



# CHURCH OF CEYLON

## DIOCESE OF COLOMBO



Rt. Revd. Dushantha Rodrigo  
**Bishop of Colombo**

*Our Ref :*  
*Your Ref :*

### **Message from the Bishop of Colombo for the 78th Independence Day of Sri Lanka**

As the nation commemorates 78 years of being a sovereign state, it is a moment for us to celebrate the diversity that enriches the social, economic, and political fabric of the island we belong to.

Our history has taught us many lessons—lessons we must heed as we continue to live together in our island nation. The diversity we see around us, amidst the verdant plantations and fields that nourish human, animal, and all living beings, is a call that goes out to every citizen: to reach out to one another, to bring out the best in all, so that we may live lives that sustain and enrich life as a whole.

We have learned to face the harsh realities of war and disaster—natural, economic, and social—where human life has taken a severe beating, yet has been forced to rise from the ashes of violence and destruction and from the mud and earth that enveloped families already struggling under heavy economic blows. Life has often been unbelievably difficult, lived amidst great uncertainty, but resilience has carried us forward.

The Government, in its second year of rule, is under tremendous pressure to help the poorest of the poor make ends meet and to raise the living standards of people who have lived below the poverty line for most of their lives. What is needed is systemic change—change that provides hope to all segments of society, especially the farmers and the plantation workers who, for more than 200 years, have labored without hope of liberation from the estates to which they have been confined, and with little or no justice in the wages they receive for their toil.

There have been mistakes made and setbacks with respect to the much anticipated educational reforms. This reform process commenced several years ago. I call upon the Government and the Opposition to collaborate on this vital issue, for the process of stakeholder consultation to be intensified, and a policy developed to produce youth who can think critically, inspire others and provide leadership for the country as it faces daunting challenges in the future.



## CHURCH OF CEYLON DIOCESE OF COLOMBO



Rt. Revd. Dushantha Rodrigo  
Bishop of Colombo

Our Ref :  
Your Ref :

The Diocese remains concerned that the process of drafting a new constitution has not commenced. It is important that the citizens of this country participate actively in such a process. Such a process takes time. The abolition of the Executive Presidency, electoral reform, secure and effective devolution of power, strengthening the Bill of Rights and Independent Commissions are some of the important areas of reform so that governance may be accountable and truly reflect the will of the people.

We note with concern that the National Commission on Women that was established to function as an independent entity and provide leadership on women's empowerment has not received the requisite resources and support to do so. We call upon the Government to address this matter as a matter of priority.

As we journey through our next year as a sovereign nation, may our lives be interwoven with truth, justice, equality, equity, and respect for all. May the four major religions practiced in our land—forming the bedrock of our nation—help us rise above narrow, exclusive claims and build an inclusive community that lives in peace and harmony.

**May God bless Sri Lanka.**

*+Dushy Rodrigo*

**The Right Reverend Dushantha Rodrigo  
Bishop of Colombo**