DALIT LIBERATION SUNDAY

8TH NOVEMBER 2026



NCCI

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Commission on Dalit Concerns
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To Liberate To Empower
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Foreword

Water gives life. But in our villages and towns, water has also been made to carry the poison of caste. A Dalit sibling drinks from a tank and is hospitalised because human waste was mixed into it. This is not an accident of history—it is the sin of purity that still flows through our society and sometimes through our churches.

This year our reflection meets two streams of the ecumenical movement: the Ecumenical Water Movement, which insists that water is a right and not a privilege, and the Season of Creation, which calls us to hear the groaning of the earth. In India, these are not separate cries. The Dalit who is denied water and the river that is choked by greed are wounded by the same idolatry of domination.

Jesus stood and cried, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink" (John 7:37). The living water of Christ knows no caste. It flows to the outcaste, the landless, the manual scavenger, the Dalit woman. If we are baptised into these waters, we cannot still drink from the wells of caste. As the NCCI has affirmed, "No one can serve Christ and caste - practice of caste is sin, and untouchability a crime.'

This liturgy is a call to repentance and to solidarity. Let us confess where the Church has been silent. Let us listen to those denied both water and dignity. And let us commit ourselves to a Church and Society where living water flows freely—beyond caste, for the healing of all creation.

Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer
General Secretary
National Council of Churches in India

Preface

This year's liturgy for Dalit Sunday has woven together the metaphor of water, which is a lifegiving scarce resource and the theme of 'justice to the poor' relating them to the Indian context where Dalits still struggle and cry out for social justice. It also reminds us of our need to repent and of our responsibility to be actively engaged in building a free, fair and sustainable society.

Water and the Word of God in the Bible convey insights about spirituality, morality and social ethics. Together, they point to stewardship and justice as important principles, which in turn demand the dismantling of hierarchical and dominating institutions such as caste.

The liturgy serves its ultimate purpose of drawing us closer to Jesus Christ, who is the living water, the true source of life.

I urge one and all to use this liturgy during worship on Dalit Sunday.

Rev.Dr.Y.Moses
Chairperson, Commission on Dalit Concerns.

Appeal

Every year, the second Sunday of November is observed as Dalit Liberation Sunday by the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). This observance is an important opportunity for our Christian communities to reflect on the struggles of Dalit Christians, stand in solidarity with them in their pursuit of freedom, equality and dignity, and renew our commitment to building an inclusive Church and society.

This year, Dalit Liberation Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday, 8 November 2026, with the theme "Living Waters – Beyond Caste" (John 4:5–14).

In the Gospel, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well and breaks through the barriers of social exclusion, prejudice and division. By reaching out to her with respect and compassion, Jesus demonstrates that God's grace and love are not restricted by social status, community or human-made boundaries. The living water that Jesus offers invites us to move beyond caste discrimination and build communities rooted in equality, mutual respect, justice and human dignity.

As followers of Christ, we are called not only to proclaim the Gospel but also to examine our own attitudes, practices and institutions. Caste-based discrimination and exclusion have no place in a Church that professes the equal dignity of every human person. Dalit Liberation Sunday is therefore not merely a day of remembrance or prayer; it is a call to conversion, solidarity and concrete action.

In this spirit, we earnestly appeal to every diocese, parish, congregation, educational institution and Christian organisation to observe Dalit Liberation Sunday meaningfully.

With prayerful greetings and in the spirit of Christ's solidarity,

Fr. Devasagayaraj
Secretary, CBCI Office for SC/BC

Introduction

Water has emerged as a significant theological, ecological, and justice-related concern in contemporary ecumenical discourse. Across the world, churches and ecumenical movements have increasingly highlighted water as a matter of human dignity, environmental sustainability, economic justice, and the right to life. The growing water crisis, marked by scarcity, pollution, unequal access, and the commodification of natural resources, exposes the deep inequalities embedded in social, economic, and political systems. These global concerns invite the Church to recognise water not merely as a natural resource, but as a gift of God entrusted to humanity and creation, demanding responsible stewardship, equitable sharing, and collective action.

