



ARCHDIOCESE OF CACERES
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP
PILGRIM CITY OF NAGA, PHILIPPINES

M E S S A G E

My warm greetings and heartfelt blessings to all devotees of Ina, Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

It is with profound joy and deep gratitude that we celebrate, in this 316th Year of our Peñafrancia Fiesta and 144th year of devotion to the Divino Rostro, the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Caceres. It was in the year 1951, that the local Church of Caceres was elevated to an Archdiocese, “giving birth” to and spiritually nurturing its two suffragan dioceses of Legazpi and Sorsogon. In this spirit of festivity and thanksgiving, we embrace the theme for this year’s Peñafrancia celebration, **Ina: Nurturing a Growing Church**. This theme resonates deeply with our archdiocesan pastoral thrust, *Gabos Kaayon, Gabos may Gibuhon*, which highlights the second pillar of a synodal Church, that is, Participation.

In sacred scripture, Mary stands as a spiritual mother who calls every faithful to participate in the Church by directing them to follow Jesus. Her explicit call to action occurs at the Wedding at Cana, where she commands the servants – and all believers – saying, “Do whatever He tells you.” (*John 2:5*) Mary’s whole life is a model of active participation in God’s plan, from her “fiat” to her steadfast presence at the foot of the cross, where Jesus entrusted her to us as Mother of the Church.

As our beloved Ina, Our Lady of Peñafrancia has been given to us as a tender and guiding mother. The theme beautifully mirrors her maternal care for our growing Church. Through her nurturing love, she accompanies us as we strive to become a truly synodal Church building the Kingdom of God in our time. Our devotion to her has been an important element and a powerful motive towards our greater participation in the life and mission of the Church. Our Marian devotions become divine impetus that propel us towards fervent participation in the Church’s programs and activities. Thus, a true devotee of Ina goes beyond seeking answered prayers, intercession and healing, but all the more is called to partake actively in the very life of the Church. What we have lovingly received must also be faithfully lived.

Nurtured by Ina and formed through our rich history, we are invited to mature into a Church that participates actively, walks in truth, and safeguards the vulnerable. We are called to welcome one another, to listen attentively, and to accompany our brothers and sisters so that every voice is heard, every person is valued, and every member can contribute. Ina’s nourishing love is ought to form us

to become more generous and active in charity. Though we possess diverse charisms and talents, we remain one in mission as workers in the Lord's vineyard. In this Peñafrancia celebration and Jubilee year, let us deepen our Marian devotion with truth, integrity, and accountability. Every baptized person – clergy and laity, leaders and ordinary faithful alike – must be formed in right conscience of truth and fostered into moral integrity. Genuine devotion does not mean silence in the face of wrongdoing. While we pursue justice with firmness, we must also attend with compassion to the needs of the poor and those on the margins. Ina's tender protection urges us likewise to care for our needy brethren. Furthermore, a Church that truly nurtures must be safe. Mary as a nurturing mother desires all of us to protect the vulnerable so that every wound is healed and every trust is restored. Guided by our commitment to a Church in which everyone participates and has a vital role, let us also strive to make our community a safe place where unity, solidarity and charity naturally flourish among us.

On this joyous occasion, I impart to you my paternal blessing. I pray that every devotee and pilgrim who turns to the maternal protection of Ina, implores her help or seeks her intercession will not be left unaided.

May Our Lady of Peñafrancia and her Son, the *Divino Rostro*, who call us to active participation in a synodal Church, continue to nurture our faith, deepen our devotion, and guide us toward a life of loving service, transparency and steadfast safeguarding of the flock entrusted to us.

Viva la Virgen! Viva el Divino Rostro!

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Archbishop of Caceres