



To the people of God on the occasion of the AD LIMINA VISIT (4 – 9 February 2018)

The Ad Limina visit is formally called "ad limina apostolorum," which means "to the thresholds of the apostles" Peter and Paul, who were martyred in Rome. This visit is made by the Ordinaries of a Region (Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei), which include the Cardinal; Archbishops and Bishops in charge of a Diocese.

Traditionally, this visit serves as an occasion for the Shepherd of each diocese to draw inspiration as well as guidance from the Universal Catholic Church in which Pope Francis; the Supreme Pontiff is the successor of Peter, the Apostle. The Archbishop and Bishops as successors of the Apostles, work in collaboration and communion with the Pope.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei's Ad Limina visit is set on the 4th to 9th February 2018.

The Ad Limina consists of three parts.

1. The first part entails a personal visit to the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul. This is a very spiritual and inspiring time of the Ad Limina because it connects the present Successor to the Apostles (Bishops, Archbishops and Cardinal) to the two major Apostles credited with the spreading of the faith. They draw strength and renewal from this visit to the tombs.
2. The second part is a visit and interview with the Holy Father which will be held on the 8th February, 2018. This is a time when the Cardinal, Archbishops and Bishops renew their obedience and loyalty to Pope Francis who is the successor of Peter, and receive his teaching in the form of a reflection and they render oral reports on the state of their individual Arch/dioceses. This gives the Bishops, Archbishops and Cardinal a chance to be in solidarity with the Pope and each other.
3. The third part is the scheduled visits to the various offices of the Roman Curia, presenting the written report which is presented to the Secretariat of the State. Each diocese is sent a questionnaire of the information being requested by the Vatican. This quinquennial (5 year) report provides statistical and written descriptions of all the priests, deacons, religious, and laity serving in the diocese; the state of the sacramental life of the diocese; the financial health of the diocese as a whole; the types of programs being offered which can range from prison ministry to evangelization to family life to ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue; the process of catholic education in Catholic Mission Schools and at parishes; evangelization efforts to the active, inactive and unchurched; and the current status of our

priestly vocations. This report also presents the successes and challenges since the last report given.

It is in the same light that the Gospel today speaks to us as in “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” The Good News today is the blessings of the Ad Limina visit which will be fulfilled in God’s time. The Ad Limina visit is the seed of the Kingdom of God that is near, close to us in which the Cardinal, Archbishops, Bishops, the Emeriti as well as all the people of God will receive through the shower of God’s Word and the warmth of God’s love. These graces will be experienced tangibly through the seat of Peter, in the encounter with our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

The call to repent can be seen as the journey of going Home where the seat of Peter is and it is also a call for renewal, a change of perception and a new experience of meeting Christ through the Holy Father and through meetings with other offices which remind us of our universality as the one body of Christ. This unity plays a very important role in the Church. It brings to life the words of St. John in chapter 17, 22-23 which states, *“The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

Believing that God’s kingdom in our midst is an act of faith and thus, we continue to proclaim the Good News of our encounter with Jesus. This encounter will spur us to go out, to see and call the others to form communities of faith wherever we are. Ultimately, the daily encounter with Jesus will transform us in becoming missionary disciples of hope.

In conclusion, we wish for all Catholics, through prayer and solidarity, to feel a part of the Ad Limina visit, which confirms and celebrates that which we profess each week when we express our belief in the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'. Our faith was handed down to us from Jesus through the apostles and as Archbishops and Bishops we are charged with the enormous responsibility of continuing that tradition. The Ad Limina visit is an important physical and spiritual milestone in the carrying out of that ministry. May the Holy Spirit empower us and May Mary our Mother intercede for us!

United in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sebastian Francis". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis
Diocese of Penang

3rd Sunday after Epiphany: 20 - 21 January 2018

Readings: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20