

Holy Muron Qurbana (Diocese of Chanda)

Bishop's Homily

27.03.2018

My dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people,

Holy Muron Qurbana is an important occasion of our communion in Christ Jesus, and renewal of our missionary commitment as Christians, the members of the mystical body of Christ. This celebration of the blessing of Holy Muron has a special significance for all priests working in the diocese as it points to their special relation with the bishop in the ministry of serving the people with salvation of souls as primary duty of priests in pastoral field. The Eastern Code of Canon Law, 281/1 states as follows (I quote): "The pastor is to be a presbyter to whom, as the principal co-operator of the eparchial bishop, is entrusted the care of souls as their proper shepherd in a determined parish under the authority of the same eparchial bishop" (unquote) "Care of souls" is our primary duty and every missionary of Christ should participate in this ministry by their whole hearted cooperation. Accordingly we are called to nourish our people by proclaiming the word, administering the sacraments and leading them in the right path showing the way to the kingdom of God. Needless to say that visit to villages and individual families is the pre-requisite to accomplish this task. The evangelist Mathew beautifully narrates it in ch. 9:35-36 (I quote) "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd". It was Jesus' style and our pioneering missionaries in Chanda followed it. We are called to follow the suit. The care of souls is our primary task, divine mission and pivotal to our ministry.

The three important aspects of the "care of souls" are: (i) Formation of Eucharistic communities, (ii) Men and women of prayer in personal and communal level and (iii) Nourish people of God with the divine word. Let me explain them, one by one.

- I. **Formation of Eucharistic Communities:-** It is with this purpose in view that we have declared 2018 as the *Aaradhana Varsh*. Holy Eucharist is the sacramental presence of Christ among us. In the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant reminded the people, of the presence of God amidst them. Exodus chapters 26-27 beautifully narrate the tent of Lord's presence. Today the tabernacle takes the place of Tent of the OT and you and I, are invited by the sacrament of holy baptism, to be the mobile tabernacles – carrying the presence of Christ among people. We have to seriously reflect and examine our conscience, how far we are faithful to this mission? Let us avail the opportunity of *Aaradhana Varsh* to adore the Lord and share the fragrance of presence of Christ in us through our works of charity, compassion and love. We must be able to proclaim as St. Paul did (2 Cor. 2:15) "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing". Indeed the theme of today's talk very much places us in the context: "Eucharistic Worship as the Lord's invitation to overcome idol worship". Let us break the idols of mammon of our lives. May the *Aaradhana Varsh* facilitate it better, to transform us the bearers of Christ, forming Eucharistic communities in our parishes.
- II. **Men and women of prayer in personal and communal life:-** As Christians, priests, religious, and missionaries, we are called to be men and women of prayer. We have to lead people into prayer and lead prayer for the people. Unless there is a habit of personal prayer we cannot

effectively lead people in prayer and pray for our people above all. Generally the prayer is understood as communication with God, indeed it is truly life in the presence of God – a prayer consciousness. St. Paul exhorts “pray constantly” (1 Thess 5:17). The question Jesus asks Peter: “Simon, are you asleep? Weren’t you able to stay awake even for an hour?” (Mk 10:37), should reverberate in our minds and should inspire us to be men and women of prayer. Then Jesus said to them: “Keep watch, and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mk 14:38). Prayer, supports against wild desires of human flesh and orientate towards divine inspiration. It is God’s work, God expects human cooperation. Let us again and again insist on the importance of daily prayer in personal life and in family life as well as in our communities. 2017 as Year of Family Prayer has embarked a spirit and enthusiasm in Family Prayer in our diocese. Let us follow it up sincerely and faithfully.

III. Nourish people of God with the divine word:- The power of the word of God is superbly great. “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”(Heb. 4:12). The word of God is living, powerful, forgiving, loving, transforming, reconciling, dispelling darkness, knowing everything, turning sorrow into joy, etc. It has never failed. It yields fruit. It never returns ineffectively. As prophet Isaiah reminds us in 55:11 "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it ". Let us recall the words of St. Augustine: “Holy Bible is the love letter to the human kind”. God's love is perfumed and permeated in the Bible which contains God's words. In this context, particularly next year 2019 it is proposed to observe as the ‘Year of Bible Reading - *Bible Vaachan Varsh* ’ in our diocese. We have to ask ourselves: what is my attitude towards this word? What is my aptitude for this word? How far and how deep has the word sunk into me, into my life, in my ministry, in my family, in my community, and in my human relations. The word is faithful and it brings to effect what it intends. We have to develop the culture of daily reading of the word, meditating it, praying it and studying it, above all proclaiming it. St. Paul’s assertion: “If I do not preach, woe to me” (1 Cor 9:16). “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the word of God” (Rom 10:15). How beautiful are my feet? Let us transform ourselves to be men and women who proclaim the word by mouth and by action. That is our priority. Our pioneering missionaries have done it and we are enjoying the fruit of their labour. Let us follow their footsteps and be evangelizers rather than social workers – indeed our social apostolate, education and healing ministries are meant to proclaim the word of God. Let us try to be more and more faithful to our mission and avail every opportunity in our ministry to do our mission – i.e. evangelization, proclamation of the word. Let us live the word in life and proclaim it in place – in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2)

So dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people, the Holy Muroq Qurbana in the year 2018 instil in us, inspire us and invigorate us to be men and women who form Eucharistic communities, who witness Christian prayer in personal life and community/ family and living pillars that radiate divine wisdom by our preaching of the word of God.

God bless every one of you. Amen