

My dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord's Vineyard,

Let me warmly welcome each one of you to this Clergy Conference. I appreciate the sacrifices you and your families have made to enable you to be here, very specially those who have traveled from distant places.

The Theme for this year's Clergy Conference is "**Re-thinking God's Mission in Contemporary Sri Lanka**"

The purpose of the Church is to carry forward the Mission of the Triune God

- God the CREATOR
- God the REDEEMER
- God the SANCTIFIER

The very purpose and the mission of the Triune God is to call the church (People of God) to engage in the mission of becoming Co-Creators with God the Father, Co-Redeemers with God the Son and Co-Sanctifiers with God the Holy Spirit. In John 13:34 Jesus said: "A new Command I give you; Love one another; By this all will know that you are my Disciples." The Mission and the purpose of the Triune God was not to bring into being a club where all so called Christians could have membership for their personal satisfaction, but to MAKE DISCIPLES to carry forward the Purpose and the Mission of God till Jesus comes again as our Great Judge.

In Mathew 28:19 Jesus commands us to carry out the **Great Commission** which is truly mandatory on every Christian. It is not a **Great Suggestion**. Jesus said "Therefore Go, and make Disciples of all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The Vision of the Triune God is to make **Disciples** and not **Christians** to carry forward His Mission. Today our churches are overflowing with many Christians and with only a few Disciples.

The question could be asked as to who a disciple is? We who are of the eastern tradition can understand this better. A Disciple will always prefer to be in the company of his or her Guru; A Disciple would certainly love his or her Guru and become very protective of the Guru; A disciple will always prefer to be at the feet of the Guru and learn of his teaching with much enthusiasm and with a sense of dedication; A Disciple will always like to imitate the Guru; The Disciple will learn to speak like the Guru, think like the Guru, and act like the Guru. It is here where we have lost something sacred by our own choice. If we are to make Disciples of Jesus who are empowered and driven by the Holy Spirit to carry forward the Mission of the Triune God, we are called to be Role Models of this Guru

I give thanks to God for many of your lives and for your silent, sincere ministry among people

which can be seen only by God..I encourage you to continue on that path and I am confident that your deliberations at this Conference will enable you to return to your parishes refreshed in mind , body and spirit and your spirituality further deepened.

The General Assembly of the Church of Ceylon passed a resolution to be forwarded to the 16th Anglican Consultative Council. This resolution was received and endorsed by the Standing Committee of the ACC and thus a resolution was passed on the floor of the ACC16 giving us the green light to move into a Province with no conditions attached. On my return from ACC 16 a Special General Meeting of the General Assembly was called on the 28th of May to report back to on the ACC resolution. The General Assembly authorized the formation of a Commission under the Chairmanship of The Ven. Dr.Rienzie Perera to work out the Road Map for this to be achieved. The Primate of All Australia and Archbishop of Melbourne -The Most Revd. .Philip Frier was appointed by the Standing Committee of the ACC to oversee and monitor the implementation of the ACC resolution. I am grateful to all Clergy and Laity who have consented to be part of this important journey in the life and history of our Church.

The shame and scandal of the divided nature of our churches has often been commented upon even by those outside the church. This is a challenge to us, that unless we put our house in order under one banner we can hardly preach reconciliation to the divided and broken nation of ours, convincingly. In response to this dire need, heads of all Christian denominations from the main line churches and the younger churches gathered three years ago in the Cathedral and pledged under God to form an ad-hoc loose gathering of denominations calling ourselves the “ **Sri Lanka Christian Fellowship**”. These gatherings were to be formed in every district, primarily to achieve the following:

- To walk together in spite of our differences,
- To sit together ,pray together and study God's Word together to build trust and confidence.
- To stop all sheep stealing
- To learn from each other mission strategies as they share their challenges in Mission
- To refuse to do things alone which you can do together such as Children's, Youth, Women, and men rallies.
- To stand for each other and offer protection as the Body of Christ if and when any one of our churches are attacked.

I urge all clergy persons of my Diocese to be part of this journey, to carry forward the vision and mission of our Lord to be one in the midst of so many challenges that work against this vision of our Lord..