

# THUCKALAY TIDINGS

DECEMBER 2021 | VOL. 1 | ISSUE 10

DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY



# Christmas

LIGHTING UP OUR HEARTS



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### THUCKALAY TIDINGS

DECEMBER 2021 | Vol. 1 | Issue 10

A Monthly online newsletter of Diocese of Thuckalay

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**DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY**  
BISHOP'S HOUSE  
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Kanyakumari District, Tamilnadu – 629 175



# Message

**Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,**

The joy of Christmas is at the doors again. All our projects, programs and celebrations that we carry out every year, following our family traditions, have been partially skipped. Never as in recent weeks have I felt strongly, from the people, the invocation and the request that we never fail Hope in our lives, in our families.

In the Gospel of the night of Christmas the Angels' announcement not to be afraid will resound loudly: "Do not be afraid, here I announce a great joy ..." (Lk 2:10). Let these words enter into our hearts and bring light into our life. The Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died by order of Hitler on Easter 1945, wrote: "Only Jesus is the Lord of fear: it recognizes him as his master, and only distances himself from him. For this reason, in your fear, look to him, think of him, place him before your eyes, invoke him, believe that now he is with you and will come to your aid. Then the fear will vanish, it will go away and you will be free."

We are in a phase of life when we need Hope. We live bitter and difficult hours for many reasons, but the Christmas of Jesus comes once again to give us a Hope that is stronger than any evil even death. French poet Charles Péguy gives us a very beautiful and enlightening thought: "My favorite faith, says God, is hope. Little hope proceeds between her two great sisters, faith and charity. And the people gladly believe that the two big ones are dragging the little one by the hand. But it is the one in the middle that drags her big sisters. Without her, they would be nothing. It is she, the little one, who drags everything".

On the road that leads from Bethlehem to our daily life, it is with this Hope that we need to be carried away. Even in this difficult Christmas year we are called, once again, to make the extraordinary gift of God resound and write in heart, His Son Jesus. And this is the sign of a God who has immeasurable love for us. Let's write in our heart. "God loves me".

Strengthened by this certainty and experience, we start from here, we start a new path, we go back to fighting and dreaming, hoping and loving, forgiving, serving, giving and giving ourselves. We learn every day to mix heaven and earth, infinite and finite. Our Christian faith, we well know, is the art of living finite and infinite together. When Christmas is welcomed in faith, it gives us the ability to be born again with Christ.

In the Holy Mass and in our personal prayer we ask the Child Jesus to give us God's boundless eyes to see life with a new perspective. But to have these immense eyes, we need the miracle of Christmas: the conversion of the heart, because the roots of the eyes are in the heart. I wish myself and all of you that, on Christmas Eve, this can happen: it all depends on each of us.

Let me assure you that I will bring all of you to the Altar of the Lord, the sick, those who live in suffering, the families who are mourning the death of their loved ones, the elderly who in these months are most fragile and vulnerable, young people and children with their parents in the Holy Eucharist which I celebrate on the eve of Christmas.

May this Christmas bring peace to the heart, light and a little more serenity that comes from the certainty that we are not alone: He is always with us, especially in the hour of trial, sadness and pain.

From the bottom of my heart I wish everyone of you Merry Christmas and a Bright Year 2022 in His blessings.

May God bless you all.

+ **George Rajendran sdb**  
*Bishop of Thuckalay*







## Episcopal Jubilee of Our Major Archbishop



On 13 November 2021 the priests, religious and members of the Pastoral Council of the Diocese 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 Diocese of Thuckalay. He served the Eparchy in its initial stages for a period of 14 years before he was elected as 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 Mass. The felicitation programme was organised at Aseer Auditorium after the Eucharistic Celebration.





25<sup>TH</sup> SILVER JUBILEE OF THE EPISCOPAL ORDINATION OF

GRAND CARDINAL ALENCHERRY

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During the felicitation addresses, the initial ministry of the Major Archbishop as the first bishop of the Diocese 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 Diocese 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.





## Jubilee Events and Visit of Our Major Archbishop



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 Diocese 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 Diocese. The participants were asked to submit the answers by 10.00 PM on the same day.



ARULTHOOTHU TV

எசாயா இறைவாக்கினரின் தந்தை பெயர் என்ன?

A ஆமோஸ்      B செக்கரியா  
C யோசேப்பு      D ஒசேயா

Email: arulthoothutv@gmail.com | Whatsapp: 9487084902

The Diocese was very happy to **welcome the 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, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB received him at the Thiruvananthapuram airport at 10.50 AM on 12 November 2021.

