



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb
Diocese of Thuckalay

Bishop's House, P B No: 12, Thuckalay PO,
Kanya kumari Dt- 629 175, Tamil Nadu, India

Ref. No. Priests/GR/177/2025

31 December 2025

Dear Rev. Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, I write to you with profound gratitude for the grace-filled year that has passed and with renewed hope for the year ahead. I wish to share with you the inspiring message of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, contained in his Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* ("I Have Loved You"). On 4 October 2025, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo XIV released a comprehensive Apostolic Exhortation that stands as one of the most thorough teachings on the Church's relationship with the poor in recent history. Taking its title from the Book of Revelation, where Christ speaks words of love to a Christian community possessing little power or resources, this 121-paragraph document reaffirms the Church's ancient yet frequently overlooked commitment to prioritising the needs of society's most vulnerable members.

The Holy Father emphasises that for Christians, "the problem of the poor leads to the very heart of our faith," making care for the poor not merely a charitable option but an essential dimension of authentic Christianity. This divine declaration of love extends to all who are marginalised, impoverished, and powerless in our contemporary world.

A Heritage Two Thousand Years Old

Pope Leo XIV grounds his teaching in a thorough historical examination of the Church's engagement with poverty, demonstrating that concern for the poor has been integral to the Church's mission since apostolic times. He recalls our Lord's own poverty, noting that Christ "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" and experienced the same exclusion that afflicts the poor and outcasts of society. The document underscores that Jesus presented himself not only as a poor Messiah but as "the Messiah of and for the poor."

This preferential love has been traced through the centuries, as attested by the Church Fathers. St John Chrysostom famously taught that Christians should not honour Christ with golden vessels in church whilst neglecting him in the poor outside its doors. St Augustine viewed the poor as the sacramental presence of the Lord, whilst St Ambrose declared that giving to the poor is not charity but justice restored, proclaiming, "What you give to the poor is not your property, but theirs."

Medieval monasticism perpetuated this tradition through radical hospitality. St Benedict's Rule instructed that "the poor and pilgrims are to be received with all care and hospitality, for it is in them that Christ is received." During periods of plague and war, monasteries became sanctuaries where those in need found not only bread and medicine but also dignity and education. The mendicant orders of the thirteenth century, particularly the Franciscans and Dominicans, transformed Christian witness by not merely serving the poor but becoming poor themselves, choosing to live in solidarity with society's margins.

Contemporary Challenges and Structural Injustice

Whilst honouring this rich tradition, Pope Leo XIV confronts present-day realities with unwavering honesty. He acknowledges that despite technological and economic advancement, poverty threatens to assume “massive proportions” in our time. The document criticises what he terms a “culture that discards others” and observes that “in a world where the poor are increasingly numerous, we paradoxically see the growth of a wealthy elite, living in a bubble of comfort and luxury, almost in another world compared to ordinary people.”

The Holy Father directly confronts ideological prejudices that blame the poor for their own poverty or suggest that market forces alone will resolve the issue. He states unequivocally: “The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate. Nor, for most of them, is poverty a choice.” He challenges both secular economic theories and certain Christian attitudes that dismiss charitable works as outdated or insufficient, insisting that “the preferential choice for the poor is a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society.”

Building upon the social teachings of his predecessors, Pope Leo XIV highlights the concept of “structures of sin” that sustain poverty and inequality. He condemns the “dictatorship of an economy that kills” and urges action to address “the structural causes of poverty” with urgency. The document emphasises that inequality “is the root of social ills” and that welfare programmes, although necessary, “should be considered merely provisional responses” that must be supported by fundamental economic and social reforms.

The Poor as Subjects, Not Objects

One of the document’s most significant contributions is its insistence on treating people experiencing poverty as active subjects rather than passive objects of charity. The Holy Father emphasises that the poor possess unique insights into reality that others cannot perceive; therefore, society and the Church must listen to them rather than merely help them. He writes that we must embrace the teaching that marginalised communities “have the right to embrace the Gospel and to celebrate and communicate their faith in accord with the values present within their own cultures.”

The Exhortation emphasises the importance of popular movements led by laypeople who fight for justice and structural change. These movements, the Pope writes, “invite us to go beyond the idea of social policies being just for the poor, but never with or of the poor.” Genuine democracy involves including these voices in shaping the common good, and the same principle applies to Church institutions.

