, especially of St Ephrem, the Patron of our Exarchate!

Your humble servant in the service of the Lord,



✠ **Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC**

Apostolic Exarch

Exarchate of St Ephrem, Khadki-Pune

25.01.2016
Khadki-Pune

N.B. : *This circular should be read in all our parishes and mission centres on Sunday, 7 February, during the Holy Qurbano.*

*By the Grace of God and the favour of the Holy See
and in communion with Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis,
the Father and Head of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church
and its Holy Episcopal Synod
From the Apostolic Exarch of the Exarchate of St Ephrem, Khadki-Pune,
Aboon Thomas Mar Anthonios Metropolitan
Blessings to the Priests, the Religious, the Seminarians and the Faithful
in the jurisdiction of the Exarchate!*



Prot. No. PL 01/2016

Dear Rev. Fathers, Religious, Seminarians and beloved Faithful,

We are entering the Season of the Great Lent. We try to grow in depth in our spiritual life observing lent, fast and prayers. Let us observe the Great Lent of this year together with the spirit of the Extra-Ordinary Jubilee Year, the Holy Year of Mercy.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis has declared the Holy Year through the Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae vultus*. The call of Jesus, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36), is given as the motto of the Holy Year. Through this, the Holy Father reminds us that as Jesus Christ is the merciful face of God the Father, the Holy Church should be the face of the merciful God. The attitude of Jesus Christ, “For I have come to call not the righteous, but the sinners” (Matthew 9:13), teaches that He came down to fulfil the will of God the Father and He is merciful to humanity as His merciful Father.

The God we encounter in the Holy Bible is infinitely merciful. A God who accompanies Israel forgiving their sins! The Lord is “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). Mercy is the bridge between God the Father and the humankind. Jesus Christ is the face of this mercy. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them” (Matthew 9:36). He healed the sick who were brought to him and he multiplied bread to feed them when they were hungry (Matthew 14:14; 15:37). He performs miracles for the widow and the leper standing before him... Jesus, who has come to give life and to give it abundantly, through the sacrifice of his life, shares continually the ultimate mercy of God.

In the spirituality and liturgical celebrations of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church, mercy is the profound attitude in the God-man relationship. A Malankara Catholic faithful standing before the mercy of God always prays ‘*Kurielaison*’ which means ‘Lord, have mercy on us’. In the Trisagion, after singing ‘who was crucified for us, have mercy on us,’ we pray always ‘Our Lord have mercy on us, Our Lord have pity and mercy on us, Our Lord receive our service and prayers and have mercy on us’. The merciful God answers us who knock at His door.

My beloved! We should observe the Great Lent of this year in this context. Our prayers, fasting, lent, abstinence and almsgiving should be imbued with mercy. We should imbibe the mercy of the Triune God through Bible reading, participation in the Holy Qurbano, making regular confession and partaking in other Sacraments. We should be able to share the mercy which we receive from God who mercifully receives us as the prodigal son, with our

brethren. This great lent will transform into an unending ocean of mercy if, along with prayers and lent, we can reach out to the needy, lend our ears to the lonely, spend some time with the aged, visit the sick, be a consolation for those who grieve the death of their beloved, support one who is financially broken and share a sincere smile with a stranger who comes on our way.

At this time when the Church reflects deeply and teaches on family life, it is necessary that all the members of the family strictly observe the Lent and pray together earnestly.

Let me bring to your notice the prevailing rule to observe the Lent: “Abstain from meat on all days of the Great Lent. Abstain from fish and egg on the first Monday of the Lent (*Shubkono*), on all Fridays of the Lent and on days from 40th Friday to Easter. On Good Friday, besides what are mentioned above, give up milk and milk products. Those who have completed 21 years of age and those who are below 60 years should fast till noon on the first Monday and on all Fridays of the Lent. Fasting is not compulsory for those who are sick, pregnant and engaged in hard labour”. We have a tradition of sanctifying ourselves through observing the Lent very strictly abstaining from meat, fish, egg, milk and milk products. Observing Lent in this spirit is a great blessing.

We should stay away from all sorts of celebrations and extravaganzas during the Season of Lent. Special permission has to be sought from the Apostolic Exarch in cases prescribed by law. All parish priests should ensure that the Lenten prayers are recited and acts of penance are observed in their parishes. I exhort everyone to pursue the Lent in the liturgical spirit of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church.