Against this global ecumenical concern, the theme for Dalit Liberation Sunday 2026, "Living Waters: Beyond Caste," draws inspiration from John 4:5–14, where Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. In a society structured by religious hostility, gender discrimination, and social boundaries, Jesus initiates a transformative encounter that challenges exclusion and offers the promise of living water. The well becomes a meeting place where entrenched divisions are confronted and the possibility of renewed relationships emerges. The passage invites us to reflect on the relationship between the living water of Christ and the struggle for communities in which every person enjoys dignity, equality, and the fullness of life.

The theme urges the Churches in India, where access to water has historically been shaped by caste hierarchies. The Dalit communities continue to experience, discrimination in accessing wells, public water sources, sanitation facilities, and other essential resources. These experiences demonstrates that the water crisis is not merely ecological or economic; it is also social, political, and deeply connected to questions of caste, power, and human dignity.

For the Church and the wider ecumenical movement, "Living Waters: Beyond Caste" therefore establishes a vital connection between global water justice and the local struggle for Dalit liberation. It challenges churches to connect ecological responsibility with social justice, recognising that the protection of creation cannot be separated from the liberation of oppressed communities. It also calls Christian institutions to examine their own practices, challenge caste-based exclusion, and work towards equitable access to water and other common resources.

As the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), through its Commission on Dalits, observes Dalit Liberation Sunday 2026, this theme calls the Church to move from theological reflection to prophetic action.

The living water offered by Christ becomes a sign of hope for a world thirsting for justice, reconciliation, and equality. To move beyond caste is to ensure that the waters of life flow freely for all, without discrimination, exclusion, or hierarchy, embodying God's vision of a just and inclusive community.

Rev.B.Asher Noah
Executive Secretary-Commission on Dalits
National Council of Churches in India

Dalit Liberation Sunday
8th November 2026
Theme: "Living Waters: Beyond Caste" *John 4:10*
National Council of Churches in India &
Catholic Bishops Conference of India

Altar Arrangement: At the front of the worship space, a transparent vessel or earthen pot containing clean water may be placed beside a green plant. These symbols represent water, land and the life sustained by creation. The vessel is to be at the front; it should be visible to all. The alter to also have broken pieces of earthen pot all over the table.

Opening words

1. **Gathering: Drawing to the Waters**

The broken pieces on the alter table emphasising how Dalit communities know it as a sign of their own condition, also symbolises ours: a broken humanity and the collapse of human justice. It speaks of the violence we inflict, the silences we keep, and the systems we uphold that deny dignity to others. It echoes a call to repentance, to restoration, and to a renewed participation in God's justice. Alternatively, the Parai may be played three times as a call to gathering.

2. **Invocation:**

One[1]: God of the broken, you promised us justice with a rainbow, and so we gather to worship you. Lead us into life, give us living waters. Come amidst us and quench our thirst for justice and peace. In Christ's name, we pray,
Many: Amen

3. **Call to Worship:**

One: Come, all who are thirsty,
Many: We come to the waters

One: Come, you who have been turned away from the well,
Many: We come to the waters

One: Come, you who have been told you are unclean,
Many: We come to the waters.

One: Come, you who have built walls around the well,
Many: **We come to be washed of our pride.**

One: Come, let us worship the God of life.

[1] The worship will follow the use of "One" and "Many" for the responses. This choice reflects the belief that worship is not led by a single voice, but is a shared act of the whole community gathered before God. By replacing "Leader" with "One", we affirm that everyone has an equal place in the worship of God. It resists hierarchical language and embodies the justice and inclusivity we seek to live out.

Many: **We Come to the waters.**

4. **Opening Prayer:**

One: God of the pure and polluted waters, God of the wells and seas, you made water for every creature without distinction. We come before you with gratitude for water and grief over our divisions about who gets it. Gather us, O God, into the fellowship of your living waters. May our worship today open our eyes, disturb our complacency and strengthen our commitment to a world in which every person and every creature may flourish. In Christ's name we pray,

Many: **Amen.**

5. **Opening Song:** Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing/ or any other appropriate song in a regional language.

1. Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
   Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
   Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
   Call for songs of loudest praise.
   Teach me some melodious sonnet,
   Sung by flaming tongues above;
   Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
   Mount of Thy redeeming love.
2. Here I raise my Ebenezer:
   Here by Thy great help I've come;
   And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
   Safely to arrive at home.
   Jesus sought me when a stranger,
   Wand'ring from the fold of God;
   He, to rescue me from danger,
   Interposed His precious blood.
3. Oh, to grace how great a debtor
   Daily I'm constrained to be!
   Let that grace now, like a fetter,
   Bind my yielded heart to Thee.
   Let me know Thee in Thy fullness;
   Guide me by Thy mighty hand,
   Till, transformed, in Thine own image
   In Thy presence I shall stand.

6. **Testimony:**

- Invite one or two Dalit community members, not outsiders, to share in their own words. Where local testimony is not available, we may use documented public events (for example, the Mahad Satyagraha of 20 March 1927, or reports

of children punished for drinking from a common pot).[2] After each testimony, allow a time of silence.

7. **Prayers:** A member of the congregation may pray for all Dalit communities and the struggles they face;

8. **Reading:** John 4:1-30

9. **Reflection**: *(Prepared by CBCI)*

Key Scripture: John 4:13-14

"*Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water that I will give will never be thirsty." — John 4:13–14. The theme before us is very powerful: "Living Waters – Beyond Caste." The image of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well speaks directly to this theme. Jesus does something extraordinary. Jesus crosses social, religious, gender and ethnic boundaries to meet a person whom society had placed on the margins.*

Introduction:

The Gospel says: "A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'" — John 4:7. Jesus knew that Jews and Samaritans did not normally associate with one another.

The woman herself is surprised: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" — John 4:9. Jesus does not allow the divisions created by society to determine whom He will speak to, touch, love or welcome. This is the first message for us today: Where society has built walls, Jesus builds bridges.

1. Caste is not compatible with the Gospel

The Christian faith teaches that every human being possesses equal dignity because every person is created in the image of God. "So God created humankind in God's own image." — Genesis 1:27. Therefore, no human being can be considered inherently superior or inferior because of caste. St. Paul gives us a radical Christian vision: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." — Galatians 3:28. If we say that we believe in Christ but continue to practice caste discrimination, we have created a contradiction between our faith and our life.

[2] https://api.sci.gov.in/AMB/mahadsatyagraha.php https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/dalit-student-thrashed-by-school-principal-for-drinking-water-from-bottle-in-uttar-pradesh/article66503039.ece https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/indore/students-forced-to-drink-water-as-punishment/articleshow/54322888.cms https://lawrato.com/civil-legal-advice/punished-in-school-for-drinking-water-without-permission-49872 https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/dalit-boy-dies-after-being-assaulted-by-teacher-in-rajasthan-school/article65766467.ece

2. The Church must be a fountain, not a wall

Look at the image of today's theme. There are stones carrying the words: CASTE – DISCRIMINATION – EXCLUSION – INEQUALITY – UNTOUCHABILITY – DIVISION. But from those stones flows water. This is a beautiful symbol. The Church cannot allow the stones of discrimination to stop the living water of Christ from reaching every person. Jesus says: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink." — John 7:37–38. Jesus says: **"**Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." The living water of Christ is for everyone. Therefore, the Church must be a place where nobody is made to feel inferior**.**

3. Jesus does not merely give water; He restores dignity:

The Samaritan woman came to the well carrying a water pot. But she was also carrying many invisible burdens: social rejection, prejudice, loneliness, shame, exclusion. Jesus does not begin by condemning her. He begins with a conversation. He gives her dignity. He listens to her. He reveals Himself to her. And eventually she becomes a messenger of Christ. "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!" — John 4:29. The woman who came to the well as an outsider goes back to her community as a witness. This is liberation. Liberation is not simply giving someone something. Liberation is helping a person rediscover God-given dignity.

