

DIOCESE OF AGRA

BISHOP'S ADDRESS TO SIXTEENTH DIOCESAN COUNCIL

(2nd to 5th October 2006)

THEME: "PRIORITIES FOR THE FIRST DECADE OF 21ST CENTURY"

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

We extend a very hearty welcome to Office bearers, all members, guests and invitees to the XVI th assembly of Agra Diocesan Council. The Diocese is thirty years old now. It was inaugurated on 9th April, 1976. Like the Lord Jesus Christ, who was 30 years old when he left his household and launched out into full time ministry, Luke 3:23 the Diocese of Agra is also groomed and ready to launch out into full time ministry of the Lord.

The mission statement of the Diocese of Agra as written in Diocesan Constitution is – "The objects and purposes of the Diocese shall be to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and Master of the Church, for the salvation and good of all mankind through unity, witness and service which may include education, medical, social, agricultural and other services, and also through worship and other activities of the church which promote spiritual growth, self-reliance, social justice and moral regeneration irrespective of caste, creed or colour." Page-3) The Diocese has adopted seven priorities for the first decade of 21st century, so that our mission statement be made more specific, measurable and tangible. The priorities are:-

1. Re-juvenating Pastoral Ministry.
2. Evangelism within and without for costly discipleship.
3. Equipping God's people for Participatory learning process.
4. Solidarity with subaltern.
5. Ministry of Service.
6. Healing Communities.
7. Re-structuring the structure.

In these seven areas the Diocese has been groomed in the last biennium. Let us briefly examine our work and growth to see whether we measure upto the Stature of our Lord when he was thirty years of age.

1. **Re-juvenating Pastoral Ministry**: This priority has four goals to be achieved –
 - (A) To rediscover the unity and identity of CNI.
 - (B) To build worshipping communities with adequate pastoral care.
 - (C) To mobilize resources for support of Presbyters in the Diocese.
 - (D) to develop alternate forms of ministry.

(A) **Unity And Identity of CNI:**

Jesus prayed, "so that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me " (John 17:22-23). It has been a constant effort to train & provide Pastors who can heal estrangements within the body of Christ and promote unity & love. The polity of Church of North India is as stated in chapter II Sub-section B. Pages 31-32 Green Book.

"The Church of North India believes that Just as the Church of a whole region, being in fellowship with other regional churches, is ideally the embodiment of the Church Universal in that region So also in the purpose of God every local group of the faithful organized as Pastorate expresses in that place the life of the same one, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church."

(B) **To build worshipping communities with adequate pastoral care:**

During the biennium (2004-2006) two training conferences for Pastors were organized, one at Rajpur (Dehradun) and the other at Agra. There is a lot of importance being given to in-service training of Presbyters and Evangelists. In a world exploding with information and using information technology for professions, pastors and Evangelists can not remain uninformed and not updated. During the biennium, one Presbyter was added to the Diocesan fold and two new Evangelists have been added. Two Presbyters & one Evangelist have retired and one Evangelist Mr. Vijay Singh died while in service. During the biennium, two candidates were sent for theological training. Five Diocesan candidates are in theological Colleges who will qualify by April 2007.

(C) **To mobilize resources for support of Presbyters in the Diocese:**

The Diocese has a full time Stewardship Director working to encourage stewardship at Pastorate level. Many Pastorates have become more, conscious about tithing for the support of full time ministry. Resources other than "People's giving" are also being mobilized.

We must learn once for all, that there is no Foreign aid in the area of support for Church Presbyters and Evangelists. The Church of North India in the Diocese of Agra and all other Dioceses has to support & maintain its full time, trained ordained ministers and lay workers. Nothing less than tithing will be adequate for support of full time ministers.

(D) **To develop alternate forms of ministries** is a special calling of C.N.I. which believes in "Priest-hood of all believers" based on 1Peter 2:9. The Diocese so far, has tried Lay Leaders, full time paid Evangelists, Sunday

School teachers, full time paid teachers in Schools & Colleges, doctors & paramedic staff in Hospitals etc. During the biennium under review, in service training was provided to full time Evangelists and lay leaders of various Pastorates. Training of Lay-Leaders was done for the first time in the history of the Diocese. Training of Pastorate Committee members for various ministries was started during the 2002 – 2004 biennium. It can be resumed if you so desire.