This perspective also involves recognising that “we must let ourselves be evangelised by the poor” and acknowledging “the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.” People experiencing poverty have developed insights and virtues that those in comfort might lack, and their witness can challenge the comfortable to simplify their lives and confront their own spiritual poverty.

Concrete Love in Action

Throughout history, the Church’s love for the poor has taken numerous practical forms. Pope Leo XIV celebrates the dedicated care of the sick pioneered by Saints such as John of God and Camillus de Lellis, whose orders brought “motherly affection” to suffering patients. He honours the religious congregations, especially women’s congregations, who built hospitals, schools, and orphanages in areas lacking social services, providing not only material aid but also human dignity and a gentle presence.

The document particularly emphasises education as an expression of love for people with low incomes. St Joseph Calasanz, St John Baptist de La Salle, and St John Bosco established educational systems specifically aimed at helping children from working-class families, recognising that “knowledge liberates, gives dignity, and brings us closer to the truth.” Catholic schools, when true to their mission, become “places of inclusion, holistic formation, and human development.”

The Parable That Never Ages

Returning repeatedly to the parable of the Good Samaritan, Pope Leo XIV urges Christians to reflect on their own responses to suffering. He questions sharply: “If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to resolve, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity, and see in this person a human being with a dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ.”

The document cautions against various forms of indifference that have become normalised in modern society, including the claim that prayer and doctrine are sufficient without concrete action, the view that assisting the poor is mainly the government’s responsibility, and the redirection of pastoral efforts towards the wealthy and influential rather than the marginalised.

Even the practice of almsgiving, which some modern Christians dismiss as outdated, is defended by the Pope as an important means of encounter and solidarity. He insists that almsgiving offers “a chance to halt before the poor, to look into their eyes, to touch them and to share something of ourselves with them.” Drawing on Scripture and the Church Fathers, he affirms that almsgiving “is the wing of prayer” and that without concrete acts of charity, even the most cherished spiritual convictions will “weaken and fade away.”

A Church That Must Change

The exhortation concludes with a strong plea for the Church to reflect on her commitment to the poor. Pope Leo XIV warns that “any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticise governments.”

The Holy Father urges Christian communities to avoid “spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings, and empty talk.” The true measure of the Church’s fidelity lies in tangible solidarity with those who suffer. The document stresses that this preferential option for the poor arises directly from faith in Christ, who “became poor for us, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” As Pope Leo XIV states: “There is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor.” For Christians, serving the poor is not optional; it is an encounter with Christ himself.

Dilexi Te concludes with a personal and pastoral tone, assuring each poor person that Christ’s words are addressed to them individually: “I have loved you.” This ancient declaration of divine love must be made tangible through the Church’s witness in every generation.

GRATITUDE FOR 2025 AND WELCOME TO 2026

As we reflect on these profound teachings, my heart overflows with gratitude for the grace-filled year that has been 2025. It has been a year of extraordinary significance for our Eparchy, marked by meaningful growth in our pastoral, educational, and social ministries.

I express my deepest appreciation to all of you for your dedication and commitment. The time we spent together at the presbyterium meetings enriched our communion and strengthened our pastoral vision. The blessing of new churches across our Eparchy has been a source of immense joy, as we witness the expansion of our faith communities. The development in our mission stations reflects the missionary zeal that characterises our Syro-Malabar tradition.

The Jubilee Year 2025 provided us with unique opportunities for spiritual renewal and deepening our faith. Our Eparchy observed this sacred year meaningfully through various programmes, pilgrimages, and acts of mercy. The Eparchial convention held in 2025 brought us together in fraternal communion, allowing us to discern together the path forward for our Eparchy and to strengthen our bonds as the People of God.

As we welcome 2026, we do so with renewed commitment and purpose. The Syro-Malabar Church has declared 2026 as the **Syro-Malabar Empowerment Year**, and we shall observe it with dedication throughout our Eparchy. This year calls on us to empower our faithful through deeper catechesis, enhanced participation in Church life, and stronger engagement with the social realities of our time. In light of *Dilexi Te*, let this empowerment particularly focus on enabling our communities to become agents of justice and mercy, walking alongside the poor and marginalised in authentic solidarity.

