Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am happy to visit you through this Message, first of all, to thank you, your pastor, the Mission Director and the Bishop of your diocese, for your unfailing support each year, for the missions around the world and this year in particular to the Diocese of Kumbakonam, which I represent as Mission Director.

Let me assure you of the prayers of the people of my diocese, for divine protection over all of you during this time of the terrible pandemic.

Kumbakonam, one of 156 dioceses of India, was erected in 1899 by the Foreign Mission Society of Paris, France.

I have been a priest for 47 years. During the past 28 years I have served in the US and have been in charge of the mission development of my diocese.

Pastors and members of the laity, from the US & Canada, had not only helped us financially, but also visited our diocese in order to encourage us in our missionary efforts through our hospitals for leprosy and general healthcare, 18 medical dispensaries in rural missions, our schools and homes for children of widows, single mothers, lepers and HIV patients, and of course our 94 parishes and 620 remote missions.

--In short, their visits served as a shot-in the arm for all our ministries for the pastoral care and welfare of people, education , medical care, social emancipation and upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. 60% of our Catholics are converts from the socially discriminated and economically oppressed community, called The Dalit.

Various ministries undertaken by our diocesan pastoral center, are promoting Bible, Catechetics, Liturgy, Education, Formation of Basic Christian communities, Evangelization and Missions: Vocation; Social Development; Ecumenical dialogue with Hindus who form 80%, and Muslims who form 13% of the population of India that has 1.3 Billion People, which is 1/6th of the world population.

Vocation

My rural diocese, although very poor and very much undeveloped, has served as a fertile nursery of vocations, by sending for each year, hundreds of young women and men, not only to serve the home diocese but also to many other dioceses in India and abroad, to serve the universal church by joining 45 different religious orders of men and women both in India and abroad.

My Bishop has sent 36 priests to serve in other dioceses both in India and abroad, namely in U.S,, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Mauritius and Singapore.

Although we are a poor mission diocese, we try thus to participate in the universal call to evangelize the nations.

Again, as a token of gratitude, through my personal efforts, during the past 28 years, I have facilitated the pastoral placement of 285 priests

from many dioceses and religious Orders, to minister in 22 different dioceses in U.S. 24 of them joined the U.S dioceses for good, others returned to India, after serving for 5 to 10 years.

Every year we are forced to deny admission into our seminary to a good number of applicants, just because of shortage of funds Your donation of $2000 a year, will enable us to admit one more seminarian.

<u>Your donation will be used for :-</u>

 *Our schools and homes,*for the 280 physically challenged Children and for families of 500 HIV patients ,

 - Sacred Heart leprosy-hospital where we have a school for their children

a rehabilitation centre and separate homes for women and men, after the treatment , since their families would ostracize them.

These three ministries, to lepers, HIV patients and the deaf and dumb children, though highly challenging, constitute the essence and the radical call to the missions very dear to Jesus, and hence serve as vital and irresistible means of evangelization among the non-Christians.

<u>I very humbly seek your assistance firstly for these three essential missions;</u>

Secondly for the upkeep of many of the 94 parishes and 620 missions

where 213,000 Catholics are served by 288 priests, 620 nuns,18 trained catechists and 600 untrained catechists.

 I am happy to say that my diocese has memorialized most of the dioceses in the US, from whom we got funds through Mission Appeal during the past 27 years, for the poor and down trodden Catholics

--in the facilities for leprosy hospital that is 105 years old and one of the largest in the world,

-- in schools that train young women as teachers and nurses,

-- in the minor seminary that trains missionaries,

-- in 36 schools and homes that provide education, food and care for orphans and children of poor widows and single mothers.

-- and in the other 90 rural schools where 70% of students are non-Christians for whom we have class on religion every day.

Thus our schools are our main tools of evangelization. The mission-needs are various and beyond my description here. My diocese will not be able to continue the many missionary tasks, without your generous contribution,

1) To educate 28000 poor Catholic students. You could sponsor a child with $200 a year.
2) To provide a home for 25000 poor families with $6000 for each family, presently living in huts, unfit even for cattle.
3) To house and educate 3500 orphans, children of lepers, HIV patients, widows ,single mothers, families with many children and ailing grand-parents.
4) Above all to erect 210 chapels (each cost $25,000) in poor rural missions;

We have been haunted by the pandemic for past 170 days. The poor have been driven to despair and suicide.

--The most daunting task during the pandemic, is to care for the educational & socio-economic needs of the poor and the Dalit who form 60% of our populations. since they have been unjustly discriminated by the government by denying their socio-economic and educational benefits, maliciously forcing them to return to Hinduism.

May I humbly request your prayers and financial support through your parish, through a check issued in favor of your parish designating it for the "Diocese of Kumbakonam".

Let me conclude by assuring you of the prayerful gratitude of my Bishop, priests, religious, the laity and the poor of the diocese of Kumbakonam. Thank you very much !