Women of the Diocese, through W.F.C.S. want to start the ministry of "Home for the Aged." They do not know how to go about it. Do we want to support them with expertise and financial resources?

Priority No.2: EVANGELISM WITHIN AND WITHOUT FOR COSTLY DISCIPLESHIP: Under this priority, we had set the following three goals: -

- (A) Spiritual Revival within worshipping Communities.
- (B) Embodying and Exhibiting exemplary Life-Style.
- (C) To become a missionary Congregation.

(A) **Spiritual Revival:** - Jesus said, "The hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24)

There are some pre-requisites for worship in spirit and truth. The Scriptures mention these as: -

"Create in me a clean heart, O God
and put a new & right spirit within me do not
take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit

O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth will declare your praise

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."
(Psalm 51: 10-17)

Spiritual revival comes from God alone and such revival is expressed in our joyful & soulful worship. He cleanses us and gives us a new heart & a new spirit and then establishes His own spirit in our person (See Ezekiel 36:25-27). During the biennium under review, several efforts were made all over the Diocese to revive worshipping communities with spiritual revival. Since revival comes from God, our Father, therefore the most important efforts were –

- 0. Establishment of small Prayer & Bible study groups within congregations. These groups request God fervently for revival.
- 0. Several Conventions for spiritual revival were organized both in urban and rural Pastorates.
- 0. W.F.C.S. and Youth Conferences for spiritual revival were organised.
- 0. Praise and worship sessions were allowed and encouraged during traditional liturgical worship services.

(B) **Embodying and Exhibiting Exemplary Life-Style:**

Our real identity is that we are the parts/components of Body of Christ. Jesus Christ lives in us. Romans 12th Chapter explains how we are parts of Body of Christ. To make us exhibit the exemplary life of Jesus Christ, the spirit of God has endowed us all with various gifts of the spirit.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good." (Romans 12: 4-7) Also see Ephesians 4: 1-7- "..... lead a life worthy of your calling ----- each one was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift."

Now these gifts are given to build up the body of Christ, to equip the saints for the work of ministry – St. Paul Eph. 4:12-13. The gifts of the Spirit were utilized in the following areas to build up the body of Christ –

- 1. Regular Sunday School teaching, vacation Bible Schools and Children's annual assemblies for building up the Christian Character. Some

Diocesan Schools & Colleges also made special efforts to give Christian education to children on regular basis during the school days.

2. Regular and detailed teaching in Confirmation classes with a printed book containing the Syllabus.
3. Establishing Pastorate Youth Fellowships and organising Diocesan level Youth Conferences for teaching and up building Christian character in the face of several challenges, new values of life and life styles, epidemics such as H.I.V. other addictions & crimes, employment opportunities & career counselling, understanding human sexuality from biblical point of view etc.
4. Training of Licensed Lay Leaders. This was a new initiative during the biennium under review.
5. In service training of full time Lay Evangelist. Now Dip.C.S. has been made compulsory for full time Evangelists. Two new appointed Evangelists were trained at "Manna House" Banbassa(Distt. Champawat) Uttarakhand.
6. Family Retreats, theological debates on ethical issues, seminars and retreats for the congregations.

The Diocese tried its best to utilize its resources to build up the saints for the work of various ministries.

(C) To Become Missionary Congregations/Diocese:

Jesus' great commission to all his disciples is – "All authority in heaven & earth has been given to me. Go therefore & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am always with you to the end of the age." (Mtt. 28: 18-19)

Mission of God is global and it was expressed fully in the person & work of Jesus Christ. Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4:16-19 is the mission statement of the Lord and also the mission statement of the church which is the body of Christ.

The Church was called not to be a closed society of redeemed people, but to become the redeeming society for the rest of the world. In that sense the church was called to be the salt of the earth & the light of the world as also the leaven of kingdom of God on earth.

During the last biennium, through evangelistic outreach ministry 46 adults were baptised and received as new members of body of Christ. By Confirmation, 412 new communicant were added. The Diocese is supporting 20 full time Evangelists working in various villages & towns. Some congregations are being motivated to support some full-time Evangelists.

