

Pastoral Care of University Students

1. The Month of January

At the very outset of my progressive report, I would like to recall the deep insights of the pastoral document on the *Pastoral Care of University Students* presented by the Asian Bishops Conference, held from 23rd to 29th November, 1970 at the University of Santo Tomas of Manila. At this special meeting, the Bishops exhorted the students with the following words:

“You live in the world at the period with most gigantic transformations ever realized in its history. It is your mission and vocation to be the creative agents of social and political change in our much-troubled continent of Asia, and to consecrate your courage, daring and idealism by initiating and constantly striving for those urgent reforms and bold transformations which our society and its structures so pressingly need today.”

Therefore, in order to understand the university students and to help them to motivate themselves to participate in the mission of the Church, I, as their Chaplain, have decided to visit their families at the very beginning of my apostolate. By doing so, I am determined to come to know their own struggles and burning issues of their families.

1.1 Visiting the families of the Students:

It was my great desire to know the background of the university students and to come to know their parents. I have made every effort possible to visit the families of the university students in the beginning of this year; from January till March, till the deadly Corona Virus hit our Country in the second week of March. During that time, I was able to visit the families of majority of students from Colombo, Gampaha and Badulla Districts. Visiting the families of the university students, interacting and conversing with their parents, blessing their homes and praying with their family members gave me a rich experience and a great exposure. This huge experience brought me much closer to their lives and the struggles of their parents.

1.2 Details of the students visited in Gampaha, Badulla and Colombo Districts:

	Name	University	Faculty	Place	Diocese
1	Mr. H. V. Fernadopulle	Peradeniya	Science	Kochchikade	Colombo
2	Miss. Viojani Fernando	Peradeniya	Art	Kochchikade	Colombo

3	Miss. A. K. V. Gunavikramma	Peradeniya	Engineering	Kochchikade	Colombo
4	Mr. K. D. H. Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Kochchikade	Colombo
5	Mr. Menuka Fernandopulle	Peradeniya	Engineering	Kochchikade	Colombo
6	Mr. Shane Rodrigo	Peradeniya	Engineering	Daluwakotuwa	Colombo
7	Mr. Navod Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Kochchikade	Colombo
8	Mr. Rosula Fernando	Peradeniya	Science	Kochchikade	Colombo
9	Miss. P. Sindhupriya	Peradeniya	Art	Kochchikade	Colombo
10	Mr. Ishan Perera	Jayawardenapura		Kochchikade	Colombo
11	Mr. Tehan Perera	Jayawardenapura		Kochchikade	Colombo
12	Miss. Natasha Wendy	Peradeniya	Science	Dalupotha	Colombo
13	Miss. Nadeesha K. Piumi	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
14	Miss. Shanali Fernando	Peradeniya	Science	Kurana	Colombo
15	Mr. Vinod Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
16	Mr. Ishan Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
17	Mr. Sumudu Tissera	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
18	Mr. Lakshan Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
19	Mr. Adeepa Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
20	Mr. Shan Tissera	Eastern Uni.	Medical	Negombo	Colombo
21	Miss. Ridmi Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Negombo	Colombo
22	Mr. C. A. Soza	Peradeniya	Science	Negombo	Colombo
23	Miss. Roshika De Mell	Peradeniya	Science	Negombo	Colombo
24	Miss. Ishani Rajapaksha	Peradeniya	Art	Kibulapitiya	Colombo
25	Miss. Manisha Rajapaksha	Peradeniya	Art	Kibulapitiya	Colombo
26	Mr. Primash Morapitiya	Peradeniya	Engineering	Kandana	Colombo

27	Miss. Nemesha Fernando	Peradeniya	Science	Nagoda	Colombo
28	Mr. Shane Alexander	Peradeniya	MGT	Kandana	Colombo
29	Mr. Rukland Kularathne	Colombo	Science	Kandana	Colombo
30	Mr. Manoj Prasanna	Peradeniya	Engineering	Kandana	Colombo
31	Miss. Nipuni Saparamadu	Peradeniya	Dental	Kandana	Colombo
32	Miss. Dilhara perera	Peradeniya	Art	Kandana	Colombo
33	Mr. H. S. C. Silva	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ragama	Colombo
34	Mr. Heshan Perera	Peradeniya	Dental	Ragama	Colombo
35	Miss. Ranilka Perera	Peradeniya	Engineering	Seeduwa	Colombo
36	Mr. W. Dinuk Thamel	Peradeniya	MGT	Ja-Ela	Colombo
37	Mr. Nirosch Manthinu	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ja-Ela	Colombo
38	Mr. Kalana Weerawardana	Wayamba	MGT	Kandana	Colombo
39	Miss. Imasha Fernando	Wayamba	MGT	Negombo	Colombo
40	Mr. Edrian Liyanage	Wayamba	MGT	Daluwakotuwa	Colombo
41	Miss. Dilrusha Liyanage	Peradeniya	Medical	Daluwakotuwa	Colombo
42	Miss. Haidy Perera	Peradeniya	Science	Daluwakotuwa	Colombo
43	Miss. Nisansala Fernando	Wayamba	Agri, MGT	Dalupotha	Colombo
44	Mr. Nisitha Sithum	Kelaniya	Health Sci.	Dalupotha	Colombo
45	Miss. Shehara Teshani	Kelaniya	Science	Dalupotha	Colombo
46	Mr. Tharaka Costha	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ja-Ela	Colombo
47	Mr. Sasindu Perera	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ja-Ela	Colombo
48	Mr. Shehan Vanderputt	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ja-Ela	Colombo
49	Mr. B. S. V. Rodrigo	Peradeniya	Science	Ja-Ela	Colombo