The Major Archbishop was given a **reception by the FCC Sisters of Thuckalay Province at Azhagiamandapam** 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 Diocese of Thuckalay as its first bishop and for the special love he had for the FCC Sisters.







Earlier in the morning, the **Major Archbishop** blessed the **foundation stone** for the **Presbytery at Paraicode** at 7.00 AM in the presence of the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr Johnsilal 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.





## Pioneer Missionaries' Meet



It was important to honour and appreciate the pioneering works carried out by the missionaries of Kanyakumari Mission and the Diocese in the Silver Jubilee year. The Diocese organised a felicitation meeting with all the pioneering missionaries from our Mother Archdiocese of Changanassery in order to appreciate their services in the missionary Diocese. We had initially planned to bring these missionaries, who are either working in different parishes or residing at St Joseph's Priests Home, Ithithanam, Changanassery 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 Changanassery on 9 November 2021. Very Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, 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 Diocese, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB, went there for the celebration. The team met Archbishop Joseph Powathil in the morning in the Archbishop's House and felicitated him. Later, the team of Diocesans went to the Priests' Home for the programme. It was attended by nearly 25 priests who served in different mission centres of our Diocese. Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Auxiliary Bishop Mar Joseph Tharayil and other priests residing in the Priests' Home also joined the programme. Having expressed all the appreciation, some gifts were given to the pioneering missionaries as token of our appreciation and the programme was concluded with a meal.





## Priests' Pilgrimage to Velankanni



The Diocese organised a pilgrimage to Velankanni on 22 & 23 November 2021 for all the Diocesan priests in order to have a spiritual renewal and to express the Diocesan gratitude for the constant intercession of Mother Mary upon the Diocese. 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. We proceeded to Madurai and reached Ariyur Mission 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 Babu Thattil CMI shared his experiences working with the Syro-Malabar migrant community. We travelled further to Poondi Matha Church and all joined the Holy Eucharistic celebration. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, presided over the Eucharist. 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 Mass, which was the high point of our pilgrimage. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB presided over the Holy Mass and surrendered all the priests, the religious and the faithful of the Diocese to Our Blessed Mother for her intercession and protection. All spent the rest of the morning in personal prayer and visiting the holy places. After a fulfilled pilgrimage, the return journey commenced and reached safe to Thuckalay at 1.30 am.





## Online Priests' Conference



An online Priests' Conference was conducted in order to finalise the preparations for the conclusion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Diocese on 5 November 2021. The Vicar General of the Diocese 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. All the fathers assured their full support for the events with creating an atmosphere of prayer, renewal and celebration.





## Online Bible Convention


As the Diocese could not organise the annual Bible Convention as in previous years due to the pandemic restrictions, we organised an online 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 celebrated the Holy Eucharistic in their respective parishes and mission centres and made all arrangements for the online Convention. The Sinai Retreat Centre and the Pulari Communications helped the organisation. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB inaugurated the Convention on the first day and Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, 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. Special congratulations and gratitude to all those who assisted in organising this mega event.



### NEED PRAYER SUPPORT!

The Diocese has prayer groups.

Please write the following and send SMS


 +91 94871 65903:

Name: .....

Place: .....

Intentions: .....

In detail you wish to express,

 : [bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com](mailto:bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com)





## Seminarians and their Preparations

The Bishop visited the Minor seminary on 16 November 2021 for personal meeting with the seminarians. The program began with a Holy Mass and homily to the major and minor seminarians. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB 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. The Bishop went on to meet individually all the Brothers who are in regency or studying in Colleges. He 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.



## PARTICIPATE in the Mission of the Church

- Join us in promoting vocation to priesthood.
- Come forward, sponsor the education and maintenance of a seminarian.
- Let us join hands and send disciples to the end of the world; we need to make Jesus known through the length and breadth of the world.
- Future of the Church depends on the availability of selfless, committed and pastoral priests.
- Pope Francis said, "No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people. Did not Jesus say: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13:35)?"
- You can join God's Mission by helping in the preparation for priesthood.
- With a generous heart, please support the formation of Seminarians.
- We assure our prayers for your well-being.
- It takes about Rs. 40,000/- approximately per year for the education and maintenance of a seminarian.
- The Seminarian you sponsor will remain a spiritual child to you and to your family throughout his years of formation and later as a priest and he shall constantly pray for all your intentions.

