



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb

Diocese of Thuckalay

Bishop's House, P B No: 12, Thuckalay PO,
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Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

As the universal Church is concluding the year of St Joseph on 8 December 2021, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, let us briefly meditate about Saint Joseph, Our Lord Jesus' legal and foster father. Because of that function which he performed in regard to Christ during his childhood and youth, he has been declared Patron or Protector of the Church, which continues Christ's image and mission in time and reflects them in history.

At first sight, there seems to be no material for a reflection on St Joseph, for what do we know of him, apart from his name and a few events that occurred in Our Lord's childhood? The Gospel does not record a single word from him; his language is silence. It was his attention to the angelic voices which spoke in his sleep; it was that prompt and generous obedience which was demanded from him; it was manual labour, in the most modest and fatiguing of forms, which earned Jesus the reputation of being "the son of the carpenter." There, is nothing else known of him, and it might well be said that he lived an unknown life, the life of a simple artisan, with no sign of personal greatness.

But that humble figure who was so near to Jesus and Mary, Christ's Virgin Mother, he who was so intimately connected with their life and so closely linked with the genealogy of the Messiah as to be the faithful and conclusive representative of the descendants of David, is revealed as being full of significance if we look at him attentively. He is seen truly to possess those qualities which the Church attributes to him in her liturgy, which the devotion of the faithful also attributes to him, and which gave rise to a series of invocations that have taken the form of a litany.

A celebrated modern shrine of the saint, erected through the efforts of a simple lay brother, Brother André of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, at Montreal in Canada, illustrates those qualities in a series of chapels arranged behind the high altar. All the chapels are dedicated to St Joseph in honour of the many titles which have been offered to him, such as Protector of Childhood, Protector of Spouses, Protector of the Family, Protector of the Workers, Protector of Virgins, Protector of Fugitives, Protector of the Dying, etc.

If we look carefully into his life that was apparently so unremarkable, we shall find that it was greater and more adventurous, more full of exciting events, than we are accustomed to assume in our hasty perusal of the Gospel story. The Gospel describes St Joseph as a Just Man. No greater praise of virtue and no higher tribute to merit could be applied to a man of humble social condition who was apparently far from being

equipped to perform great deeds. A poor, honest, hardworking, perhaps even timorous man, but one with unfathomable interior life, from which very singular directions and consolations came, bringing him also the logic and strength that belong to simple and clear souls, and giving him the power of making great decisions, such as that decision to put his liberty at once at the disposition of the divine designs, to make over to them also his legitimate human calling, his conjugal happiness, to accept the conditions, the responsibility and the burden of a family, but, through an incomparable virginal love, to renounce that natural conjugal love that is the foundation and the nourishment of the family; in this way he offered the whole of his existence in a total sacrifice to the imponderable demands raised by the astonishing coming of the Messiah, to whom he was to give the everlastingly blessed name of Jesus, whom he was to acknowledge as the effect of the Holy Spirit, and his own son only in a juridical and domestic way.

St Joseph was a committed man. He was totally committed to Mary, the elect of all the women of the earth and of history, and always his virgin spouse, never his wife physically. He was totally committed to Jesus, who was his offspring only by legal descendant, not by the flesh. He had the burdens, the responsibilities, the risks and the labours surrounding the holy family.

Saint Joseph personified the message that Jesus was to announce at the beginning of his public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth. He becomes the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises to great destinies, and he is the proof that in order to be good and genuine followers of Christ there is no need of great things; it is enough to have the common, simple, human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic.

This Saint's laborious and dignified poverty, can still be an excellent guide for us to follow the path traced by Christ's footsteps in the modern world. It can also eloquently instruct us in positive and honest wellbeing, so that we may avoid losing Christ's path in the complicated and giddy world of economics. It will also help us to avoid going too far on one side into tempting ambitions of conquest of temporal riches, and too far on the other side, into making use of poverty for ideological ends, as a power to rouse social hatred and systematic subversion.