New Evangelistic Initiative: - The Diocese is working in partnership with 'Ministry of Gospel' a Society at Banbassa (Distt. Champawat). A new Building Called "Manna House" has been constructed for regular School of Evangelism, Retreats & Conferences. Our young lay persons interested in Evangelism can be trained in this Centre for honorary work of evangelism. In future, we may sign a written agreement with the 'Ministry of Gospel' for church planting ministry within the Diocese.

Church & Social Change: Despite the false propoganda against the church in our country, our courage, our willingness to be a bold & creative witness & our commitment to be transformed and be a transforming community proves that the Spirit of Christ is at work in the church. This messianic mission of Christ alone gives hope for the future of our nation & the world.

Let us recall Jesus' description of his people approved for eternal rewards in Mathew 25:35-40 – "For I was hungry & you gave me food, I was thirsty you gave me drink ----- . You did it to one of the least of these my family ----- . You did it to me." Also Jesus' seven letters to the seven churches in Asia minor – Revelation 2 and 3. Jesus repeatedly says, "I know your works ----- ." The works of the church on earth are the most important decisive factors of Jesus' messianic mission. In the Diocese, D.B.S.S. is inspiring & encouraging missional involvement of Pastorates. May the Lord give us strength & wisdom to make every Pastorate a missionary Pastorate.

Priority No.3:- Equipping God's People For Participatory Learning Process:

Under this priority, the following objectives were identified:-

- (A) To reaffirm & reformulate theological education.
- (B) To train laity for ministry of witness and service.
- (C) To facilitate ongoing in-service training.

(A) To reaffirm & reformulate Theological Education:

Theological education is essential for each and every Christian, especially in 21st Century India in which the Christian faith is being studied & questioned. A distorted picture of Christianity in India & missionary work is being delebrately projected. We are grateful to Senate of Serampore for introducing courses for lay people such as, Bachelor of Christian Studies (B.C.S.) and Diploma in Christian Studies (Dip. C.S.). Many lay people are taking these courses.

For candidates for the office of Presbyters & Deacons, the new formulations of theological study courses are in the process of being finalized. Some of our Presbyters are doing M.Th. and D. Min while in service. They were given an opportunity to study Apologetics to interpret the faith in post modern era.

(B) To Train Laity for ministry of witness and service:

Church is a movement of lay people. It is their witness and services which actually fulfil the demands of Nazareth manifesto (the mission statement of the church). We have already mentioned training workshops for Licensed Lay Leaders and many others taking up B.C.S. and Dip.C.S. studies.

Besides, some of our lay persons have received training in Haggai Institutes. Some of the trained lay persons are involved in very important lay ministries in the Diocese. Training in evangelism for lay people is available at Banbassa. Christian Life, Mission & Evangelism Committee under the guidance & leadership of Dr. S. P. Singh is striving hard to provide more opportunities to foster lay ministries.

(C) To facilitate on going in-service Training:

The Diocese has a policy of encouraging in service further training to enhance & update the skills of our full-time workers. We send our doctors for specialisations, nurses & tutors for higher studies. We need to upgrade our

two school of Nursing into B.Sc. Nursing Schools. Our teachers, lecturers & Principals do not get many opportunities to go for in service further training. D.E.B. organises Principals & Managers Conferences for updating knowledge and sharpening skills. The D.B.S.S. organises periodical staff appraisals to assess the weaknesses to be remedied through various exposures & excercises.

Presbyters & Evangelists get in service training through Conferences and Collegiums. His excellency Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam writes about his leadership in executing SLV-3 project – “we were a team of almost self-trained engineers. In retrospect, I feel the unique blend of our untutored talent, character, and dedication suited SLV development the most ---- I recall writing after winding up a late night shift:

Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest & brave & true
Moment by moment
The long day through.”
(Wings of Fire – Dr. A.P.J.Abdul Kalam P.P. 72-73)

The desire to excel and be creative, innovative & yet result oriented means that you are doing your best for the glory of the Lord.

Priority No.4 – SOLIDARITY WITH SUBALTERN:

The word subaltern means an Officer in British army below the rank of Captain. The word comes from Latin – Sub – meaning next below + alternus – meaning every other, thus ‘below every other.’ In this general meaning the word denotes all low ranking persons, not enjoying much respect or acclaim.