50	Miss. Nilanka Muthumali	Peradeniya	Medical	Ja-Ela	Colombo
51	Miss. Sajana Perera	Peradeniya	Science	Ja-Ela	Colombo
52	Miss. Nadishani Bandara	Peradeniya	Medical	Ja-Ela	Colombo
53	Mr. Praveen Morais	Peradeniya	Science	Ja-Ela	Colombo
54	Mr. Avantha Prasad	Kelaniya	Science	Ja-Ela	Colombo
55	Miss. Nisansala sadamali	Moratuwa	Architecture	Ja-Ela	Colombo
56	Miss. Meeresha W.singhe	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ganemulla	Colombo
57	Mr. Madura Fernando	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ganemulla	Colombo
58	Mr. K. A. R. S.Rodrigo	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ganemulla	Colombo
59	Mr. W. M. M. Soysa	Peradeniya	Agriculture	Ragama	Colombo
60	Mr. S. A. Gunawardana	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ragama	Colombo
61	Mr. Sandalu Soysa	Peradeniya	Engineering	Ragama	Colombo
62	Miss. Tharushi Bhagaya	Wayamba	Science	Ragama	Colombo
63	Mr. Angelo Suriyakantha	Peradeniya	MGT	Maradana	Colombo
64	Miss. Andrina Vesanthan	Colombo	Medical	Maradana	Colombo
65	Miss. Shobitha Rajendran	Eastern Uni.	Medical	Maradana	Colombo
66	Miss. Dinithi K. Suriya	Colombo	Computing	Thibirigasyaya	Colombo
67	Mr. A. Gowthamar	Peradeniya	MGT	Colombo -15	Colombo
68	Miss.Mercy Victoria	Peradeniya	Art	Bandarawela	Badulla
69	Miss.Luckma Tharundi(B)	Peradeniya	Art	Bandarawela	Badulla

1.3 Details of the places visited

Date	Area	Places	Diocese
15 th Jan. '20	Kochchikade	Thoppuwa, Kochchikade, Daluwakotuwa,	Colombo
16 th Jan. '20	Kochchikade	Pallansena, Udangawa, Bambukuliya	Colombo
21 st Jan. '20	Maradana	Colombo 10	Colombo
22 nd Jan. '20	Ja-Ela	Wattala, Dehiyagatha, Ganemulla, Kapuwatta ,Kadana, Nagoda, Ja-Ela, Kalaeliya, Makavita, Bollatha	Colombo
24 th Jan. '20	Negombo	Wellavidiya, Dalupotha, Eththukala	Colombo
25 th Jan. '20	Negombo	Dalupotha	Colombo
14 th Feb. '20	Negombo	Munnakkaraya, Kadirana, Kimbulapitiya, Negombo,	Colombo
15 th Feb. '20	Negombo	Seeduwa, Kurana, Welihena, Daluwakotuwa.	Colombo
03 rd Mar. '20	Ragama	Kadana, JaEla, Ragama, Batagama, Waboda, Walpola, Kurukulawa, Kapuwatta	Colombo
09 th June.,20	Bandarawela	Bandarawela ,ObadaElla	Badulla

1.4 Sri Lanka University Catholic Students' Movement:

On 18th January 2020, the members of the Sri Lanka University Catholic Students' Movement (SLUCSM) and the National Chaplain came together at Joe-Neth Centre, Colombo, to discuss various matters pertaining to the University Chaplaincy.

In the meeting the following were agreed:

- To assist the poor students in their education and to raise funds for the SLUCSM, through the following projects: car-wash, pen project and flag day.
- To reach the affluent Parish Priests with an appeal for help for the special programs of the movement.
- To have inter-university chaplains' meetings to promote awareness among them about the Mission to University students.