Thus, St Joseph becomes an example for us to imitate him. We shall call upon him as our protector, as the Church has been wont to do in these recent times, for herself in the first place, for spontaneous theological reflection on the marriage of divine with human action in the great economy of the Redemption, in which economy, the divine one is wholly sufficient to itself. But human action, which is ours, though capable of nothing, is never dispensed from humble but conditional and ennobling collaboration with the divine.

The Church also calls upon him as her Protector because of a profound and most present desire to reinvigorate her ancient life with true evangelical virtues, such as shine forth in St Joseph. Finally, the Church invokes him as her Patron and Protector through her unshakeable trust that he to whom Christ willed to confide the care and protection of his own frail human childhood, will continue from heaven to perform his protective task in order to guide and defend the Mystical Body of Christ himself, which is always weak, always under attack, always in a state of peril. Finally, we call upon St Joseph for the world, trusting that the heart of the humble working man of Nazareth, now overflowing with immeasurable wisdom and power, still harbours and will always harbour a singular and precious fellow-feeling for the whole of humankind.

As we conclude the year of St Joseph, on a practical note, I suggest that we observe some of the following practices in our parishes on 12 December 2021.

- Let us honour the fathers of the families during Holy Mass on 12 December 2021 when we can meaningfully conclude the year of St Joseph with our people.

- We can decorate a statue of St Joseph or a Picture in the Church and recite the prayer to St Joseph with the people to conclude the year of St Joseph.
- We can organise a class / special talk / quiz on St Joseph for our people on the concluding day of the year of St Joseph.

Let us entreat the intercession of St Joseph and entrust ourselves and our Eparchy under his protecting hands so that we can continue to ministry with great vigour and enthusiasm!

NEWS AND EVENTS

Death of Mr Sounder Raj: The shocking news of the unexpected death of Mr Sounder Raj, beloved father of Rev. Fr Abhilash, was received in the evening of 1 November 2021. He died due to an accident that took place on his return from the Bishop's House after attending a meeting of the Vincent de Paul Society with our Vicar General. Mr Sounder Raj was a stalwart of Vincent de Paul in the Eparchy and an important member of the Eparchy who often represented it effectively among the people in the district. He was a great lay missionary with ardent love for the Syro-Malabar Church. He possessed a special quality of understanding the mind of the Church. He had a heart for the poor and the marginalised youth. He took leadership in introducing schemes and programmes for the empowerment of the people. As I was away in north-east India, I could receive the news only on the early morning of 2 November 2021. I cancelled all my programmes there and returned to Thuckalay on the same day. The funeral was held on 3 November 2021. Many priests and religious, members of the Vincent de Paul, friends and well-wishers attended the funeral. We all stand with Rev. Fr Abilash and his family in this moment of bereavement.

Online Priests' Conference: To finalise the preparations for the conclusion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Eparchy, we organised an online priests' conference on 5 November 2021. The Vicar General presented the entire programme for the three-day celebrations: the mega online quiz and cultural events on 12 November 2021, celebrations of the Silver Jubilee of the Episcopal Ordination of our Major Archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry on 13 November 2021 and the conclusion of the Jubilee celebrations on 14 November 2021. I am happy that all our Fathers attended the meeting.

Online Bible Convention: As the Eparchy could not organise the annual Bible Convention as in previous years due to the pandemic restrictions, we organised an on-line Bible Convention from 5 November 2021 to 7 November 2021. The event was aired from Christ the King Church, Palapallam. Rev. Fr Varghese Palathankal VC from Divine Retreat Centre, Chennai was the animator for the Convention. All priests conducted Holy Qurbana and made all arrangements for the online Convention in their respective parishes. The Sinai Retreat Centre and the Pulari Communications helped with the organisation. I inaugurated the Convention on the first day and the Vicar General concluded it on the last day. Many of our people were able to take part in it and they were very appreciative of the way it was organised. I express my sincere gratitude you, dear Fathers, for taking much interest in the spiritual welfare of our faithful and making all arrangements.

