



CHURCH OF CEYLON

Diocese of Colombo

Rt. Revd Dhiloraj R. Canagasabey
Bishop of Colombo

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

Pastoral Letter 01/2013

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write this pastoral letter to you as your Bishop as we approach the 65th anniversary of our national independence. It is with a heavy heart that I write it, the reason being that in the past few days we have seen the complete collapse of the rule of law in our nation. We no longer appear to be a constitutional democracy.

The rule of law means that we as a nation are governed by a system of laws to which the lawmakers themselves are subject. This is a way of ensuring that power is not concentrated in the hands of one person (or group of persons) and exercised arbitrarily. The breakdown of such accountability is a process that has been building up for the past several years. It has now climaxed in the recent events that have seen both the Executive and the Legislature disregarding the provisions of the very Constitution which they swore to uphold and defend, giving the appearance of a country ruled on the principle that "Might is Right"

The numerous warnings that the Church, other religious organizations and civil society bodies repeatedly issued have been ignored. There is currently a climate of fear and helplessness, where people remain silent rather than speak out against rampant injustice, intimidation, violence and falsehoods.

We as a Christian Church cannot remain silent in this situation. Such silence will be dishonouring to our Lord and a betrayal of our identity as His people. I wish to remind you that right from the day of Pentecost, the Church has learnt to say that 'Jesus is Lord and not Caesar'. Often this has led to suffering and persecution. The Church must always be prepared for this eventuality.

There are many examples in the Bible and Christian history of persons who have refused to follow orders when they have contradicted God's moral law. Even in the Old Testament, Kings were expected to rule under a law which they themselves did not make and to which they were accountable (Deuteronomy 18; Psalms 72, etc.). Where rulers violated the law, God challenged them through prophetic men and women chosen and sent by him. The Church is called to be such a prophetic presence and voice in our local communities, our places of work, our schools and in the wider society

This is a time for us as a Church to take an honest look at ourselves, where we have shamelessly compromised our loyalty to God. We need to repent of ways in which we, as individuals as well as collectively, have;



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- been silent when we should have spoken
- allowed ourselves (thoughtlessly or out of fear) to be used by those in authority to speak lies or commit wrong and unjust acts
- consciously received benefits for ourselves through acts of injustice committed against others

I as your Bishop, call the Church to a period of lament together for the terrible state of our nation today, and repentance for our failing as a Church to “love mercy, to seek justice and to walk humbly with the Lord” (Micah 6:8).

I therefore propose that

(a) Sunday 3rd February 2013 be observed in all parishes within our Diocese as a Day of Lament. All services should have an extended time of silence, prayer and intercessions, to grieve over the state of our country today. Please encourage all parishioners to wear white and to fast wherever possible.

(b) We as a diocese will congregate on 4th February 2013 at 9am, dressed in white, for a service to continue our Time of Lament. Those who are unable to be present at the Cathedral for this service are encouraged to gather in their own churches at this time.

(c) I further propose that all parishes in our Diocese have a series of Bible studies, reflections and discussions during Lent, which is traditionally a period of self-examination and penitence, to reflect on what it means to live as a faithful disciple-community of Jesus in the context of our nation today.

I thank God for the calling he has given us to be faithful to Him. When others may be controlled by fear and helplessness, we must remember that our Lord who was crucified and suffered death was raised to new life offering hope to all.

In the words of St. Paul, “*Therefore my brethren stand firm and immovable, and work for the Lord always; work without limit since you know that in the Lord, your labour cannot be in vain*”

(1 Corinthians 15:58)

With Prayers and Christian Greetings!

+ *Thilo* Colombo

The Rt. Revd Dhiloraj Canagasabey
Bishop of Colombo

18th January 2013