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### Message of Felicitation

It is with joy that I send this message for the occasion of the Thanksgiving Mass for the Canonization of the Apostle of Sri Lanka and son of Goa on the 15th of March at the Cathedral of Christ the light, to be presided over by His Excellency Bishop Michael Barber of Oakland.

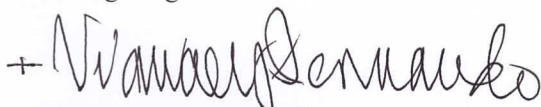
The Canonization process has been long awaited and yearned for by so many in Sri Lanka, Goa, and by numerous devotees around the world. Our hearts are filled with gratitude to God Almighty for the great blessing of having our beloved Joseph Vaz declared a Saint of the Universal Church. We thank God also for having inspired Pope Francis to Canonize Blessed Joseph Vaz on his Holiness' memorable visit to Sri Lanka in January this year.

The Canonization is, however, not the end of a journey. It is in way a, beginning, as we are now challenged to emulate his tremendous example of eminent sanctity and burning zeal. St. Joseph Vaz was an Evangelizer par excellence, and he was centuries ahead in his missionary methods of inculturation, respect for other religions and above all for the example he gives us of total dedication in shepherding a deserted flock. If St. Joseph Vaz could have achieved, what he did, with no human resources and with no assistance from political and religious authorities of his time, the laity, religious and clergy, today, have no excuse in committing themselves with greater zest and dedication to make Jesus and the good news known to those around us.

May this celebration of thanksgiving be a launching pad to all devotees of this great Saint to make him their model and exemplar of evangelization and to strive towards personal holiness and rededicate themselves to their baptismal commitment.

I am grateful to Mrs. Filomena Saraswati Giese, the President of the Joseph Naik Vaz Institute and all her collaborators for their relentless pursuit of the Cause of Canonization and all their efforts to make this greatest Missionary that Asia has ever produced, known, in view of a deep commitment to New Evangelization in our times.

I wish God's abundant blessing upon this celebration and as the Promoter of the Cause of Canonization I wish to express my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Bishop Michael Barber S.J. of Oakland, for presiding over the Holy Mass of Thanksgiving.

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+Bishop Vianney Fernando,  
Bishop of Kandy and Promoter of the Cause of Canonization  
Sri Lanka