



Shepherd's Voice

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Wednesday, 18 February 2026 was Ash Wednesday, ushering us into Lent. For us, in this diocese, it was also a day of mourning, as we bade a sad but fond farewell to Fr Joseph Alexander, who died suddenly, leaving us in a state of shock and grief. These two events are a simple coincidence, but the Lord speaks precisely in and through such coincidences. The Lord certainly has a profound message for all of us collectively as a Church and to each of us individually as His disciples, struggling sincerely to be faithful, but often failing, because we are human, and, therefore, finite, fragile, flawed and fallible.

Ash Wednesday is almost universally underrated in its power to redeem, by repairing, reconciling, remedying, re-building and renewing. Of course, we go through the ritual, but forget it's spirituality. The truth is, that against a backdrop of infinite possibilities and imagined cyber-immortality, the Church dares to say something unfashionable and unpalatable and at the same time, undeniable: "You are dust, and you will certainly return to dust." It is an insistence on finitude. As St Teresa of Avila says: "Every creature passes; God alone surpasses". This is not to dampen the spirits or add to the modern anxieties. Rather, it is an invitation to accept the truth about what it means to be human. In a culture increasingly oriented toward the denial of all limits, and where mortality is treated either as a technical problem to be solved or as an inconvenience to be ignored, the Church says: "You are a miracle of God's creation, and yet, you are fragile, flawed, fallible and finite". The Church simply names our condition as human beings: We are creatures, and we are finite.

In the Latin liturgy, the ancient formula of dust returning to dust has now been replaced with: "Repent and Believe in the Good News". But many other Churches have Ash Wednesday Prayers that name our failings and our striving to change: "We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed. We acknowledge our self-indulgent appetites and selfish ways, and our exploitation of other people, our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, our use of people as objects for our own selfish gratification, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us." This prayer is indeed a heartfelt expression of the formula: "Repent and believe in the Good News".

We are called to continue to reflect on and pray about the things our liturgy names: sin; repentance; forgiveness. Repentance has a public aspect and a private aspect. Ash Wednesday is when we acknowledge, before God and one another, our mortality, our finitude and our moral failings. The ashes make me name the truths publicly that I have sinned; also, that I have a body, and I am going to die. To walk around all day with a cross on your head is to walk around in a body inscribed with death. It is also to walk around inscribed with the hope that comes through Jesus' having joined us in our mortality.

The Spirituality of Ash Wednesday is the spirituality of death and resurrection, human fragility and divine strength; sin, forgiveness, redemption and hope. It begins with a simple truth: You are dust and to dust you shall return, and a gentle call: "Repent! And believe in the Good News!". By reminding us what we truly are, weak, wounded, vulnerable and sinful, mortal dust, it puts us back among the

pilgrim souls on Earth, wandering toward redemption. In facing death, each of us, layperson, religious or priest, has to acknowledge what has gone wrong with us, individually and collectively, and what or Who can set us right. Here comes the relevance and timeliness of the priest's Ash Wednesday admonition: Repent and believe in the gospel.

Here is also the danger for those of us who are professional preachers. We may preach beautiful sermons which bring us acclaim, appreciation and accolades. But we may not practice what we preach. We need to remember what the ordaining Bishop told us at our Diaconal Ordination, and also at our ordination to the ministerial priesthood: "Receive the Word of God. Read what you receive. Believe what you read. Preach what you believe. Practice what you preach. And may your life be like that of Christ Crucified".

If we do not heed this call from God given to us through the ordaining prelate; if we do not make any effort to pattern our daily lives on the life of Christ Crucified; if we go on and on in our sermons about the values of the Gospel and at the same time live our lives in a thoroughly worldly way, relentlessly in pursuit of profit, pleasures and positions of power, then, we certainly merit the terrible title Jesus repeatedly utters in the Ash Wednesday Gospel, "Hypocrite". Who is a hypocrite? The hypocrite is one who preaches to others but does not practice himself. Hypocrite is one who pretends and proclaims to be who he is really not. Hypocrite is one who goes about wearing a mask in order to hide the truth about himself.

