

## **Inauguration of the Diploma course in Pastoral Health Theology on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016**

Dear Rev. Fr. Thomas Aykara CMI, Rector of Dharmaram College, Rev. Fr. Paulachan Kochappilly, President, DVK, Rev. Fr. Joy Kakkanattu, dean of Faculty of Theology, DVK, Rev. Fr. Reji Kaithapampil, Rector of Upasana, Rev. Fr. William, Director, Upasana, Indian Institute of Pastoral Health Theology, dear fathers, brothers, sisters and dear participants

It is a moment of grace and joy for us Camillians in India. First and foremost, I thank God for making it happen today. I am delighted to be here with you on this inaugural day of the Diploma course in Pastoral Health Theology affiliated to the Pontifical Athenaeum of DVK.

This dream of ours becomes a reality today in this great Jubilee Year of Mercy. We, Camillians feel blessed to be part of it, as we are called to witness prophetically and practically to the Merciful love of Jesus, in the model of the Good Samaritan and St. Camillus.

We have been thinking of this new venture in India since a couple of years. We have spent months in reflecting and discussing this matter. Based on our discussion with the president of DVK Fr. Paulachan Kochappilly, we formally made a request for the affiliation of the Diploma programme in Pastoral Health Theology and another Diploma course in Bioethics and human dignity which we would launch next year. We are sincerely grateful to the Pontifical Athenaeum of DVK, the president, the Dean of Theology faculty, the senate members for granting us the affiliation and for all the support and encouragements.

I do gratefully acknowledge the remarkable commitments and hard work of Fr. William Eronimoose, the director of the Institute of Pastoral Health Theology, Fr. Reji Kaithapampil, the assistant Director, the Upasana community, Fr. Siby Kaitharan, head of the ministry department of the province and my council members for making it a

reality. I pray for God's blessings upon them to carry out the mission 'to educate to heal and heal to humanize', which is in fact the motto of the Institute.

Now we are ready to actualize the vision of the institute, that is, to create a healthcare system, Human, Holistic and Compassionate by training, motivating and animating the healthcare personnel and all those who desire to defend and promote life with dignity.

In the light of the Gospel and in ways suited to our times, we help the sick find an answer to the persistent questions regarding the meaning of pain, evil and death and about the meaning life both present and future, as well as their interdependence. We are to remain close to them, especially in moments of darkness and vulnerability so as to become signs of hope for them (Con 47). We use every suitable means of the apostolate, to dedicate ourselves to the ethical formation and Christian animation of healthcare workers (Con 53) and encourage society to promote the humanization of health care structures and services, guaranteeing the rights of the sick and respecting their personal dignity by means of legal, social, pastoral interventions (Con 55).

This Diploma programme is for all those in healthcare ministry and it aims at giving direction to all pastoral activities of the Church. It provides a theological foundation for pastoral ministry, stimulates theological reflection on pastoral experience and at the same time helps comprehend theology from a pastoral perspective. It concentrates on the interface between theology and pastoral experience. It would be a theological reflection drawn from the lived experience of the Church. This praxis is at the same time the content and the object of study. According to James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, Pastoral Theology can be defined as "a prime place where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious (Christian) tradition meet in a critical dialogue that is mutually and practically transforming". This is precisely what Pope John Paul II meant when he said "Pastoral Theology is not just an art. Nor is it a set of exhortations, experiences and methods. It is theological in its own right, because it receives from the faith the principles and criteria for the pastoral action of the Church, a Church that each day begets itself". One of the main principles of Pastoral Theology is "evangelical

discernment of the socio-cultural and ecclesial situation in which the particular pastoral action has to be carried out”. This dynamic and holistic approach involves the whole person and his or her community. The task is to reflect upon the self-disclosure of God witnessed by the Scriptures, mediated through tradition, reflected on by critical reasoning and embodied in personal and social experience.

It seeks to give a clear definition to general ministry of the Church and its purpose is to improve the practice of ministry. It is a kind of “practical theology” that has as its object, the communal self-formation of the Church.

Dear Participants, while welcoming you to this Diploma program, I say that your role is to unify, apply and give other theological disciplines, even secular sciences a practical dimension, utility or usefulness and maturity so that they contribute to the holistic growth of human beings. I am certain that at the end of this program you would become practical pastoral practitioner in the pastoral healthcare world today.

Best wishes for the participants and God’s blessing on each one of us.

Thank you. God bless you all.

Fr. Baby Ellickal MI

Provincial