4. Liberation begins when we change our hearts

Dalit liberation is not only a political or social issue. It is also a spiritual conversion issue. The prophet Isaiah says: "Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." — Isaiah 1:17. And the prophet Micah asks: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" — Micah 6:8. Therefore, today's celebration asks each of us: Have I unknowingly participated in caste discrimination? Have I remained silent when someone was humiliated? Have I treated people differently because of their caste? Do our parishes truly welcome Dalit families? Do our schools, convents, seminaries and Church institutions practice equality? Do Dalit people have genuine participation in leadership and decision-making? These are not merely administrative questions. They are Gospel questions.

5. The final challenge

The Samaritan woman came to the well carrying a water jar. After meeting Jesus, she left the jar behind and ran to the village. Why? Because she had discovered something greater than ordinary water. She had discovered living water. Today, Jesus invites us to leave behind our own "jars": the jar of caste prejudice, the jar of superiority, the jar of discrimination, the jar of silence, the jar of indifference, the jar of exclusion. And Jesus invites us to become channels through which living water can flow. Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." — Amos 5:24. Living Waters.

Justice flowing like water.
Grace flowing like water.

Equality flowing like water.
Liberation flowing like water

10. Affirmation of Faith:

One: Let us profess our faith in the triune God.

Many: **We believe in God, Creator of water and earth, who made every person in the divine image. We believe that no one is born polluted, and no one is born to pollute. We believe in Jesus Christ, who borrowed water and sat at the well with a woman others deemed polluted, who touched those with leprosy, ate with the outcast, and was crucified outside the city gate. We believe that he is the Broken One, in whom God stands with all who are broken. We believe in the Holy Spirit, who moved over the waters at creation. We believe the Spirit makes one people from all castes, tongues and tribes. We believe in the Church, called to be a community without caste. We repent of every wall we have built, and we commit to break them down. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the liberation of the oppressed, the healing of creation and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

11. Intercessory Prayers:

i. One: For the Church, that it may become a house of prayer for all peoples, and that every congregation, diocese, synod and parish may give Dalit Christians full dignity, leadership and voice. God of the living waters,
Many: **Hear our prayer and lead us towards justice.**

ii. One: For Dalit communities in India, who face discrimination in access to water, sanitation, land and other common resources. Strengthen those who resist exclusion. Protect those who confront injustice, that the constitutional promise of equality (Article 17 abolishes untouchability) may become a living reality. God of the living waters,
Many: **Hear our prayer and lead us towards justice.**

iii. One: For water and the earth, that rivers, wells, tanks and glaciers may be protected; that water may not be privatised or poisoned; that communities most affected by climate change, drought and flood may be heard. Guide communities, public institutions, industries and governments towards responsible stewardship and equitable distribution. God of the living waters,
Many: **Hear our prayer and lead us towards justice.**

iv. One: We pray for women and girls who carry disproportionate burdens in collecting water, caring for families and sustaining communities. Protect them from violence and humiliation. Ensure that their knowledge, leadership and decisions shape the

policies and practices that affect their lives. God of the living waters,

Many: **Hear our prayer and lead us towards justice.**

v. One: For sanitation workers and manual scavengers: that the practice of manual scavenging may end in fact as well as in law, and that every worker may have dignity, safety and fair wages. God of the living waters,

Many: **Hear our prayer and lead us towards justice.**

vi. One: For those in authority: we pray for governments, local administrations, water authorities, civil society organisations and all who make decisions concerning water. Give them wisdom and integrity to protect water as a shared necessity of life, to ensure fair access and to address discrimination wherever it occurs. God of the living waters,

Many: **Hear our prayer and lead us towards justice.**

vii. **Many:** **God of the living waters, hear the prayers of your thirsty people. Make us channels of your justice, and barriers to your mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

12. Confession of Sins:

One: The prophet says: "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13). Let us confess how we have dug cisterns of caste and called them holy.

