

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE 2ND MANIPUR CATHOLIC WOMEN CONVENTION, 2017 AT CHRIST JYOTI SCHOOL, MANTRIPUKHRI ON 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2017.

Reverend Dominic Lumon, Archbishop – Archdiocese of Imphal,

Reverend Gerald Almeida, Chairman of Justice and Peace Commission, Catholic Bishops Council of India,

Pastors of various Catholic Churches of the State,

Distinguished Invitees,

Participants,

Friends from Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a very pleasant experience for me to be here at the opening ceremony of the Convention of Manipur Catholic Women's Organization whose noble objective is leading a good Christian life according to the teachings of Christ and empowerment of women in the Church and society. The pioneering contributions made by the Organization in building and expanding the Theosophical Order of service and promoting the quality and dignity of all human beings for a just and human society are truly remarkable.

In Mumbai, my home was at Sacred Heart Parish and just opposite to St. Trisas Convent. I used to see on Sunday, the mass at the Sacred Heart Church - families in their Sunday best going to the church. Many a time, my daughters used to go to the mass with their maid who was a catholic. My windows also opened to Roseland Society which is a Catholic Society. On Christmas, we went to each house to wish Merry Christmas and at night we went around the city to see the Lord's cribs and always attended the midnight mass. I always admired the concept of service by the Nuns who devote their lives in service of the needy. My husband's Secretary's daughter became a Nun. So, I am very familiar with catholic way of life and service as I lived among them. My daughters every year were visiting Mount Mary Fair and lighted candles. They always brought back photographs.

I congratulate the Manipur Catholic Women's Organization for this Convention and the outcome, I am sure, will be meaningful to one and all. I am pleased that the Manipur Catholic Women's Organization is an officially approved organization of the Catholic Church in Manipur and its vision is the emergence of a new society and formation of a Gender Equity Society, living in harmony, peace and justice. The Organization also implements the policies of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India in respect of women. Women's cause is an important issue and women's empowerment is central to achieving gender equality.

The Organization is addressing some core areas of women's concern, namely, marriage and family, education of women, mother and child health care, social awareness and involvement, women's participation in public and political life. A recent trend which is of serious concern is the increasing number of trafficking of women and sexual abuse happening in our society. Unfortunately, Manipur has not been spared from this bane which was unknown in Manipur. I am happy that these social evils are also high on the priority of the Organization. The aim and objective of the Organization should be to promote the presence, participation and co-responsibility of Catholic women in society and the Church in order to enable them to fulfil their mission of evangelization and at the same time to work for human development. It is a matter of great satisfaction for me that the Organization has been involved in working against Human Trafficking, along with like-minded Civil Society Organizations that work against trafficking.

As you all are well aware, theosophy literally means "God's Wisdom" and it is all about hidden knowledge or wisdom that offers individual enlightenment and salvation. The goal of theosophy is to explore the origin of divinity, humanity and the world. The Theosophical Society was founded with the motto, "There is no Religion higher than Truth". Violence, indifference to justice, loss of consciousness of sin, worldliness and hypocrisy, the 'throw away' culture of human beings and the lack of creative and honest dialogue are some of the evils

that the Holy Father often points out and for which He says mercy is the best ‘medicine’. Theosophy has given rise to and influenced development of many mystical, philosophical and religious movements. Theosophical Societies and Organizations are doing very good work across the globe sensitizing the community. I sincerely encourage it.

It is indeed a great joy for each one of us to live in this beautiful world. A sense of wonder pervades the entire earth and a sensitive mind appreciates the internal beauty and magnificent abundance of the creation. Watching nature one is aware of the presence of an overwhelmingly benevolent force and presence which is ever-present and ever-beckoning. Looking around at others, young and old, one sees beautiful manifestations of this same life source.

However, the overwhelming tragedy of our world today lies in the fact that we remain disconnected from our sense of belonging to a benevolent universe. On the contrary, we constantly strive to turn the earth into a realm of fear, exploitation, injustice, intolerance and an on-going violence that blinds us to the truth that is ever-present. Thinking that we can have a world of peace, joy, social justice and freedom for ourselves while we viciously destroy the peace and freedom of others exposes how we are disconnecting from one another and how all our efforts become ironic and absurd. We should all work for the idea of universal brotherhood of mankind and the cardinal truths inherent in all religions. My best wishes to all gathered here and the organizers for their efforts in organizing the Convention. With these words, it gives me a great pleasure to open the Convention and I do hope there will be very productive deliberations on issues concerning women and wish the Convention all success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.