

Bishop's Message

**Dear Fathers, Sisters and Brothers,
Greetings!**

Gandhi Jayanti, on October 2 this year is unique for a specific reason. One hundred years ago on this day, the barrister Gandhi shed his ostentatious and alienating western attire and took to a single loin cloth worn by the oppressed masses of India. This historic decision which he made in Tamil Nadu put him closer to the masses and elevated him to the status of a *Mahatma*. Gandhiji's life and contributions have inspired millions all over the world. He can neither be erased from Indian history, as some would wish to, nor from human history. Such is the power that he wields among people. We, as agents of social change, do have the bounden duty to pass on Gandhi's message of peace and coexistence to our younger generation. Let me wish you all a hope filled Gandhi Jayanti.



Someone similar to Gandhi in our current times is our Holy Father Francis. Every move that he takes to renew the church has endeared him not only to Catholics but also to the other Christians and to the sisters and brothers of other religions too, not without detractors anyhow. The themes that he touches upon in his encyclicals, letters and statements have made far reaching impact on the global society. The most noticeable focus of his efforts is to make the church a church of the people and of the poor.

In this context, Pope Francis has announced convening of the 16th synod of Bishops already way back in April this year. It will be a decentralized synod in tune with the collegial experience of the Second Vatican Council. The central themes of the synod are **communion, participation and mission**. It is a synodal journey in three phases encompassing laity/people, pastors and the Bishop of Rome: **“one listening to the others; and all listening to the Holy Spirit”**.

The Synod will be formally launched on October 9-10 in Vatican by Holy Father Francis.

First is the Diocesan Phase where consultation with and participation of the people of God will take place. This phase will begin on Sunday, 17 or in

any day fitting to local conditions. First phase will continue up to April 2022 during which period voice of the people will be heard and their views will be consolidated and sent to the Indian Bishops Conference. Secretariat of the synod will send a preparatory document, questionnaire to consult with the people of God. Bishops of the dioceses will appoint a contact person and a team to coordinate the process of consultation and liaison with other ecclesial bodies. Fruits of the consultation will be consolidated and sent to the National Episcopal Conferences.

Second is the Continental Phase: dialogue and discernment. This will take place from September 2022 to March 2023. During this phase the consolidated views received from the dioceses will be perused and sent to the Vatican which in turn will send it to the Continental Bishops. The aim of this phase is to engage in dialogue on the draft received. At the end of their discussions, each continental grouping will draft a final document and send to the General Secretariat of the synod in March 2023.

Third is the Universal Phase: Bishops of the world in Rome. The synodal journey will reach the final phase, scheduled to take place from September 2022 to March 2023. Culmination of the synod will be on October 2023 with the Assembly of Bishops.

During this post Covid world which is in shatters, the 16th Synod is expected to absorb the *vox populi* and discern on their aspirations. Although the local churches handled the Covid crisis in their own ways, the response of the universal church will add greater relevance and credit to the existence of Church in the world. The task is arduous. It is the call of God to respond to the times. Church has to infuse new hope into the world and provoke new and relevant action programme. If only everyone listens to the Spirit and act according to his dictates, the synod will have far reaching effect in the church and the world society at large.

Dear Fathers, once again let me remind and invite you to participate in the forthcoming retreat with a deep sense of faith and hope.

Prayers.

In the mind of Christ,

Sd/-

+ Nazarene Soosai

Bishop of Kottar