

# THE GRADUATION DAY

## Basic and Advanced Liturgical Ministry Courses

This eagerly awaited occasion was held on Sunday, March 10, 2019 at Mount Mary's Convent Hall, Bandra. The event began with welcoming Bp. John Rodrigues, Fr. Wilfred D'Souza SDB and the other religious into our midst. Some of the candidates then performed a prayer dance which was followed by the lighting of the lamps by Bp. John Rodrigues, Fr. Wilfred D'Souza and all the religious present there. Mr. Maxim D'Cruz, staff and member of the ALC, gave the opening welcome. Fr. Wilfred D'Souza, the Secretary of the Archdiocesan Liturgy Committee then addressed the gathering, emphasizing on the key features of Pope Francis' exhortation 'Evangelii Gaudium' and "I have a dream" speech which begins thus: "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus".

It emphasises what Pope Francis wants Catholicism to be: more missionary, more merciful, and with the courage to change. He dreams of "a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world, rather than for her self-preservation." He calls for a church marked by a special passion for the poor and for peace and appeals to all baptized persons to bring Christ's love to others. He emphasises on the need for a "pastoral and missionary conversion" and a "renewal" of ecclesiastical structures to enable them to become "more mission-oriented", "a conversion of the papacy" through a "sound decentralization" and a "collaborative leadership" with a desire to listen to everyone. Pope Francis says the Eucharist "is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak", hence, the doors of the Church should always be wide open." He urges care for the weakest members of society: "the homeless, the addicted, refugees, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence and the unborn

children, the most defenceless and innocent among us. He calls on the church to face communal forces that deny the religious rights of people, to oppose income inequality and unemployment and to advocate for stronger environmental protection and care for nature. His ardent appeal is for “spirit-filled evangelizers”, who are “fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit” and who have “the courage to proclaim the Gospel with boldness”. “Only the person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary”.

In short, Pope Francis urges the Faithful to move from a “Maintenance Church” to a “Missionary Church” and to make the world a better place where justice, peace, harmony and care for creation are nurtured. He reminds the Family to always bear the Good News at home so that it can become a witness in the neighbourhood. It calls on the Youth to stay creative in mind, loving in heart, lively in their steps and loyal to the Church. It emphasises to the Clergy and Religious to be selfless missionary disciples shunning clericalism and careerism. There is so much richness in the Church in India - the fidelity, fervour and enthusiasm of so many lay groups keeps the Church vibrant; the heroic witness of the faith of so many ready to lay down their lives for Christ, the silent witness of so many lay people, consecrated persons and priests who live their commitment through the path of love. The challenge is to go to the peripheries and areas where the Church has not yet managed to reach and find means to reveal the “merciful face of Jesus’ instead of seeking security in Institutions. Fr. Wilfred ended with a reminder to the candidates of their personal call for mission - to promise that each one not only HAD a mission but would also BE a mission; that they would be the change that they wanted to see. He was also overjoyed to see the tremendous response and the great number of candidates from different Parishes all over Mumbai who completed the Course this year. He was also grateful to the families of the Candidates who had encouraged and supported them right through the Course.

A few candidates then gave their testimony on how the Liturgical Ministry Course had enriched their lives and made them more aware of Liturgical norms and how they had

found new purpose and meaning in their Ministry. This was followed by the entire group of Basic and Advanced Course candidates singing the Jesus Liturgy song and the Anthem. Bp. John Rodrigues then presented the candidates with their diplomas and in his address, he thanked the Candidates for their dedication and perseverance in completing the Course. He also thanked the Resource Persons for conducting interesting and informative sessions on Liturgy and he urged the Candidates to use the knowledge of this Course to enhance and strengthen the Liturgical aspects at their Parish and Community level. The Liturgy of the Hours was then prayed followed by the Vote of thanks. We were then treated to a sumptuous dinner.