Many: **Holy God, fountain of living water, we confess that we have built walls around the well. We have separated the pew, the cup, the cemetery and the table. We have kept silent when our sisters and brothers were beaten for drinking water. We have used your Word to defend what you came to destroy. We have baptised in your name and then divided the baptised. Forgive us. Wash away the stain of casteism from our hearts and our churches. Make us honest, humble and ready to change, through Christ our Lord.**

13. Absolution:

One: Hear the good news. The one who was crushed has been raised. Christ, the thirsty one on the cross, is the spring of life for all. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Go and break down the walls that divide waters.

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

14. Our Common Commitment:

One: Let us commit ourselves to the work of the Lord

Many: With God's help, we will challenge injustice and stand with those who resist it. With God's help, we will seek repentance, accountability and shared leadership. With God's help, we will care for creation and defend the right to water. With God's help, we will walk in solidarity and respect the agency of those with whom we walk. With God's help, our worship will become action, our faith will become solidarity, and our hope will become a witness to God's abundant life. Amen.

15. Ministry of the Sacrament: If the Ministry of the Sacrament is celebrated, the liturgy of the respective ecclesial tradition may be followed from this point onwards, in accordance with the established liturgical practices of the participating Churches.

16. Commissioning: After the Communion

One: You have drunk from the same water. You have been washed in the same river. You are sent now to the wells of your own village, your own street, your own church.
Many: Send us, Lord, to open the well.

One: Go to the places where the cup is still refused.
Many: Send us, Lord, to open the well.

One: Go to the places where the church has been silent.
Many: Send us, Lord, to speak and to listen.

One: Go to the places where water is poisoned or sold.
Many: Send us, Lord, to guard the water of life.

One: Go to the rivers of living water.
People: **We go, in the name of the God who made the waters, the Christ who thirsted, and the Spirit who flows through all.**

17. Blessing:

One: Go into the world as people who have heard the cry of the thirsty. May God, who made the waters, bless you. May Christ, who thirsted on the cross, strengthen you. May the Holy Spirit, where the Spirit wills, move you. May the triune Divinity continue to be a part of our conversations and lead us and the creation into fullness of lives, now and forevermore.
Many: Amen

18. Final Hymn: For everyone born a place at the table

Verse 1:
For ev'ryone born, a place at the table,
For ev'ryone born, clean water and bread,
A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
For ev'ryone born, a star overhead.

Chorus
And God will delight when we are creators
Of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
Yes, God will delight when we are creators
Of justice, justice and joy.

Verse 2:
For woman and man, a place at the table,
And God will delight when we are creators
Of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
Yes, God will delight when we are creators
Of justice, justice and joy.

Verse 3
For young and for old, a place at the table,
A voice to be heard, a part in the song,
The hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
For young and for old, the right to belong.

Prepared by
Mr. Anugrah Brij
CNI- Diocese of Delhi

Dalit Liberation Sunday Themes (2007-2025)

2007: Put away Violence and Oppression, Execute Justice and Righteousness (Ezekiel 45:12)

2008: Seek Justice, rescue the oppressed (Isaiah 1:17)

2009: Crossing boundaries and building bridges: Overcoming prejudices (Matthew 15:28)

2010: Will not God bring justice to people who cry out to God day and night? (Luke 18:7)

2011: Our God with struggling people (Exodus 3:7-8)

2012: Break the barriers; build a world of equality

2013: “Celebrating Faith by Witnessing” (Deuteronomy 1:13-18)

2014: “Dalit Culture, Dalit history, Dalit pathos: Regaining the lost identity in Christ”

2015: “Climate, Caste, and Care for the Earth”

2016: “Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed (Jeremiah 21:12)

2017: Religious Freedom of Dalits

2018: As for Me and My household. We will serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15)

2019: Resist Caste: If one suffers all suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:26)

2020: Challenge Caste: Affirming the Dignity of Dalit Women

2021: God Says ‘NO’ to Caste Discrimination (Acts 10:28)

2022: All are Equal in Christ; Let’s dismantle Caste Division: Galatians3:28

2023: No One Can Serve Christ and Caste: Mathew; 6:24a

2024: Proclaiming the Good News, Setting the captives free: Luke 4: 18-19

2025: “For such a time as this: The Church in Mission with the oppressed" Esther 4:14.