Lent is a call to us to turn from hypocrisy to holiness; an opportunity for us to go back to our original innocence, our first love, our early motivation in opting for the priesthood and religious life. It is a season for radical conversion. It is a call to make a decisive break with consumerism, corruption, careerism, competition, conflict and clericalism, and strive after simplicity, sacrifice, surrender and service. May this Lent prove to be a time of real change for all of us, a time of repentance, reconciliation, reform and renewal. "Repent! And Believe in the Good News".

✠ **Francis Serrao, SJ**
Bishop of Mysore

EVENTS

Solemnity of St. Joseph

On March 19, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, the chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the foster father of Jesus, chosen by God to play a unique and silent yet powerful role in the history of salvation. Called "chaste spouse" for his pure, faithful, and selfless love, he accepted Mary and the Child Jesus with deep trust and humble obedience to God's will. A model of faith, silence, humility, dignity of work, and family responsibility, St. Joseph is honoured as the Patron of the Universal Church, workers, fathers, and a happy death. On this feast, we entrust our families and our Diocese to his loving intercession, praying that we may live in purity, humility, and faithful obedience to God's holy will.

Feast of the Annunciation

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, celebrated each year on March 25, commemorates the moment described in the Gospel (Luke 1:26-38), when the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to the Virgin Mary in Nazareth to announce that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and bear Jesus, the Son of the Most High. Though initially troubled, Mary responded with humble faith and courageous obedience, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." Through her generous "YES," the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, marking a decisive moment in salvation history. This feast reminds us of God's loving plan for humanity and invites us, like Mary, to listen attentively, trust deeply, and respond generously to God's will, knowing that even a simple and faithful "YES" can transform the course of history.

Holy Week

This year, we begin the Holy Week on 29 March with Palm Sunday. It is the holiest week of the Christian year, inviting us to reflect deeply on the sacrificial love of God and to return to Him with sincere and repentant hearts.

Palm Sunday - 29 March 2026

Palm Sunday marks Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, where He was welcomed with palm branches and joyful cries of "Hosanna." Yet, the humble King who entered on a donkey also begins His journey toward the Cross. The day calls us to welcome Christ into our lives with faith, devotion, and commitment.

IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING

Rev. Fr. Joseph Alexandar returned to eternal abode.

On 15th February 2026 Fr Joseph Alexander was brought by his parishioners at midnight from a village parish to Mysuru as he was complaining of pain in the chest and was sweating profusely. He already had a mild cardiac attack.

On arrival at Manipal Hospital, Mysuru, the doctors found his sugar level had gone up unusually high (above 1000) and his blood pressure was fluctuating. Angiography revealed that his heart had three major blocks. Immediately a stent was placed to make the blood flow. Subsequently his sugar level was brought down to 700, however his B.P. was refusing to get stabilized. He was kept in the ICU under observation and treatment and the doctors were closely monitoring his health. Yesterday he gave the signs of improvement and the doctors gave us the hope of his getting discharged today. On 18th February 2026 morning at 7.55 he had another cardiac attack followed by the next. The Bishop anointed him at 8.30 am and at 9.00 am he gently slipped into eternity. He was 62. We lost a gentle, frugal and a committed Priest. RIP.

As per the tradition of the Diocese all the priests of the Diocese are requested to

celebrate three Holy Masses for the repose of the soul of Fr. Joseph Alexandar.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

International Women's Day Celebration

"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30). As we mark International Women's Day on March 8, we gratefully recognize the dignity, strength, and invaluable contributions of women in the family, Church, and society-mothers, sisters, leaders, teachers, and peacemakers who shape the future with courage and love. The Women's Commission of the Diocese of Mysore warmly invites all women from our parishes and institutions to the Women's Day Celebration on 21 March 2026, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., at St. Philomena's College Indoor Stadium, Mysore. This diocesan gathering will feature prayer, inspirational talks, cultural programmes, and fellowship, offering an opportunity to thank God for the gift of women and to encourage one another in faith and service. Parish priests, religious communities, and heads of institutions are kindly requested to motivate and send representatives to participate actively. Let us unite in gratitude and joy, honouring and empowering the women of our Diocese, and commit ourselves to building a society where every woman is respected, protected, and upheld in equal dignity. Happy Women's Day to all the women in our diocese.

