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TO THE CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS OF THE DIOCESE OF RATNAPURA

Dear Rev Fathers and Sisters

God's Blessings and Fraternal Greetings

We are about to begin a new Liturgical Year with the commencement of the Holy Season of Advent next Sunday the 29th of this month. First of all I wish you all a prayerful, fruitful and joyful Season of Advent which will carry all of us through to a meaningful celebration of the Birth of our loving Xavier, Jesus Christ at C Christmas

1. The Season of Advent this year assumes a special significance for us with the declaration of the **Year of Mercy, the Extraordinary Jubilee Year with the ceremonial Opening of the Door of Mercy, as desired and proposed by our Holy Father Pope Francis**. This is scheduled for the 8th of December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. However, we are allowed to have this ceremony on the following Sunday the 13th December in order to have a better participation of the people.

2. Thus our Committee for the Year of Mercy, headed by me, made the following decisions at its meeting on the 16th December this year:

A) Our Cathedral as the Mother Church of the Diocese will be the Centre of the Jubilee Year. It will have the ceremonial Opening of the Door of Mercy and the Declaration of the Jubilee Year on Tuesday the 8th December, presided over by me.

B) For the convenience of the people, the Committee also decided on two more Shrines in the Diocese for the opening of the Door of Mercy, namely Kudagama and Tanjantenna. These two Shrines of Our Lady will have the ceremony on Sunday the 13th December, presided over by Very Rev Fr Sergius Fernando, Episcopal Vicar for Religious at the ceremony at Kudagama, and Very Rev Fr Damian Fernando, Vicar General, at the ceremony at Tanjantenna.

C) It is up to the presiding celebrants and parish priests to communicate with each other and fix a suitable time for the ceremony, which includes also the Holy mass.

3. Please note. The priests are very earnestly requested never to allow any families or individuals to occupy our Diocese-related vacant houses or buildings. This will lead to insurmountable problems. Our experience has been always bitter in solving them. You are welcome to help families or individuals to build houses in their own premises, but not to permit them to occupy our houses/buildings.

Rev.Fr. Anushka Nishan Fernando
Secretary to the Bishop of Ratnapura,
(Diocese of Ratnapura)
Madola,
Avisawella.

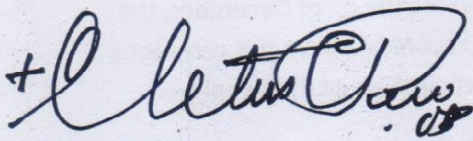
4. The Parish Priests and Directors/Coordinators of various apostolates, who receive funds from the Procurator for their respective projects, are earnestly requested to send a detailed report with relevant pictures, to Rev Fr Sanjeewa Peiris, Diocesan Projects Coordinator with a copy to me, once the project in question is completed. We need these reports for the purpose of accountability to the donor agencies which totally or partially help us financially to implement such projects. The donor agencies will not continue to help us without the reports of the projects, already completed, being regularly sent to them.

5. The Christmas Fellowship Get-together of the Religious Sisters will be held as scheduled on Monday the 14th December at 9.00 a.m., followed by lunch at the Bishop's House. All religious sisters, serving in the Diocese, are cordially invited. The committee, appointed for the purpose, will organize it

6. The Christmas Fellowship get-together of the Clergy will be held, as scheduled, on Tuesday the 15th December at 5.00 p.m. at Bulutota. All Priests, both diocesan and religious, are cordially invited. Those who wish to go there for lunch on the 15th December, are kindly requested to inform Rev r Emil Fernando about it.

With love and the assurance of my prayers,

Yours fraternally



Bishop of Ratnapura

Rev. Fr. Anushka Nishan Fernando
Secretary to the Bishop of Ratnapura
(Diocese of Ratnapura)
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