

May 8, 2021

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

The COVID mayhem is at its height across the country, in our cities and towns. This sly monster has preyed upon many a dear lives among us despite our alertness and caution. Yet, we continue to persevere with faith in the Lord's promise, "Be not afraid. I am with you... my Peace I give you". This promise enables us to accept that death is not a failure; it is a process that leads to transformation of life. A lot of sadness comes to the surface upon the death of our loved ones, yet we know we have not lost them because of the Lord's assurance, "I shall draw everyone to myself"(Jn.12:32). So, allow the sadness to touch your heart, give yourself the space for mourning and very gently grieve the physical absence of our dear ones. Allow the power of Jesus' words, again, to strengthen you, "I am going away and then I will send the Spirit to you...your grief will turn to joy"(Jn16:7,20). It is very timely and blessed that as our faith is challenged by the stormy CoV pandemic, Holy Father Pope Francis sends his comforting words of his spiritual closeness and blessings to Indian people and in particular to catholic community. With grateful heart, let us pray for the Holy Father and join him in spirit to pray for the end of the pandemic. Prayerful wishes. +Eugene Joseph



APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
IN INDIA

*To Cardinal Oswald Gracias
Archbishop of Bombay
President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India*

At this time when so many in India are suffering as a result of the present health emergency, I am writing to convey my heartfelt solidarity and spiritual closeness to all the Indian people, together with the assurance of my prayers that God will grant healing and consolation to everyone affected by this grave pandemic.

My thoughts go above all to the sick and their families, to those who care for them, and in particular to those who are mourning the loss of their loved ones. I think too of the many doctors, nurses, hospital workers, ambulance drivers and those working tirelessly to respond to the immediate needs of their brothers and sisters. With deep appreciation I invoke upon all of them God's gifts of perseverance, strength and peace.

In a particular way, I am united to the Catholic community in your country, with gratitude for its works of charity and fraternal solidarity carried out in the service of all; I think especially of the generosity shown by so many committed young people. I join you in commending to the Lord's infinite mercy the faithful who have lost their lives, not least the great numbers of priests and men and women religious. In these days of immense grief, may we all be consoled in the hope born of Easter and our unshakeable faith in Christ's promise of resurrection and new life. To all I send my blessing.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 6 May 2021

FRANCISCUS