May the year 2026 be one of grace, growth, and generous service. Let us embrace Pope Leo XIV's call to make Christ's love tangible for everyone, especially the poor, marginalised, and suffering. Let us be a Church that "sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love."

NEWS AND EVENTS

Pastoral Council at Sangamam: The fourth meeting of the Seventh Pastoral Council was held at Sangamam on 03 December 2025. The inaugural session began at 9:30 a.m. with a prayer led by Rev. Fr. Vinu D. Joseph. After the prayer, homage was paid to the deceased council members. Mr. John Kumari Thozhan and Mr. Shonic Regan, the Joint Secretary, welcomed the participants and presented the minutes of the previous meeting. I presided over the meeting and delivered the introductory address. The resource person for the day, Rev. Fr. Anil Raj Dominic, presented the theme "Syro-Malabar Community Empowerment Year 2026," based on the handbook published by the Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission. Following the input session, the council members engaged in fruitful discussions inspired by his presentation and shared practical suggestions on how the Community Empowerment Year could be meaningfully lived out in our diocese. The concluding talk was given by Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, and the meeting ended with a vote of thanks proposed by Mrs. Sujitha. I express my sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr. Thomas Sathianesan, the Director, and his team for their excellent coordination in organizing the fourth meeting of the Seventh Pastoral Council.

Diocesan Bible Convention at Kalluvilai: The 25th Eparchial Bible Convention was held from December 5–7, 2025, at the Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai. To ensure greater participation, this year's convention was conducted in the evenings on the first two days, followed by a full-day programme on Sunday, the final day. The retreat was animated by Rev. Fr. Raphael Koothur, VC, Director of the Popular Mission Retreat Centre, Chennai, along with his team. Each day began with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana — presided over by the newly ordained priests and Forane Vicars on the first two days — while I presided over the concelebrated Holy Qurbana on the final day. On the first day, I warmly welcomed the preacher and all the faithful and inaugurated the retreat with the opening sermon. Throughout the three days, the faithful were spiritually enriched through various devotional activities, including praise and worship, preaching of the Word of God, adoration, confession, and a Eucharistic procession.

Following the three-day retreat, the concluding ceremony of the Christ Jubilee Year 2025 was held at Sinai Retreat Centre in the presence of the priests, religious, and faithful of the diocese. A tableau presentation of the Jubilee emblem was organized under the guidance of the CMC Sisters, and the diocesan Jubilee Anthem was sung by the choir formed by Fr. Antony Madapurackal. In my presidential address, I recalled the major initiatives undertaken by the diocese to make this year truly fruitful and expressed my gratitude to the entire diocesan family for their efforts to make meaningful spiritual use of the Jubilee Year.

A special retreat for CML students was held simultaneously on Saturday and Sunday at Aseer Auditorium, Kalluvilai, led by Bro. David and Bro. Rajan. On the first day, nearly 120 students attended the retreat, and on the final day, around 460 students participated. In addition, Fr. Toji Kozhuvakandathil and the SABS Sisters organized a retreat for the children of Kuzhanthai Yesuvin Iyakkam at St. Mother Teresa Mission Church, Kalluvilai, in which 370 children took part. The convention witnessed an excellent turnout, with the faithful from all parishes actively participating and benefitting spiritually from the proclamation of the Word of God. The preparatory groundwork, including special adoration in different parishes, greatly contributed to the retreat’s success. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Bible Convention Committee members — Fr. Jose Muttathupadam (Convener), Fr. Thomas Sathianesan, Fr. Mijo Puthenpurayil, Fr. Anil Raj, Fr. Vinu D. Joseph, Fr. Printo Kurias, and Fr. Toji Kozhuvakandathil — for their dedicated efforts. I also extend special appreciation to Fr. Vinu D. Joseph, Director of the Sinai Retreat Centre, for preparing the venue so well for the convention. Finally, I thank all the parish priests for encouraging maximum participation from their parishes, making the Bible Convention a truly spiritually enriching experience for the faithful.