Sangamam Garment Unit Inauguration: In order to provide livelihood for the poor people living around Thuckalay and for making optimum use the infrastructure of Sangamam, KKSSS in partnership with V-Star Garment Company has established another garment unit at Sangamam. The initial work for the renovation was initiated before four months and additional facilities were installed for effective running of this cottage industry. I inaugurated the Sangamam Garment Unit on 8 November 2021 in the presence of Mr Joseph, V-Star Production Manager, Rev. Fr Aby Poovathumootil, Director of KKSSS, Rev. Fr Ajin Jose, Director of Sangamam and Rev. Sr Pavana CMC, in-charge of the Unit. Other priests, religious and

the employees of the garment production unit were also present. Although the total capacity is 80 employees, 55 women have already joined. Rev. Fr Ajin Jose worked very hard taking assistance from the Vicar General and the KKSSS Director in getting the entire facility ready. I am grateful to them all.

Pioneer Missionaries' Meet: During the Silver Jubilee year, the Eparchy organised a meeting of all the pioneering missionaries from our Mother Archdiocese of Changanasserry in order to appreciate their services to the Thuckalay Mission. We had initially planned to bring these missionaries, who are either working in different parishes or residing at the St Joseph's Priests Home, Ithithanam, Changanasserry to Thuckalay for the celebrations. However, taking into consideration the age of some of the priests coupled with the situation created by the pandemic, we decided to hold the celebration at Priests' Home in Changanasserry on 9 November 2021. Very Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General of the Eparchy, planned the event minutely with the help of Rev. Fr Zacharia Thomas, Director of the Priests' Home. Accompanied by the Vicar General and 14 priests from the Eparchy, I went there for the celebration. We met Archbishop Joseph Powathil in the morning in the Archbishop's House and felicitated him. Later, we went to the Priests' Home for the programme. It was attended by nearly 25 priests who served in different mission centres of our Eparchy. Archbishop Mar Joseph Perunthottam, Auxiliary Bishop Mar Joseph Tharayil and other priests living in the Priests' Home also joined the programme. We gave them some gifts as token of our appreciation and the programme was concluded with a meal.

Final Jubilee Meeting: To provide a boost to the preparations for the concluding Programme of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, we held the last meeting of the Silver Jubilee Monitoring Committee on 10 November 2021 at Padanthalumoodu. The details of the programmes were chalked out by the Committee and responsibilities were distributed.

Concluding Events of the Silver Jubilee: The final three days of celebrations of the Silver Jubilee began with an **Online Mega Open Quiz and Cultural Programme on 12 November 2021**. The programme was held from 7.00 pm to 8.30 pm and was organised by Pulari Communications. The Quiz on the Bible and the History of the Eparchy consisted of a set of 10 questions each of 5 rounds. After every round of Quiz, there were cultural programmes presented by various departments of the Eparchy. The participants were asked to submit the answers by 10.00 pm on the same day.

Earlier in the day, the Eparchy welcomed our **Major Archbishop His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry**. We were fortunate to have him with us for three days. Along with Rev. Fr Robin Jose and Rev. Fr Aby Poovathumoottil, I received him at the airport at 10.50 am. We reached Sangamam at 12.30 pm. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General and Rev. Fr Ajin Jose, Director welcomed him warmly.

The **Major Archbishop** was given a **reception by the FCC Sisters of Thuckalay Province** at Azhagamandapam at 4.00 pm. The Sisters from various convents were present during this event. The Sisters wished and felicitated him on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of his Episcopal Ordination. Rev. Sr Ancilin FCC, Provincial recalled with gratitude and appreciation the Episcopal ministry of the Major Archbishop in the Eparchy of Thuckalay and for the special love he had for the FCC Sisters.