**Please write / mail to us for any enquiry / details. We shall contact you with all further details for your generous support:**

**Postal Address:**

Bishop's House, PB. 12, Thuckalay,  
 Kanyakumari District,  
 Tamilnadu – 629 175, INDIA

**Contact Mission Procure:**

Rev. Fr Robin Jose  
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 Email: [bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com](mailto:bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com)





## 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, the Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS), the social wing of the Diocese, in partnership with V-Star Garment Company has established another garment unit at Sangamam. The work for the renovation was initiated before four months and additional facilities were installed for effective running of this cottage industry. Our Bishop 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 KKSS, 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. The total capacity of the garment unit is 80 employees, however, 55 women have already joined. We do believe that this will benefit many poor women to find adequate income to fend for their families.







## 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 Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP) with our Vicar General. Mr Sounder Raj was a stalwart of SSVP in the Diocese and an important member of the Diocese 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. Our Bishop was away in north-east India and he could receive the news only on the early morning of 2 November 2021 and he immediately cancelled all his programmes 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. May the Lord continue to take forward the mission that he had been involved in.







## Liturgy Committee Meeting



The Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church decided to have the unified Holy Mass using the revised text from the beginning of the current Liturgical Year. In view of this, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB 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 Mass 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 the work. All the members went through the changes in the texts one by one and approved the same and finally entrusted the responsibility to the Vicar General to get them printed and to distribute to all the parishes.





## Commencement of Revised Holy Mass

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 Mass and the revised Mass Text in the Syro-Malabar Church. We are happy that our Diocese had prepared all the priests and the faithful well in advance. We were

able to celebrate the first revised Holy Mass in all our parishes. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB celebrated the Holy Mass in the morning at St Anthony's Church, Vailankarai and in the evening at St Maria Goretti Church, Athencode. All appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in getting the text of the unified Holy Mass ready.







## 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 entire the year 2022 and to distribute responsibilities for the organisation of the events.

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. 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 would be held on 19 December 2021.







## 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 Mass 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 for the growth of faith and the people 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 for the fulfilment of their service.







## 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), the social arm of the Diocese. It was established by the Archdiocese of Changanassery. KKSSS has grown into one of the jewels of the Diocese through the years. The inaugural function was held on 26 November 2021 at KKSSS. The event began with a thanksgiving Holy Mass. It was followed by a brief public function. Our Bishop chaired the public meeting. We recalled the growth and development of Kanyakumari Mission and the formation of the Diocese 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. We appreciate and thank the chairmen and directors of the past and the present for their dedicated work.