Blessing of Diocesan Legal Cell Office at Kuzhithurai: The Diocesan Legal Cell Office was officially blessed and inaugurated on 09 December 2025, at Kuzhithurai. The ceremony began with a blessing of the office by me, followed by the official ribbon-cutting performed by senior advocate Adv. David. The event was graced by the presence of several priests, sisters, and other distinguished guests. The primary aim of the Legal Cell is to provide reliable and accessible legal aid to those in need in our diocese. By offering professional guidance with trust and feasibility, the cell aims to ensure justice and support for the community. I thank Fr. Printo Kurias, Director of Legal Cell, for the efforts taken for such a fruitful initiative for the good of the people.

Christmas Celebrations: The Diocese organized a series of Pre-Christmas celebrations as given below:

Organization	Place	Date
Catechesis	Kattathurai	13 December 2025
Kuzhanthai Isso Iyakkam	Kattathurai	13 December 2025
Institutions’ Head	Sangamam	17 December 2025
Sychar Resource Centre	Kozhipporvilai	16 December 2025
CML	Kattathurai	13 December 2025
Family Apostolate	Kattathurai	13 December 2025
UCC	Karungal	22 December 2025
Educare Students, KKSSS	Kalluvilai	13 December 2025
SMYM	Pilankalai	14 December 2025
Health Commission	Bishop’s House	16 December 2025
Seeds	Padanthalumoodu	13 December 2025
Extended Territory Mission	Madurai	21 December 2025
Evangelization	Bishop’s House	14 December 2025

Tenkasi Mission	Pudur	13 December 2025
Presbyterium	Sangamam	17 December 2025
Charitable institutions' Head	Sangamam	17 December 2025
Minor & Major Seminarians	Mukkoottukal Seminary	22 December 2025
CRI	Soosaipuram	20 December 2025
Irai Arul Staff	Bishop's House	14 December 2025
Mariyayin Senai	Padanthalumoodu	20 December 2025
KKSSS Inter Religious	Kalluvilai	20 December 2025
Neighborhoods	Bishop's House	23 December 2025

I extend my sincere thanks to all the Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, and lay faithful who dedicated their efforts to the success of these joyous celebrations.

SMYM Annual Day at Pilankalai: On Sunday, 14 December 2025, the SMYM organized a “Five-in-One” grand celebration at the Pilankalai Forane Church campus. The programme combined the SMYM Annual Day, Christmas Celebration, Conclusion of the Jubilee Year, Farewell to the Outgoing Office Bearers, and the Oath-Taking Ceremony for the New Office Bearers. The event commenced at 1:00 p.m. with registration, followed by the inaugural ceremony. Star-Making and Carol Song competitions were then conducted for the youth. After the competitions, a special Adoration was held to mark the conclusion of the Jubilee Year. The Annual Day celebration began at 6:00 p.m., and I presided over the function. Sr. Jeena FCC, the Youth Animator, offered felicitations. The celebration was colourful and lively with various cultural programmes. During the event, mementos were presented to the outgoing office bearers, and the new team officially took their oaths of office. The programme concluded with the distribution of prizes to the winners. I thank Rev. Fr. Anil Raj, the Director, and the entire team for their dedicated efforts in making the celebration a grand success.

Conclusion of Christ Jubilee 2025: The diocesan-level conclusion of Christ Jubilee 2025 was held on 07 December 2025 along with the conclusion of Bible Convention at Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai. The parish level conclusion of the Jubilee 2025 was held on 28 December 2025 in all the parishes along with the solemn thanksgiving Holy Qurbana. It started with the lighting of the Jubilee candle by the main celebrant followed by an introduction to the Holy Qurbana highlighting the graces we received in the jubilee year. The Sanctuary Hymn was sung along with the kissing of St. Thomas cross. During the Karosoosa, special payers were recited and at the conclusion of the Holy Qurbana, the Jubilee prayer was recited and the Jubilee Anthem was sung. In many parishes, special meeting was conducted with the sharing of Jubilee year experience by children, youth and religious. I thank all the Fathers who took efforts to coordinate the parish level concluding ceremony very well.

