

CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA - DIOCESE OF MADRAS

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*The Presbyters &
Heads of Institutions
CSI Madras Diocese*

1st September 2008

Dear friends,

Greetings! I am writing this to share with you certain developments with regard to our response to the plight of Christians in Orissa, A meeting of representatives of Missionary Organisations working in Orissa was held on Saturday the 1st September at the Diocesan Office. About fifteen Missionary Organisations were represented and they shared the heart rending stories faced by Christians and particularly the Missionaries, It was decided at the meeting to call for a meeting of Church leaders from all the denominations to make aware of the most pitiable conditions of Christians in Orissa to make it known to the public in Chennai, to express our solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters and also to respond effectively for rebuilding of Churches, houses and rehabilitation of people who are displaced

A meeting of Church leaders representing different denominations was held on Tuesday the 9th September at StGeorge's Cathedral Parish Hall It was very encouraging to see many Churches represented with emotional participation. We fervently prayed for Christians in Orissa.

Consensus emerged on the following;

- 1. To organize a Rally on Sunday the 21st September at StGeorge's Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School campus from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.*
- 2. To invite leaders of Churches and a few representatives of other religions to speak at the meeting in addition to prayers and singing at the Rally.*
- 3. To request all Churches to encourage all their members to participate in the Rally by cancelling the evening worship on that day,*
- 4. To make an announcement of this Rally on 14th September and solicit generous contributions from all the members of our Churches. The Church leaders could send circulars to the effect that a second offertory be taken in the worship services on Sunday the 21st September,*
- 5. It was desired that the Church leaders fraternal be formed as a continuing form of fellowship and also to plan for the work of rehabilitation.*

Persecution of Christians, a phenomenon in North India viz. Gujarat' and Orissa has reached our doorsteps in Andhra and Karnataka. If we do not act with all the strength that we are and we have we will be failing in our responsibility to our fellow Christians as well as paving the way for our own disaster. This Rally should be a demonstration of Christian Unity and Strength so that the voice of the Rally could be heard unambiguously by the people in authority

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in Chennai, Bhuneshwar and Delhi Our participation in the Rally is the least that we could do to pay our homage to our sisters and brothers who have sacrificed their lives, the lives of their dear ones and all their belongings just for the sake of their refusal to deny their faith. May I appeal to all of you to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the Rally and also to stay for the whole Rally. Snacks may be provided and I request the Churches to make arrangements for dinner for people traveling from rural areas.

Since the damages due to the torching of over hundred Churches, several hundreds of houses and establishments and the destruction to all the belongings is enormous I shall particularly thank each of the congregation if you could announce on 14th September and solicit generous offerings to be collected as second offertory on 21st. September. The amounts collected may be sent without much delay to the Treasurer of our Diocese,

With prayers.

Yours sincerely

*V. Devasahayam
Bishop in Madras*

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