Our object in this priority is to express solidarity in concrete terms with Dalits, handicapped, women, children, tribals, people living below poverty line, orphans & widows. God’s concern for the poor & downtrodden is very clear, see – Exodus 23:10 - 12, Leviticus 19:9-10, Job 5:15-16. Jesus’ mission is good news for the poor. Luke 14:13 “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the cripple, the lame and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they can not repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

When we read Jesus’ mission statement in Nazareth manifesto, it may appear to some of us as a statement of some rich club (e.g. Lion’s Club Or Rotary Club) for the good & charitable works for the poor & handicapped. But that is not true because God chose the poor & lowly of the world to shame the rich & powerful. See I Corinthians 1:26-29 – “consider your own call

not many of you were wise by human standard, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, to reduce to nothing things that are

Bishop Dr. George Ninan says in his book “Church & Society” P.P. 292-293“The poor should become the subjects of change. Then only a genuine

political process will begin which can subdue economic interests and influence other areas of life."

How can we in the Diocese show our concern/solidarity with the poor in concrete terms? Our solidarity with the subaltern is being expressed by social action of D.B.S.S. which is working in about 80 villages. They are working with the people on the issue of livelihood. They help the people in implementation of government programmes for alleviation of poverty. They also train Church members to get involved in this ministry. Let us join the struggles of the subaltern for survival.

PRIORITY NO.5:- MINISTRY OF SERVICE:

The Diocesan objectives under this priority are –

To help the marginalized communities for access to services: education, social and health care through different wings & institutions of C.N.I.

EDUCATION:- Education is the most important sector of our country. Modern education was started by a Baptist missionary William Carey and his colleagues in India. It is because of this modern education that the country has made so much progress in all fields of development. It is because of command over English, French & German languages, sciences and humanities that Indian Scientists, doctors, engineers & management & I.T. Professionals are considered the best in the world.

The Missionaries have always played a key role in educating & evangelizing the country. Do we want to continue to serve the nation in this most important sector? Do we feel the urge to educate the millions of uneducated children of our Country, and also give them Christian values as their foundational principles?

If so, we need to redefine our vision for education for 21st century India. What exactly do we hope to do & achieve through our educational institutions? Dr. Plamthodathil S. Jacob, former President of All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) writes in an article for the book "Church in India – its Mission Tomorrow" pages – 187 – " with the restrictive government grants, the lack of mobilization of alternative financing & the vanishing of the original vision, tomorrow's institutions are going to be bureaucratically oriented & commercialized automations which respond to rules & regulations in the process. The absence of vision, the confusion on Christian as well as educational goals & the lack of commitment to any spiritual ideals on the part of the institutional leadership will make us followers and not leaders."

In the first decade of 21st century India, the tremendous challenges in the field of education are quite intimidating for Christian educational institutions. Market driven economy & social & ethical value systems are like a hurricane which is uprooting all Christian values and our foundational principles on which ministry of education of the Church in India has stood for more than 300 years. We will have to make conscious and determined efforts to reformulate our vision and set our priorities in the ministry of education.

1. **Christian Vision of Education:-** We need to recapture the Christian vision of education and impart that vision to all involved in educational institutions – the management, the Principal/Head, the teachers, the students and the community. Focus of vision should be on "Christ-ideal." He was a great teacher who was creating new humanity

though his teachings. A Christian institution is involved in the business of creating new human beings based on restoration of image of God in human beings.