On **13 November 2021** the priests, religious and members of the Pastoral Council gathered around the **Major Archbishop** to celebrate the **Silver Jubilee of his Episcopal Ordination** at Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai. It was on 2 February 1997, he was consecrated and installed as the first bishop of the newly established Eparchy of Thuckalay. He served the Eparchy in its initial stages for a period of 14 years before he was elected the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church in May 2011. Despite the heavy rain, the

programme went off well. Everyone enthusiastically welcomed the Major Archbishop. The Major Archbishop presided over the Holy Qurbana. The felicitation programme was organised at Aseer Auditorium after the Holy Qurbana.

During the felicitation addresses, the initial ministry of the Major Archbishop as the first bishop of the Eparchy were recalled. The challenges and difficulties that were faced and the wisdom with which he handled them were highlighted. In his address, the Cardinal thanked God for all the blessings that the Eparchy received during the past 25 years and appreciated the dedicated services of the priests and the religious. He was very vocal in expressing the tough time that the Church is going through and requested everyone to pray. The celebrations ended with a solemn lunch.

Earlier in the morning, the **Major Archbishop blessed and laid the foundation stone for the Presbytery at Paraicode** at 7.00 am in the presence of the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr Johnsila Arackaprampil and some of the parishioners.

The CMC Sisters of Thuckalay Province had the opportunity to welcome and felicitate the Major Archbishop at their Provincial House at Thuckalay in the evening. The programme began with Ramsa prayers. There was a brief meeting and dinner. Many Sisters from their various communities were present for the felicitation. Rev. Sr Pavana CMC, representing the Province, felicitated the Major Archbishop on his Episcopal Silver Jubilee.

The **Silver Jubilee of the Diocese came to a close on 14 November 2021**. His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, Major Archbishop, Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop of Changanassery and Mar Thomas Tharayil, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Changanassery were given a warm reception at 8.45 am at the entrance of the Little Flower Forane Church at Manjalumoodu. At 9.15 am, the solemn Holy Qurbana, presided over by the Cardinal, began. The Holy Qurbana was attended by priests and religious, all the faithful of Manjalumoodu, those of neighbouring parishes and mission centres and invited representatives from all the parishes and mission centres of the Eparchy. Simultaneously holy Quarbanas were held in every Parish of the Eparchy.

The public programme began at 11.30 am. Mar Vincent Mar Paulos, Bishop of the Eparchy of Marthandam, Most Rev Peter Remigius, Bishop Emeritus of Kottar, Rev. Fr Hilary, Vicar General of Kottar Diocese and Rev. Fr Yesu Rathnam from Kuzhithurai Diocese joined the function.

I warmly welcomed all the dignitaries, priests and religious and faithful from all the parishes gathered at Manjalumoodu and all those who were witnessing the YouTube live telecast from their respective parishes and all who were watching it from India and abroad.

The youth of our Eparchy presented a wonderful visual exposition of the Jubilee Anthem on stage, which highlighted the different ministries undertaken in the Eparchy. All the dignitaries were then felicitated.

A number of books such as the History of Eparchy, Book of Blessings, Prayer cum Hymn Book and Prayers for Funeral were released on the occasion. One of the highlights of the Silver Jubilee was to construct 25 homes for the poor and the keys of one of the homes were handed over to one of the beneficiary family. *Arulin Osai*, a CD with liturgical and spiritual hymns, was also released. In remembrance of the Silver Jubilee, all the Catholic families of the Eparchy received a photo frame depicting the Holy Family and a sapling to be planted in the front or back of their homes. This programme was held in all parishes when the felicitation programme was going on.

His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry delivered the Presidential cum Valedictory Address. He highlighted the hard work and dedication of all the missionaries and priests who toiled hard for the development of the Church. He was happy to recall his Episcopal ministry in the Eparchy and the blessings of God that the Eparchy received at every stage of its development. He also appreciated the present Bishop, priests, religious and laity for their dedicated service for the cause of the Church and of the people. The programme concluded with meals arranged not only at the venue but also in all the parishes and mission Centres for all the people.

