



LENTEN PASTORAL MESSAGE 2023 **“OUR ROLE IN REALIZING THE COMMON GOOD”**

*(To be read in lieu of homily during
Eucharistic Celebrations on Saturday/Sunday, 18/19 February 2023)*

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
Religious Sisters, Brothers, Fathers,
Young Adults, Youth, and Children in Christ

1. On Ash Wednesday, 22 February 2023, we will enter the Lenten season. Lent is a special time – the Solemn Retreat of the whole Church – to give thanks for God's great love towards us. We are also invited to recognize our own identity again. Through Moses, God declared that we are a holy people (Lev 19:1-2). In his letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul stated that “God’s Spirit dwells in you.... You belong to Christ...” (1 Cor 3:16-23). Meanwhile, Jesus told us, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

2. The Church teaches that such an identity is equivalent to a vocation “to the perfection of love, the perfection of holiness and the perfection of the Christian life” (LG 11.40). This vocation was explained at length by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation titled *Gaudete et Exsultate* – On the Call to Holiness in Today's World. “We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters” (No.14). In this series of Pope Francis' statements, I would like to add one question and its answer: “Are you a member of the Jakarta Archdiocese? Be holy by continuing to find new ways of nurturing and realizing the common good.”

3. Why did we add that question? This year we Catholics of the Archdiocese of Jakarta enter the Lenten season when we - in order to understand the Church's Social Teachings - want to explore the theme of common good and look for some concrete forms of action to take. What is meant by the common good is "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment" (*Gaudium et Spes* No. 26). As Christians we are called to be involved in seeking this common good.

Beloved Sisters and Brothers,

4. We enter Lent with gratitude because in the midst of various challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the government is really working hard and all citizens of our nation are involved for the common good. However, we are all aware that the state of our society is not doing well. According to data from *the Central Bureau of Statistics*, from September 2019 to September 2022, the number of poor people in Indonesia increased from 24.78 million to 26.36 million. In the period of August 2019 to August 2022, unemployment in Indonesia also increased from 7.05 million to 8.42 million. Poverty and scarcity of employment has had an impact on the health of people whose purchasing power has decreased. According to a study published at the end of 2022 (*Kompas* 9 December 2022), an estimated 68% of Indonesia's population (183.7 million people) are unable to meet their daily nutritional needs. This has an impact, among other things, on the high prevalence of stunting in children in Indonesia. According to *the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI)*, the prevalence stunting rate for toddlers in 2022 is 21.6%. Meanwhile, the number of stunting cases in children aged 12-13 months in 2022 increased from 565,479 to 978,930 children (*Kompas*, 28 January 2023). People's mental health is also affected. Based on the results of the *Indonesian National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS)*, one in three adolescents aged 10-17 years in Indonesia has had a mental health problem in the last 12 months. This number is equivalent to 15.5 million teenagers in Indonesia. Of course, the state of our society is much more complex than these numbers reflect.

Beloved Sisters and Brothers,

5. I would like to bring to your awareness especially of one of the greatest crimes against humanity, that directly contradicts the ideals of the common good, namely human trafficking. Our poorest, most vulnerable and disabled brothers and sisters, as well as women of all ages and children, migrants, refugees and our sisters and brothers who come from disharmonious families are very vulnerable to being exploited by human trafficking practices. In early January 2023, the police arrested four people suspected of being traffickers in an apartment in the Cempaka Putih area, Central Jakarta. (Detik.com, 1 January 2023). The Criminal Act of People Trafficking (TPPO) also assaults our brothers and sisters of Indonesian migrant workers who work abroad. According to the Director for the Protection of Indonesian Citizens, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of cases of Criminal Act of People Trafficking of Indonesian Citizens abroad from 2017 to October 2022 continues to increase. Cases of the Criminal Act of People Trafficking are all around us, but it is not always obvious, because human traffickers work secretly and neatly.

6. The Church affirms that human trafficking and smuggling migrants is a crime and a grave sin because they violate and destroy human dignity (*Commission for Justice, Peace and Pastoral for Migrant and Itinerant People, 2019, Pastoral Directions on Human Trafficking, No. 13*). Pope Francis declared the practice of human trafficking as an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ (Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the *International Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking, 10 April 2014*). Therefore, the Holy Father conveyed the Church's commitment to combating the practice of human trafficking. "The Catholic Church intends to intervene in every phase of the trafficking of human being; she wants to protect them from deception and solicitations (by traffickers); she wants to find them and set them free when they are transported and reduced as slavery; she wants to assist them once they are freed." (Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in *the World Day of Prayer, 12 February 2018*).

Beloved sisters and brothers,

7. The challenges and reality that are being depicted in these numbers and statements show that all efforts to attain the common good are very important, relevant, as well as complex. The common good is a concrete

form of salvation that is the fruit of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection which we will celebrate during the Holy Week: the human salvation physically (=body), mentally (=soul) and spiritually (=spirit).

8. The question that we have to answer is: what should we do so that we can attain the common good – physically, mentally, spiritually? We can consider some of the following examples:

8.1. We can start from our own families and our closest environment by caring for and developing harmonious relationships within the family and the closest environment. Harmonious relations within the family and society will lead to creative initiatives to strive for the common good, for example, taking part in serving nutritious food for children who are suffering from malnutrition around us.

8.2. We can help our brothers and sisters who are still struggling to meet their basic needs by helping to provide access to social security, charitable assistance for the five basic needs: food, clothing, lodging, health, and education.

8.3. Our brothers and sisters suffering from physical, mental and spiritual problems will be very vulnerable to various kinds of exploitation. It is necessary to find creative actions to help them, such as providing counselling services, visitations to our brothers and sisters who are lonely.

8.4. Economic motives are usually the cause of people falling into trap and becoming victims of human trafficking. Concrete actions can be done to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters, such as offering formal or informal jobs, helping our brothers and sisters in their Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), providing technical skills assistance, capital and marketing, creating new job opportunities, as well as raising awareness and socialization about the dangers of human trafficking in the family and our surrounding environment.

9. Finally, together with all the priests, deacons and all the ministers of the church, I would like to thank you Sisters dan Brothers, Religious Sisters/ Brothers/Seminarians, Young adults, Youth and Children who in various ways are involved in the missions of the Archdiocese of Jakarta. We hope

that through the various initiatives which we carry out, especially during Lent – no matter how small and simple – we can keep contributing to the realization of the common good, a concrete form of salvation. Greetings and God's Blessings to all of you, your families and your communities. Mother Mary and Saint Joseph, pray for us.

† Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo
Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Jakarta