2. **Recovery of Faith**: We must recapture our faith in God that although it seems that 'Mammon' is ruling the roost; God our Father is still in command of His universe. He will bless our efforts if we work in accordance with His purposes.
3. **Pluralistic awareness**:- India is a pluralistic society made up of people of different ethnicity, caste or religious persuasions contributing towards strengthening each other. Our mission is going to be "how can Jesus help in bringing harmony & peace to a troubled world. We do evangelize but not necessarily seeking religious conversions.
4. **Personal Transformation**:- The goal of education has to be personal transformation of students & not just academic excellence. It will require additional resources and specialized staff. This will be difficult but not impossible. Many professional courses are being offered for personality development but they are all meant for professions.
5. **Pioneering Role**:- Christian institutions should regain the role of pioneering in educational matters. There is a need for providing holistic education. We will have to discover new areas of application rather than being satisfied with conventional type of education. Constant research & experimentation should be taken up & results of experimentation should be shared among all institutions. Holistic education may include technical/professional education within one unit.
6. **Mobilizing Resources**:- Most of our institutions lament that both financial & human resources are not satisfactory for fulfilling their mission. If missionary spirit is alive & active, finding resources will necessarily be part of their mission. Specific plans for selecting & training human resources and raising funds by charging appropriate fees and mobilizing donations from churches and other charitable societies, would be part of regular programmes. At Diocesan level, the financial resources are being channalized and appropriated. Sharing of human resource should also be seriously considered.

SOCIAL SERVICES:-

We have already discussed the social services being rendered by D.B.S.S. by way of social action and church's preparation for participation in the struggles of the Dalits, poor, uneducated, unskilled labours, women and handicapped.

India is doing well in wealth creation but not in its distribution. Therefore rich are becoming richer & poor are becoming poorer. The church which is basically made up of poor people needs to discover newer ways & methods of poverty alleviation.

HEALTH SERVICES:-

God has given the Diocese 4 hospitals and two Schools of Nursing with which to serve the sick & the dying and to go into preventive medicine for the poor and down-trodden. Most of our hospitals are struggling for survival.

Medical services in our country are mainly in private sector providing world class medical care to those who can pay for such medical care. On the other hand, government hospitals in rural areas do not have doctors. Health & Family Welfare ministry is making legislation to make rural posting of doctors compulsory before they can be registered with Medical Council of India – (The Hindu English News Paper, Page 13, Dated Sept 23, 2006)

Therefore the needs & relevance of Church hospitals are very evident, but most patients that come to our hospitals are poor and can not pay for medical services. The main challenge facing our hospitals is how to generate enough wealth to provide subsidized medical treatment to the deprived sections of the society. Also to keep updating technology & providing more specialists for various needs requires more & more money every passing year.

We appeal to churches to donate funds & personnel to be trained into committed doctors, nurses & paramedic staff. Medical institutions have been given new paradigm to work on & make themselves financially independent as also to increase their charitable work with their own resources. Keep praying and supporting this very challenging area of our ministry. All churches & institutions must contribute every year towards a pool fund for technology updating & charities given to very poor patients.

PRIORITY NO. 6: HEALING COMMUNITIES:

The Diocesan objectives under this priority are – to create healing communities through inter faith and intra faith initiatives for common action.

Church's responsibility as peace maker is clearly described in II Corinthians 5:19 to 6:2 – "----- entrusting the message of re-conciliation to us ----- ." It is Church's prime duty to become a healing community to heal the rifts & enmities created by religion, caste, gender, language, cultural nationalism, terrorism, deprivations, violation of human rights etc.

After the anger expressed by Muslims all over the world about Pope Benedict xvi's quotation of 14th century Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus, the Pope who had apologized for any hurt caused by the said quotation, also organized an audience to the envoys of Muslim countries on 25th September 2006 at his summer residence outside Rome. This is the essence of his speech-

"Christians & Muslims must learn to work together in order to guard against all forms of intolerance & to oppose all manifestations of violence He said, his intention was to explain that religion goes together with reason, not with violence." (The Hindu 26-9-06 Page-14 And Indian Express Page-7)

We see strife & violence all over but unfortunately we are so much divided into denominations that we hardly ever think about ministry of re-conciliation.

INTRA-FAITH INITIATIVES:- We are part of Church of North India, we believe in unity of all Christians. We are part of Communion of Churches i.e. (CNI, CSI and Malankara Marthoma Church). We are a united and further uniting Church. During the biennium, we participated in the U.P. & Uttaranchal Council of Churches assembly at Lucknow. New Office Bearers were appointed, fresh registration of U.P.C.C. was done. At district level, some district councils of churches were made functional.

INTER FAITH INITIATIVES:- Out of all religious communities represented in India, the problem of re-conciliation & accommodation exists mainly between Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians & Sikhs. After demolishing of Babri Masjid in 1992 by Hindu fundamentalist forces, there has been constant increase in Hindu fundamentalism & aggression. On the other hand muslim fundamentalists retorted by various Bomb blasts and other acts of terrorism.