1.5 Meeting the President of the International University Catholic Students Movement:

It was a privilege that I met Mr. Ravi Tissera, the newly elected President of the International Catholic University Students Movement, on 23rd January, 2020, at the Fatima Church, Colombo. In our meeting, he expressed his desire to assist the Sri Lankan Unit in organizing the meetings

and seminars for its members. He did not hesitate to recall the memories and the influential legacy left behind by late Rev. Fr. Tissa Balasuriya OMI who was at one time, the Chaplain of the Asian University Students.

1.6 Liturgy:

The hostility to foreign Languages is not a new phenomenon in the local universities. However, it is important that the university students are made to be convinced of the importance of learning English due to the globalization and exchange of the Human Resources in the Global Market. It is in this context that I, as the Chaplain, introduced the scripture readings in English in the Holy Mass in the Chapel of the University of Peradeniya. As a result, I noticed that most of them are interested in coming forward to read the Scripture Readings in English at the Holy Eucharist.

2. The Month of February

2.1 Visiting the Faculties:

Catholic Students do study in almost all the faculties of the University of Peradeniya. We find them from the first year to the final year. Adding a little bit of creativity and innovation to my University Apostolate, for the first time in the history of the Catholic Chaplaincy, I have decided to visit and meet the students in their own faculties.

2.1.1 Purpose of the Faculty Visits:

- To come to know the students personally and spending time with them
- To share their griefs, sorrows, hopes, aspirations and anxieties.
- To engage in a fruitful discussion between the students and the Chaplain
- To Strengthen the unity, harmony, equality and tolerance among the Catholic Students of the same faculty
- To gather them for a group prayer and faith Sharing
- To create more awareness of the Charism of St. Henry Newman, who is the Patron Saint of the University students

2.1.2 Medical Faculty:

Having convinced the Catholic students in the Medical and the Dental Faculties of the importance of visiting the faculties as a new venture in Catholic Chaplaincy, with great enthusiasm, I made my first official visit to these Faculties on 30th January 2020 and had a small prayer service and a

faith sharing session. The Senior Medical and Dental students shared their experiences with the Chaplain and the Junior students. This meeting was followed by a sharing of refreshments.

2.1.3 Engineering Faculty:

On Monday, 17th Feb, 2020, I had the opportunity to visit the faculty of Engineering and to meet the Catholic Students of the faculty. The meeting was arranged by Mr. Sumudu Thissera, a student of the third year Engineering and also the present President of the Newman Society of the University. At this special meeting, I was able to encourage the First Years to face the life challenges which come on their way especially during the season of ragging. A special time was allocated for prayers and faith sharing. The refreshments they shared added joy to the meeting.

2.1.4 Observations:

2.1.4.1 As the chaplain, my observation is that our Catholic Students are very close to one another.

The seniors are very much concerned about the adjustments of the freshers and safeguarding the junior Catholic Students. I was really impressed by the fellowship and collaboration that the Seniors show to Newcomers.

2.1.4.2 I was happy with their enthusiasm for works of Christian charity.

2.1.4.3 I was delighted at their willingness to have regular meetings.

2.1.4.4 I was happy to see the so-called ‘secularized’ members also taking part in these meetings.

They are a separate group called ‘The Anti-Ragging Group’ who do not mix with any active movement including the chaplaincy activities.

2.1.4.5 I see the need of meeting them regularly in view of winning them to the Lord as they have abandoned practicing Catholicism in the university set up.

2.1.5 Meeting of the University Chaplains with the Bishop:

The Chaplains of the universities were called for a meeting with Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, the Bishop of Chilaw, who is the Bishop in charge of Catholic Education and the University Education, on 28th February 2020, at 10 am at Balcombe Place, Colombo. The Chaplains who attended the meeting were Rev. Fr. Jude Chrisantha (Diocese of Colombo), Rev. Fr. Dimuthu Fonseka (Diocese of Kurunagala) and Rev. Fr. Ruwan Perera OMI (National Chaplain / Peradeniya). The absent Chaplains conveyed me their excuses.

The requests made by Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Valence Mendis from the Chaplains:

1. Improve the personal contacts with the students.
2. Inculcate in the students a Christ centered Spirituality.
3. Frequently organize liturgical activities with students.
4. Conduct regular retreats for the Students.
5. Visiting the students on the campus and giving them value education.
6. Organize workshops, seminars and retreats at the national level.

3. The Month of March

3.1 UOP was visited by SLUCSM:

The Catholic Chaplaincy of Peradeniya was visited by the members of the Sri Lanka University Catholic Students' Movement (SLUCSM) from 29th Feb. to 01st, March 2020. It was their 05th Committee Meeting of the year. The Catholic Chaplain, Fr. Ruwan Perera OMI hosted them with meals and provided them with accommodation in the Chaplaincy.

3.1.1 Aim of the meeting:

To enhance the spirit of good fellowship among the Committee Members and to deepen the understanding of the Catholic faith.