Blessing of the Silver Jubilee Memorial Arch: To mark the 25 years of the existence of the Eparchy of Thuckalay, a Jubilee Memorial Arch was built at the entrance of St Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal. The construction began on 6 November 2021 and it was completed on 14 November 2021. Soon after the Silver jubilee celebrations at Manjalumoodu Forane Parish, His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry came to Mukkoottukal for the blessing and opening ceremony of the Arch. Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, Rector of the Minor Seminary, welcomed the guests at the entrance of the Seminary. In the presence of many priests, religious and the faithful, Cardinal blessed and opened the Jubilee Memorial Arch. The Arch stands as a sign of gratitude to God Almighty for His numerous blessings showered upon the Eparchy.

Flood in Kanniyakumari District: The heavy rains affected the normal lives of the people in the district. Many people lost their homes and livelihood. Along with Rev. Fr Ajin Jose and the Director of KKSSS, I visited the flood affected people living at Thovalai and Vellamadam Relief Camps on 16 November 2021 and distributed food materials and stationery items. People living in Munchirai and S.T. Mangad area of St George Church, Munchirai were most affected due to the floods.

Along with Rev. Fr Jomon Mangalamadam, Parish Priest, Rev. Fr Aby Poovathumoottil, Director of KKSSS and some parishioners, I visited 22 families affected by the flood at Munchirai on 19 November 2021. I interacted with the families and listened to their sufferings. We prayed with them and invoked the presence of God in these moments of grief. As a gesture of support and help, we distributed food materials to the families. The families appreciated our visits during these difficult times. I thank all our priests and religious for standing with the affected people with material as well as psychological support.

Seminary Visit: My visit to the Minor seminary on 16 November 2021 began with a Holy Qurbana and homily to the major and minor seminarians. I stressed on the need for setting priorities and making God the centre of their priestly formation through regular reading of the Word of God and reflecting upon them. I personally met individually all the Brothers who are in regency or studying in Colleges. I communicated to them the content of the assessment made by the regency directors and encouraged them to go forward with their commitment in joy by growing closer to God.

Liturgy Committee Meeting: The Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church decided to have the unified Holy Qurbana using the revised text from the beginning of the Liturgical Year. In view of this, I called for an online meeting of the Liturgy Committee on 17 November 2021. The meeting discussed about the translation of the revised text of the Holy Qurbana into Tamil. Rev. Fr Dency, Director of Liturgical Committee and Rev. Fr Santosh, who were tasked with the job of translating the texts into Tamil, presented their work. We went through all the changes in the texts one by one and finally entrusted the responsibility to the Vicar General to get them printed and to distribute to all the parishes.

Thenkasi Mission and Jubilee: A special Curia was held on 18 November 2021 during which the four Diocesan priests working in the Sengkottai Mission presented their plans and programmes for the Silver

Jubilee of the Sengkottai Mission. The presentation was based on the consultations already carried out among the priests, religious and faithful of the Mission. The programmes are meant for the spiritual renewal of the faithful and for the consolidation of faith among them. The Curia welcomed all their suggestions and asked them to make detailed plans spanning the entire the year 2022 and to distribute responsibilities for the organisation of the events. It was decided to hold one more meeting and the Thenkasi Priests and Religious Conference will take the final decisions.

The Thenkasi Priests and Religious Conference was held at Ampore on 27 November 2021. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil chaired the meeting. Rev. Fr Jiji Koipuram, Coordinator of the Mission, welcomed all the participants. The report of the previous meeting was read by Rev. Sr Libiya CMC, Secretary. Rev. Fr Justin Sudeesh presented the detailed programmes planned for the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the then Sengkottai Mission and now Thenkasi Mission. All were happy to know about the programmes and the events which will be organised. The responsibilities for each of the events were entrusted to the priests and the religious working in the Thenkasi Mission. The Vicar General urged them to organise the events faithfully for the benefit of the spiritual renewal of the members of the Syro-Malabar Church and general public. The inaugural function of the Jubilee Celebrations will be held on 19 December 2021.