Clergy Recollection & Chrism Mass

All priests serving in the Diocese are invited to participate in the Clergy Recollection beginning at 4.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 25 March 2026, at the Catholic Centre, with a programme consisting of arrival and tea at 4.00 p.m., a spiritual talk from 4.30 to 5.30 p.m., Adoration and Confessions from 6.00 to 7.30 p.m., followed by supper and the Rosary at 7.30 p.m. On Thursday, 26 March 2026, the Chrism Mass will be celebrated at St. Joseph's Cathedral at 7.00 a.m., offering a significant moment to manifest the unum presbyterium - the unity and oneness of the

diocesan priesthood. All priests, including religious clergy, as well as a good number of the faithful, are earnestly requested to participate in this solemn and meaningful celebration.

Admissions to the Diocesan Minor Seminary

With deep pastoral concern and hope for the future of our Diocese, I earnestly request each of you to foster a renewed culture of vocation within your respective parishes and communities. Kindly encourage our young people - especially boys who are completing their 10th Standard - to prayerfully consider joining the Minor Seminary of our Diocese and to discern the noble call to serve the People of God as priests. Your personal witness, guidance, and gentle invitation can make a profound difference in the hearts of these young minds. I also humbly appeal that you speak to parents, helping them to see priestly vocation not as a loss but as a grace and blessing for the family and the Church, and encourage them to be generous in offering their children for this sacred mission. May we work together to nurture authentic vocations so that the Lord's vineyard may never lack dedicated and holy labourers.

Instructions Regarding Collections

Parish priests are kindly requested to ensure that the following collections are duly taken and remitted as indicated:

➤ ***The collections during the Holy Mass on Palm Sunday are to be sent to the diocese for the purpose of Communion contribution to be sent to CCBI. A/C name: "Bishop and Procurator".*** All the religious communities are requested to contribute from their communities for this cause directly to the bishop's house.

Your cooperation in faithfully adhering to these directives is greatly appreciated.

Diocesan Level Activities Commission Activities Year of Faith 2026 - Diocese of Mysore

- 1. Legion of Mary / Pious Associations - Diocesan Level Year of Faith Renewal Programme.**
Date: 6th, 7th & 8th March 2026
Place: Catholic Centre, Mysuru
- 2. Vocation Promoters Meeting**
Date: 7th March 2026
Place: Catholic Centre, Mysuru
- 3. Diocesan Level Marriage Preparation Programme**
Schedule: Second Saturday & Sunday of every month
Place: Catholic Centre, Mysuru
- 4. BEC Commission**
There will be Deanery-Level BEC Orientation Programmes conducted in all the Deaneries in the month of March- 2026.
- 5. Charismatic Renewal Programme**
Date: 15th March 2026
Place: Catholic Centre, Mysuru
- 6. All Diocesan Commissions Secretaries meeting.**
Date: 18th March 2026
Place: Catholic Centre, Mysuru
- 7. Diocesan Women's Day Celebration**
Date: Saturday, 21st March 2026
Time: 9.30 a.m. - 2.30 p.m.
Venue: St. Philomena's Indoor Stadium.
- 8. Bible & Liturgical Instruction Class for Laity**
Schedule : Every 3rd Sunday of the Month
Place : Catholic Centre, Mysuru

PRIESTS BIRTHDAY IN THE MONTH OF MARCH

Rev. Fr. Jacob Kollanoor	-	12-03-1954
Rev. Fr. Vijay Raj Jaunet	-	19-03-1983
Rev. Fr. Angelo Pais	-	25-03-1946
Rev. Fr. Anthonappa Chinnappa	-	30-03-1964



SANMAARGI - Diocesan Bishop's House

3845/M2, Nelson Mandela Road, Raajamaarga, Near Highway Circle, Bannimantap 'C' Layout, Mysuru - 570 015,