3.1.2 Methods and Means adopted:

- Meeting with the National Coordinator and sharing their ideas
- Participating in the Holy Mass and a prayer service
- Discussion among the Committee members
- Singing session and Social gathering
- Sightseeing around the University premises
- Having lunch at the Ramanathan Hall

3.2 Welcoming the Freshers to the UOP Chaplaincy.

Despite the difficulties in arranging a grand event of this scale due to pre-arranged programs in their respective faculties and language barrier, we were able to have the welcome ceremony of the freshers on 11th March 2020 at the Catholic Chaplaincy. The ceremony began with the Benediction and with a session of silent prayer. Then, after the Holy Mass, the New Comers took promises with lit candles in their hands before the Statue of Our Lady of Seat of Wisdom, to live an

exemplary life during their stay in the university. Many participated in this program organized by the President and Committee Members of the Newman Society under the guidance of their Chaplain, Fr. Ruwan Perera OMI. Thereafter, the president of the Newman Society, Mr. Sumudu Thisera welcomed the freshers, all the students and the distinguished members gathered at the Newman Hall. Dr. Manil Fonseka, who is the current treasurer of Newman Society, addressing the gathering gave an inspiring talk with his rich experiences of living and teaching at the University. At the end of the Function, the refreshments were served for all.

3.2.1 Purpose:

In the pluralist and multicultural society, the universities are called *the Centers of Dialogue* which can produce men and women with a great vision and personalities. In the same way, our Catholic Chaplaincy is a place where the students can engage in dialogue between the young men and women. In the process, they are welcome to re-think and break down if necessary, the unhealthy traditional attitudes and get rid of prejudices in relation to caste, race, classes and cultural-religious-social values.

Thus, our Catholic Chaplaincy demands an openness of mind, flexibility and a readiness to understand the other with many differences.

3.2.2 Our Aims:

- To expose the Freshers to the committed love of Jesus of Christ
- To accompany them and share their joys and sorrows
- To get them involved in the activities of the Newman Society
- To develop the values of freedom and responsibility
- To train and form Catholic leaders in view of Community development
- To create an atmosphere of love, understanding and generosity
- To provide an atmosphere of relaxation for the fatigued students
- To help them to adjust and persevere in their academic journey
- To understand them in their struggles of socio, political and ideological nature
- To help them in their financial difficulties
- To provide scholarships for poor students with the assistance of benefactors
- To be with them in their frustrations and failures
- To direct them in their just demands

4. The Month of April

4.1 COVID 19

Though I started the month of March with much enthusiasm to visit the homes of the university students living in the Districts of Colombo, Gampaha and Puttalam, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, I was unable to do so. The Government also decided to close all the Universities in Sri Lanka in this period of anxiety and uncertainty. It is in this context that the National Catholic University Students in Sri Lanka came to the forefront to do many activities with their own initiatives. The following are the initiatives and programs carried out by the Committee Members of SLUCSM. For further information, refer to the Activity Report March-June 2020.

- Formulating a prayer in English, Sinhala and Tamil to protect all peoples from this pandemic.
- Starting a Fund-Raising Project to help the needy during this difficult time.
- Starting to distribute dry rations to the Catholic, Christian and Buddhist Institutions.
 - Sahana Medura – Ja-Ela
 - St. Matins Elders Home - Kotugoda
 - Ladani Homes - Haldanduwana, Dankotuwa
 - St. Joseph Elders' home, Kotagedara
 - Sarana Sevena, Mavilmada
 - Holy Cross Children's Home , Marawila
 - Canaan Children's Hostel, Kopai
 - St. Joseph's Elders' Home, Uppuweli
- Giving dry rations to the families of the selected poor University Students.
- Commemoration of the Easter Sunday attack.

5. Acknowledgements

- Hereby I wish to express my sentiments of gratitude to Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence D. Mendis for his accompaniment, encouragement, guidance and generous support in carrying out my ministry as the Chaplain to University students.
- I also wish to thank Rt. Rev. Dr. Harold Anthony, the Bishop of Kurunegala for his promptness in settling the financial requirements of the chaplaincy.

- I am also grateful to Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, the Bishop of Kandy, for his dedicated role in various area including financial matters. His Accountant, Mr. Victor, is also gratefully remembered.
- I also thank Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Colombo for his generous support.
- My thanks also go to Very Rev. Fr. Roshan Silva, omi for his continuous guidance and encouragement.

Fr. W. Ruwan Prasanna Perera, omi

Chaplain to Catholic Students,

University of Peradeniya,

Peradeniya.

June 30, 2020

Mobile: 0779754451

N.B.: The photographs of the activities of the Chaplaincy are annexed below.



WELCOME TO THE NEWMAN FAMILY



THE NEWMAN SOCIETY UOP