Synaxis of FCC: The Sisters of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) held their Provincial Synaxis during 19-23 November 2021 to elect their new provincial superior and council members. Prior to this meeting, they spiritually prepared themselves through a week-long retreat and reflection. I gave them an orientation class on the first day. I encouraged and motivated them to keep their mission ever alive with the flame of the missionary spirit and to listen to the inner voice of the Spirit while electing new leaders. On 21 November, the Synaxis elected Rev. Sr Celia FCC as their provincial and Rev. Srs Vineetha FCC, Lizbeth FCC, Alphy FCC and Juliet FCC as the council members. Rev. Sr Cicy Maria (Finance Officer) and Rev. Sr. Jeena (Secretary). We wish the new team and the mission of the Province every success. On 26 November 2021, the Provincial and her new Team visited me at Bishop's House. We welcomed them joyfully and wished them God's blessings.

Golden Jubilee of Neta CMC Convent: The CMC Holy Queen Province of Changanassery began a convent at the southern-most tip of Kerala in Neta Parish in 1971. As it celebrates its Golden Jubilee, the CMC Thuckalay Province organised a celebration with a concelebrated Holy Qurbana and a public meeting on 20 November 2021. During the function, the pioneering missionaries who began the mission at Neta were remembered gratefully. The priests, the religious and some of the lay people spoke highly about the contributions that the Sisters made in and around Neta. They recalled how the convent catered to the neediest especially the orphan children of the area. The Sisters worked for the empowerment of women by skilling them in tailoring. Through their regular family visits, they were able to give pastoral care to the people. The function was attended by Rev. Sr Prasanna CMC, Provincial of Changanassery Province, Rev. Fr Sebastian Chamathara CMI, Provincial of St Joseph's Province, Trivandrum, Rev. Sr Vinaya CMC, Chavara Province Thuckalay, priests and religious, local panchayat members and the faithful of Neta parish. We wish the Sisters God's blessings.

Death of Rev. Sr Rosy FDSHJ: I received the news of the sudden passing away of Rev. Sr Rosy Puthuparampil, Superior General of Fervent Daughters of Sacred Heart of Jesus (FDSHJ), on 19 November 2021. She was the second Mother General of the Congregation. She was very close to the Thuckalay Mission. She worked at Anchugramam. Rev. Sr Rosy always enquired about the growth of the Eparchy. With great love for God, she was able to promote the charism of the Congregation when she took over the reins of the congregation from the foundress. I paid my homage and prayed for the departed soul at Punnavey on 21 November 2021. Her funeral was held two days later.

Priests' Pilgrimage to Velankanni: The Eparchy organised a pilgrimage to Velankanni for all the Diocesan priests to have a spiritual renewal and to express gratitude for the constant intercession of Mother Mary upon the Eparchy on 22 and 23 November 2021. It was also a way to thank God as a presbyterium for the blessings that He showered upon us for the successful conduct of the Silver Jubilee celebrations. On the way to Velankanni, we visited the Thirunelveli Mission. Rev. Fr Jinoy Thottiyil, Rev. Fr Tobin Alupurackal and the SABS Sisters welcomed the pilgrims and explained their ministries at Thirunelveli. After taking breakfast there, we proceeded to Madurai. We reached Ariyur Mission at Madurai at 12.30 pm and interacted with Rev. Fr Anil Raj and the SABS Sisters. We visited the Chavara Mission Church, Deepakam Madurai. Rev. Fr Baby Thattil CMI shared his experiences working with the Syro-Malabar migrant community. After lunch, we proceeded to Poondi Matha Church and we all had Holy Qurbana. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, presided over the Eucharist. After dinner in the canteen in Poondi, we proceeded to Velankanni and reached the land of Our Lady of Good Health at 1.00 am. On the next day, we all gathered in the Basilica at 9.00 am to celebrate the thanksgiving Holy Qurbana, which was the high point of our pilgrimage. I presided over the Holy Qurbana and surrendered all the priests, the religious and the faithful of the Eparchy to Our Blessed Mother for her intercession and protection. All of us spent the rest of the morning in personal prayer and visiting the holy places. After lunch we commenced our return journey and reached Thuckalay at 1.30 am. We are grateful to Rev. Fr Tobin Alupurackalm, Rev. Fr Aby Poovathumoottil and Rev. Fr Toby Sebastian for organising the pilgrimage.