Bible Fest 2025: This year the Forane level Catechism Bible competitions were held on 27 - 31 December 2025. All the parishes took part in the various competitions. Narcheithi Nilayam organised the competitions. The themes for the various competitions were taken from the Bible itself. This helped the children to read the Bible and to engender love for the Word of God. All the children after much preparation and rigorous practice took part in the competitions. I am grateful to the Rev. Fr. Abilash Xavier, Director, and Rev. Fr. Jacob Ayyamathra, Assistant Director, of Catechism Department for organising the events in a professional manner. I thank all the Forane Vicars, Forane Catechism Directors and Secretaries for their valuable contributions in the smooth conduct of the competitions. A special word of thanks to all the Parish Priests, Sisters and teachers who have trained and prepared the children well. The events were held at APJM School, Soosaipuram; St Michael School, Kattathurai; Holy Family School, Mukkoottukkal; St John Paul II School, Kulasekharam; Sacred Heart School, Padanthalumoodu; Jaya Matha School, Christurajapuram and St. Francis Assisi School, Mezhaicode. The Rank list of each Forane is listed below:

Foranes	Rank -1	Rank -2	Rank - 3
Kaliyal	Marappady	Pallikonam	Kaliyal
Manjalumoodu	Manjalumoodu	Malaicode	Mukkoottukal
Nithiravilai	Varuthattu	Nithiravilai	Cheenivilai
Padanthalumoodu	Annikkarai	Padanthalumoodu	Thettiyode
Soosaipuram	Soosaipuram	Mankarai	Palappallam
Thuckalay -Pilankalai	Kattathurai	Pilankalai	Paraicode
Arukani	Arukani	Mezhacode	Netta

INFORMATION

- **Mr. Cheriyan Joseph (86)**, brother of Sr. Agnetta CMC, was called to the eternal rest on 01 December 2025. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Sr. Agnetta and her family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Jaya Matha Hr. Sec. School**, Christurajapuram celebrated its 21st Annual Day on 02 December 2025.
- **Mrs. Rachel Aaron (90)**, grandmother of Fr. Abilash, was called to the eternal rest on 08 December 2025. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr. Abilash and his family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Fr. Jinu Thekkethala** reached the diocese from Rome for his annual vacation on 17 December 2025.
- **Rev. Fr. Vinod Kanakkalil** is relieved from the office of the Parish Priest of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay, Director of Sangamam and Director of Sangamam Garments with effect from 18 December 2025.
- **Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam** is appointed as the Director of Sangamam and Sangamam Garments with effect from 18 December 2025.
- **Rev. Fr. Subin Puthenpurackal** is appointed as the Parish Priest of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay with effect from 18 December 2025.
- **Second Death Anniversary Remembrance Holy Qurbana for Fr. John Thekkel** was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam on 22 December 2025 at St. Francis Assisi Church, Mezhacode.
- **Fr. Ludovic Pathickal CMI (91)** was called to eternal reward on 23 December 2025. Fr. Ludovic was the Parish Priest in Netta for three years. The Diocese expresses the heartfelt gratitude for all his services in the Diocese. Let us pray that the merciful Lord grant him eternal joy.
- **Sr. Leo CMC (87)** was called to eternal rest on 27 December 2025. As a religious sister, she served in our diocese for almost 9 years in three different places: Muzhucode, Puliyarai and Coutrallam. Let us thank God for her selfless sacrifices for the good of our diocese. May God grant her eternal rest and welcome her into His loving embrace.
- **Mrs. Paul Thankam (75)**, beloved mother of Fr. Albert Jose CMI, was called to the eternal rest on 28 December 2025. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr. Albert Jose and his family members and pray for the departed soul.

FORTHCOMING MAJOR EVENTS

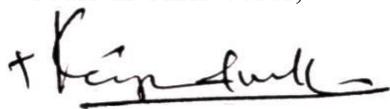
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| 11 January | - | Parish Level Inauguration of SMCEY 2026 |
| 20 January | - | Priests' Conference |

Priests' Conference
20 January 2026, Tuesday
@ Sangamam
Time: 09. 30 AM

CONCLUSION

It is gratifying to note that on the first day of the new year, we celebrate the feast of Mary, Mother of God. It is indeed a wonderful opportunity for all of us to entrust ourselves to Mary's maternal care and protection as we begin the new year 2026, a precious gift from God. Let us make good use of this year to become more Christ-like and to bring his message to as many people as possible. Let us make the invocation that we recite in the prayer Our Father, 'Thy kingdom come,' a reality! May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Help of Christians, intercede for us. May St Thomas the Apostle, patron of our Syro-Malabar Church, guide our steps. Wishing you all a blessed and grace-filled New Year 2026!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



† **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