The Church in India should be looked upon as a re-conciling community seeking to establish kingdom of God on ecumenical principles. But if we are also fundamentalist then we will not become 'healing community.' During the past biennium, once one Pastorate sent information about holding an inter-faith dialogue. We need to enhance such initiatives and seek to form peace & harmony committees in the area of every Pastorate.

PRIORITY NO. 7:- RESTRUCTURING THE STRUCTURE:

The CNI and Diocesan objectives under this priority are –

- (A) To implement the voice of the people expressed through different Commissions & Boards for revisioning Episcopacy, revising Constitution and decentralizing administration.
- (B) Ensuring Transparency and accountability in all levels.

(A) Revisioning Episcopacy, revising Constitution and decentralizing administration:- The Diocese of Agra never had any problems with understanding/interpreting episcopacy or with the Constitution or administration. It never asked for redefining episcopacy or changing the Constitution at Synod, Diocesan or Pastorate level, except for asking to interpret some bye-laws or clarifying the meaning thereof. However, the C.N.I. is in the process of revisioning episcopacy. It has appointed "Council of Bishops," a new structure. The Council has taken up the responsibility of redefining episcopacy. Your Bishop has presented a paper on the historical background of episcopacy. He now has been given the responsibility to propose new understanding of episcopacy & Episcopal functioning in CNI. I have just returned from Kenya (East Africa) after attending a meeting of Theological & Doctrinal Commission of the world wide Anglican Communion. Even that Commission is studying & is in the process of redefining episcopacy for the Anglican Communion. So this is the opportune time to make your suggestions & express your concerns about this very crucial matter.

Constitution:- The 12th Synod has approved wide range of amendments to the Constitution of the whole Church. We shall be adopting those changes formally during this the XVI th Diocesan Council.

Diocesan Administration is quite decentralized. Authority & autonomy is given to Pastorate Committees, Governing Bodies/Management Committees of Schools, Colleges & Hospitals. Presbyters & Heads of Institutions have administrative freedom & authorisation. All this freedom & authorization is given under various Constitutions or Schemes of Administration, so that accountability and transparency in various dealings are maintained. Your prayerful comments & suggestions are invited.

(B) **Ensuring transparency and accountability in all levels:**

It is the Diocesan policy to be good stewards in the estimation of God our Father. Good and honest stewards of time, talent and treasure (wealth) do not fear transparency and accountability. In fact, we encourage transparency & accountability of our total stewardship.

Our Presbyters submit their Monthly Work Report. Heads submit Annual Reports, other workers are also accountable. Pastorate Committees submit their report to A.G.Ms.

Diocesan A/Cs & A.D.T.A. A/Cs are audited every quarter. We expect the same kind of accountability & transparency at every level of the Church. May the Lord help us to become a source of encouragement for others.

In conclusion, we would gratefully acknowledge tremendous blessings of our Lord in the Diocese during the past biennium. All around we see development & growth. There has been growth in our fixed assets, growth in various ministries to the people. We are at the threshold of starting a new ministry of evangelism and Church planting with "Manna House," an informal Bible School cum Conference Centre at Banbassa (Champawat) as our main resource centre, and in partnership with Ministry of Gospel, a registered society. God is giving us one more asset – a Retreat cum Conference Centre at Nainital. The foundation stone for which was laid in June this year. We have been blessed with an other degree College at Dehradun, CNI Girl's Campus. Home for the aged Women is coming up at Christ Church, Mussoorie. New educational institutions have been planned and land has been purchased & at some places the Diocese is in the process of negotiating & finalising purchase. Some Nazul land has been purchase & for some other pieces of nazul land the purchase is being negotiated with the Government.

Let us resolve to rededicate ourselves to our mission priorities, to become better stewards of God's kingdom on earth. Let us spend time in the XVI th Diocesan Council, in Worship, Study and meditation of Word of God and sharing our love & concern with each other as we discuss the reports of work done and discuss policies for the future.

May the Lord bless the XVI th assembly of Agra Diocesan Council.

Yours affectionately,

The Rt. Revd. S. R. Cutting
Bishop of Agra.