



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SIMLA-CHANDIGARH

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Advent Letter 2025

Dear Rev. Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, and Beloved Faithful,

Grace and peace of Christ, our coming Lord and Eternal Hope, be with you.

As we enter once again the holy season of Advent, the Church invites us to begin a spiritual journey—a journey of expectation, preparation, and deepening hope. Advent is a sacred time when heaven leans close to earth, when God stirs the human heart to seek Him anew. ***“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light”*** (Isaiah 9:2). This light is Christ, who comes not only in Bethlehem but also into our daily lives, our diocese, our ministries, and our struggles.

This year, as the universal Church moves toward the Jubilee with the theme ***“Pilgrims of Hope,”*** we, the Diocese of Simla–Chandigarh, are invited to walk forward with courage, perseverance, and unwavering trust in God’s promises. Hope is not a mere sentiment; it is a spiritual strength rooted in the certainty that ***“He who promised is faithful”*** (Hebrews 10:23). Hope lifts our eyes above present difficulties and allows us to see the world through God’s perspective.

Our mission in the northern regions of India faces many challenges—cultural, social, political, and pastoral. There are moments when evangelization seems slow, when ministry appears demanding, and when we feel tested by circumstances beyond our control. Yet Advent reminds us that God often works quietly and powerfully in hidden ways. The Savior entered the world in the simplicity of Bethlehem, in poverty, silence, and vulnerability. ***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”*** (John 1:14). If God chooses humble beginnings, we too should not be discouraged by small or difficult situations.

As ***pilgrims of hope***, we must press on in our vocation. Saint Paul encourages us: ***“Let us not grow weary in doing good”*** (2 Thessalonians 3:13). Every act of charity, every moment of forgiveness, every effort in catechesis, every challenge embraced in parish life, every sacrifice made for our institutions and missions is a seed planted in God’s field. Though we may not always see immediate results, the Lord assures us that ***“your labour in the Lord is not in vain”*** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

However, authentic evangelization is impossible without **deep prayer**. Mission begins not from activity but from intimacy with Christ. The Lord Himself says, ***“Apart from Me you can do nothing”*** (John 15:5). Before Mary conceived Christ in her womb, she welcomed Him in her heart. Before the Apostles preached to the nations, they remained with Jesus in prayer (cf. Acts 1:14). Prayer is not optional for us—it is the heartbeat of our ministry.

I invite every priest, religious, and lay faithful to renew the commitment to daily personal prayer during this Advent season. Spend time in silent adoration before the Eucharist. Let the Word of God dwell richly in you (cf. Colossians 3:16). Pray the Rosary, meditate on the mysteries of Christ’s coming, and cultivate a listening heart. When we pray deeply, our zeal for evangelization grows, our compassion increases, our fears diminish, and we rediscover the joy of belonging to Christ.



Prayer opens our eyes to recognize the Lord's presence in the ordinary. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, whose hearts burned within them as Jesus opened the Scriptures (cf. Luke 24:32), we too become renewed and strengthened to proclaim Him with conviction. Our witness becomes credible only when it flows from an authentic encounter with the Lord.

Advent is also a call to **unity and reconciliation**. St. Paul says, "**Bear one another's burdens**" (Galatians 6:2). In our parishes, religious houses, families, and institutions, let us renew the spirit of fraternity. Small gestures of forgiveness, words of encouragement, acts of kindness, and efforts to rebuild relationships open the door for the Lord to enter. John the Baptist reminds us: "**Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths**" (Mark 1:3). We prepare the Lord's way not only through liturgy and prayer but also through healing relationships and strengthening community bonds.

As we journey toward Christmas, let us keep our eyes fixed on the Lord who comes to save us. He assures us, "**I am with you always, to the end of the age**" (Matthew 28:20). This promise should give us courage in our ministry and hope in our challenges. The world needs the witness of joyful Christians—men and women who radiate the hope of Christ even in difficult circumstances.

Let families pray together more intentionally this Advent. Let parish communities renew their commitment to the poor, the elderly, the sick, the migrants, and all who feel forgotten. Let our institutions become places where Christ's compassion is visible in word and deed. Let our diocesan family walk together as true pilgrims—strengthening one another and encouraging one another in faith.

My dear brothers and sisters, may this Advent season awaken in us a longing for Christ, a deeper love for His people, and a renewed commitment to mission. Let us walk together with courage, knowing that **the Lord who comes is the Lord who remains**.

With a shepherd's affection, I extend my heartfelt blessings to you all. May this holy season fill your homes with peace, your minds with clarity, your hearts with hope, and your lives with the joy of the Lord's presence. May Mother Mary intercede for all of us.

With my Prayers and Blessings,

✠ **Most Rev. Sahaya Thatheus Thomas**
Bishop of Simla-Chandigarh