Visit of Mission League Children from the Eparchy of Idukki: Rev. Fr Jomy Kamukumattathil of the Eparchy of Idukki organised an online quiz competition on Martyr Devasahayam Pillai for all the people through his online channel. About 3000 people participated in the quiz and 300 of them completed the quiz. Among them, he selected 15 participants and their families by lot to visit the holy places associated with the life and martyrdom of Devasahayam Pillai. Our Eparchy facilitated the visit on 24 November 2021. They visited Arapalli, Padmanabapuram Palace and Muttu Idichan Parai. They visited the Bishop's House and I interacted with them. I narrated some incidents from the life of Martyr Devasahayam Pillai. I congratulated them for their participation in the quiz by distributing the certificates. I also appreciated the initiative of Rev. Fr Jomy Kamukumattathil. They also visited Devasahayam Mount and Kanniyakumari before they commenced their return journey to Idukki.

Visit to Children's Home at Nedumkunnam: It was a special privilege for me to visit St Alphonsa Sneha Nivas at Nedumkunnam, a home for the orphaned and abandoned children, run by the Archdiocese of Changanassery on 25 November 2021. The Sisters of the Destitute (SD) take care of the children. They look after the children between the age groups of 5 to 14. I was happy to meet and interact with the children and the Sisters. I could see the joy in the faces of the children. I prayed with the inmates. I appreciated the Sisters for their total dedication for the young children. I also distributed some sweets to the children.

KKSSS Golden Jubilee Inauguration: We are happy that we are entering into the 50th year of the establishment of the Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS). It was established by the Archdiocese of Changanassery. KKSSS has grown into one of the jewels of the Eparchy of Thuckalay. The inaugural function was held on 26 November 2021 at KKSSS. The event began with a thanksgiving Holy Qurbana. It was followed by a brief public function. I chaired the public meeting. We recalled the growth and development of Kanyakumari Mission and the formation of the Eparchy of Thuckalay. The vital role that KKSSS played in alleviating poverty, illiteracy and unemployment in the region was remembered. KKSSS has planned many social and charitable outreach activities during this year-long celebrations of the Jubilee. One of the important outreach programmes is to build 30 homes for the homeless and to begin this project, the very first home was constructed and the key was presented to the beneficiary family during the public

function. I appreciate and thank the chairmen and directors of the past and the present for their dedicated work.

Commencement of Revised Holy Qurbana: The new liturgical year of the Catholic Church began on 28 November 2021 with the season of Annunciation. The day also marked the implementation of the unified Holy Qurbana and the revised Qurbana Text in the Syro-Malabar Church. We are happy that our Eparchy had prepared all the priests and the faithful well in advance. We were able to celebrate the first revised Holy Qurbana in all our parishes. I celebrated the Holy Qurbana in the morning at St Anthony's Church, Vailankarai and in the evening at St Maria Goretti Church, Athencode. I thank all the priests for the wonderful co-operation in making this transition very smooth.

Blessing of Athencode Church: The efforts of the faithful, the priests and the religious for constructing a Church for themselves began on 7 July 2016. With the support of people in and outside the country and the generous contribution of the faithful, the work had gradually proceeded. The work took momentum depending on the availability of funds. Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal, present parish priest, took up the task of completing the Church on a war-footing. He arranged for the necessary funds from people. The parishioners helped with labour. Finally, the church was completed. I consecrated the church on 28 November 2021 in the presence of Vicar General, Parish Priest, priests and religious and faithful not only from Athencode but also from Padanthalumoodu and other neighbouring parishes. I express my gratitude to Rev. Fr Mathew Mullangasserril, who began the construction work, Rev. Fr M Christudhas who continued the same and Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal who completed the construction of the church. A special thanks also goes to Palai Friends of Thuckalay for their support.

