



Peace be with you all!

I find we are blessed to live in a place where the victory of light against the darkness is so evident after Christmas. One of my formators, who had been a missionary in South America for many years, shared with us students how difficult it was for him, a northerner, to celebrate the Nativity when actually the days were the longest of the year. It is so encouraging to see the sunlight being more present everyday. It gives us real hope that spring is coming and that we will witness the resurrection of nature as well as Christ's victory over death.

For many years now, I have kept a small globe of the earth around my desk or a map of the world in my office to remind me of the vision the Lord has on the world. It is so easy to concentrate on our personal problems and not realize that we are part of such a great vision God has for us. When we do look up to see his plan, not only do we realize how huge it is, but how amazingly he also cares personally about each of us, our family, our local church, our town... That does not solve our problems but it surely gives hope, knowing that he is faithful to his children. It also inspires us to be like him and be there for others around us.

Sometimes I wish you were all with me as I discover what is happening in the Church when I participate in bishops' meetings or church events as your archbishop. God is working in our world. It usually ends up in the news, but we might not realize it when it is submerged in so many sad stories. I never realized how bishops, together and as individuals, are involved with so many issues trying to make the world a better place for all.

That is actually why Jesus instituted the apostles: to be signs of unity with him in every part of the world they might be sent.

I look forward to what God is preparing for us in the coming months. Lent is coming and it will reveal to us, among many things, all the adults who have started preparing for baptism or who have asked to join the Catholic Church from another Christian faith. Their search and response to God's call is so encouraging. May they be welcomed with open arms in our communities. They may challenge us with their new found zeal, their questions and their presence. That is good.

Three young men are preparing to become priests in our diocese and they are so close to being ordained. Deacon Thomas Wollis will be ordained a priest sometime in the Easter season. Brother Paul Edo-Aranmude and Brother R.J. Mallannao are just waiting to receive their Permanent Residency in Canada. We hope that this will happen in the next few months. Please keep them in your prayers.

Keep praying also for those God is calling to the different vocations. We need good priests, parents, deacons, sisters, brothers and missionaries who will go to other countries in our name.

I will be continuing Archbishop Pettipas' tradition of visiting a deanery every year. After Easter, I will spend 3 weeks in deanery 5, the most northern region of the archdiocese. I look forward to discovering this region that I have not had the blessing of visiting very much up to now.

The season for confirmations is also around the corner which will allow me to go to many churches and meet with the young women and men who want to fully take part in the work of the Church in today's world.

Finally, what will Lent and Easter transform in our personal lives this year as we faithfully follow Jesus to the cross and to the resurrection? We can look at these seasons of the Church just as periods we have to move through. Or we can let them transform a corner of our lives to make us better instruments in God's hands. It might not always be easy, but it usually brings more happiness to our lives. And let us not forget what Jesus said on the day of Ascension: "... remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Blessings to you and your loved ones.

In Jesus our Saviour,

+ *Charles J. Duval CSC*