Mankarai Parish Turns Golden: St James Parish, Mankarai is preparing to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of its establishment. Rev. Fr Prince Maliyil, Parish Priest, has prepared a series of events and animation programmes for the jubilee year. The inauguration of the Jubilee began with the Holy Qurbana presided over by Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil on 28 November 2021. He gratefully remembered the then Bishops and the missionaries who sowed the seed of faith in Mankarai area. He congratulated the faithful for receiving the Word of God and thus forming a Syro-Malabar community. We wish the Parish Priest, the religious Sisters and all the parishioners the blessing of God as they celebrate their golden jubilee.

Madonna Garment Unit Blessing: The Congregation of the Mother of Mary Mediatrix (MMM) established and inaugurated a Garment Unit for 60 women in Padanthalumoodu. The Sisters have been present in our Eparchy for nearly 11 years now and they were happy to get their permanent residence here last year. It was a cherished dream of the Eparchy to promote women empowerment and job opportunities for the people. I am happy that the MMM Sisters are collaborating with V-Star Garments for providing livelihood to the women around the area. I blessed the Madonna Garment Unit on 29 November 2021, in the presence of Rev. Sr Valsamma, Provincial, Mr Joseph, Production Manager of V-Star, priests, religious and the first set of beneficiary women.

INFORMATION

- We are in the **season of Annunciation** and the 25 days fast begins on 1 December to prepare spiritually for the nativity of our Lord.
- **Christmas** is the time of sharing. I request all the parishes and institutions to organize Christmas programmes with the respective neighbourhoods.
- The Bishop's House community welcomed the **Major Archbishop** on 12 November and hosted a dinner

- **The regency Brothers** are transferred after 6 months of their ministry. They will be moving to their new places by the end of this week.
- **The Major Seminarians** are in the Eparchy for Christmas holidays since 23 November. Those who would like to have the Brothers in their parishes can request Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal
- **Silver Jubilee Monitoring committee meeting** was held on 30 November 2021 in order to discuss the preparation for Jubilee photo album.
- **Month's mind Holy Qurbana** for the departed soul of Mr Sounder Raj, father of Fr Abilash Xavier, was celebrated on 30 November 2021 at Soosaipuram.
- The Consecration of St Xavier Church, Kaisalavilai will be held on 30 December, 2021
- The Priestly ordination Dn Libin Kottapuram CMI, from Kasalavilai parish, will be held on 27 December at Chethipuzha, and his first Holy Qurbana will be held on 31 December in his own native parish at Kaisalavilai.


FORTHCOMING EVENTS

05 December	Youth gathering
12 December	Conclusion of St Joseph Year in our diocese
12 December	Christmas gathering with Missionaries in Extended territories
18 December	Christmas gathering with CRI Members
19 December	Inauguration of Silver Jubilee of Thenkasi Mission
21 December	Christmas Gathering with Presbyterium
23 December	Christmas gathering with Major and Minor seminarians
30 December	Blessing of foundation Stone of Nirmala Home, Nanguneery

CONCLUSION

On 8 December we celebrate the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Let us once more familiarise ourselves with the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate conception. It reads thus: "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful." Mary was granted the privilege to be immaculate since conception. She was conceived immaculate – no stain of original sin infected her heart, mind and soul; and moreover she cherished it and set an example for others especially the disciples of her Son, the liberating force of being immaculate on earth. On 25 December, we celebrate Christmas, the birth of her son in the manger. Let us prepare our people for great solemnity with the 25-day fast that we have just begun! May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us, keep us sinless like her and lead us to her son!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