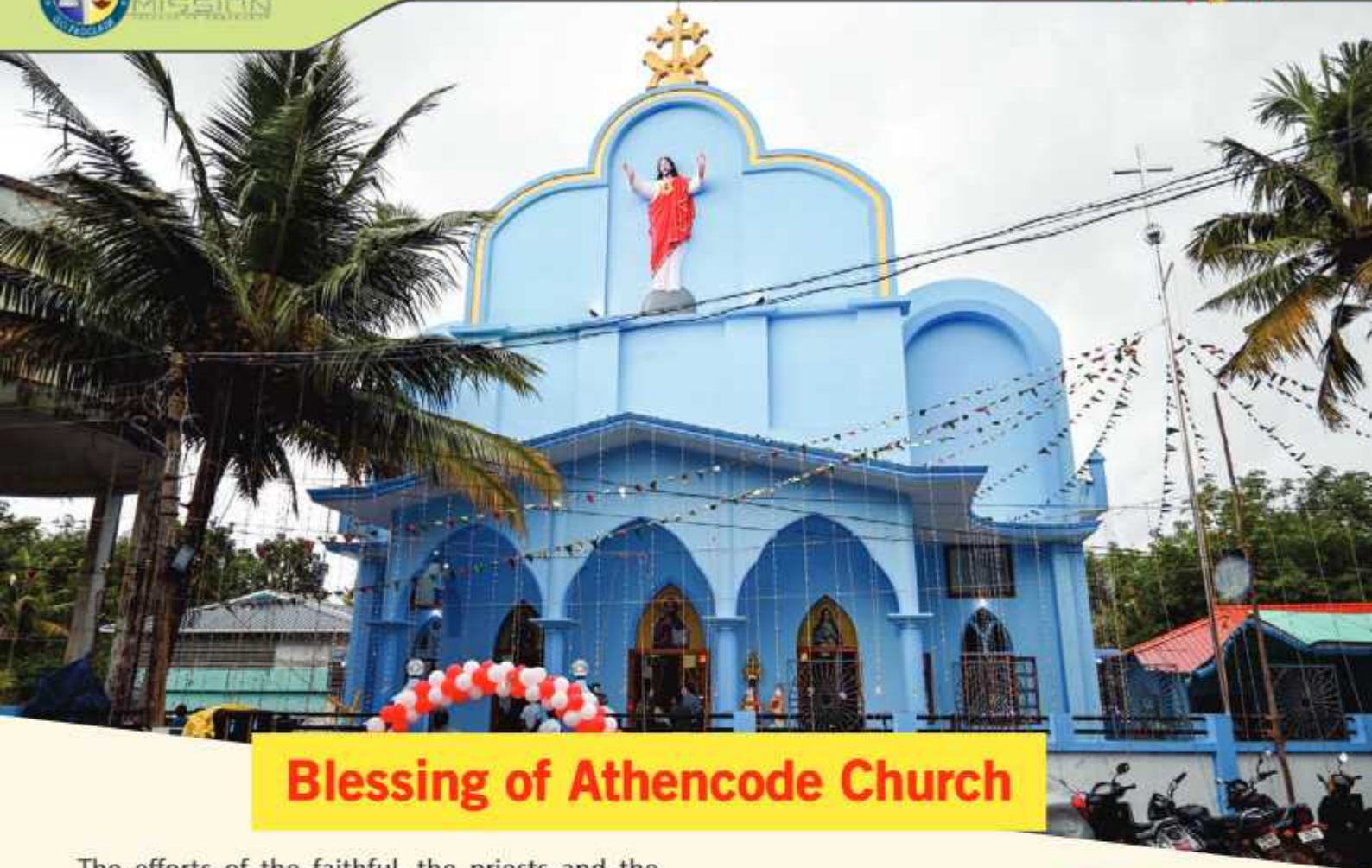


## Mankarai Parish Turns Golden

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 Mass 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.







## 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 benefactors and friends 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. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB 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 Mulangasserril, 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. We recollect with gratitude the contribution of benefactors from abroad and Palai Friends of Thuckalay for their support.







## 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 Diocese for nearly 11 years now and they were happy to get their permanent residence here last year. It was a cherished dream of the Diocese to promote women empowerment and job opportunities for the people. We are happy that the MMM Sisters are collaborating with V-Star Garments for providing livelihood to the women around the area. The Bishop 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.





## Flood Relief 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, our Bishop visited the flood affected people living at Thoivalai 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, visited the families affected by the flood at Munchirai on 19 November 2021. He interacted with the families and listened to their sufferings and concerns. The team 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. Subsequent visits and support were undertaken in different areas. The families appreciated our visits during these difficult times. We also thank all our priests and religious for standing with the affected people with material as well as psychological support.



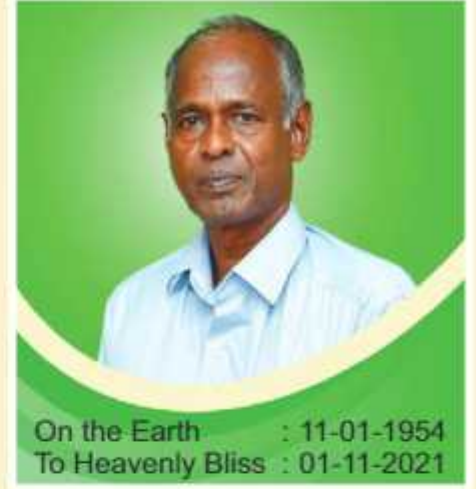




## VOCATION AND MISSION

**Mr Sounder Raj**

**A Man with a Heart of Gold for the Church**



A terrible news was conveyed to all of us in the Diocese of Thuckalay in the evening of November 1, 2021. A person very dear to all of us, very close to the Church, active member in all our activities and a positive and effective contributor beyond all limits, Mr Sounder Raj, had tragically passed away in an accident on his way home from Bishop's House, Thuckalay. He was returning home after a meeting of the executive committee of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP). As always, he had participated actively in the discussions and spent additional moments of deliberations with Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General of the Diocese.

As we are reeling through this loss, we are forced to recollect the special vocation that Mr Sounder Raj had in the life of the Kanyakumari Mission under the Archdiocese of Changanassery and the

Diocese of Thuckalay through the years of his life on earth and the mission that he had been involved, being one with the missionary spirit of the Church. His association can be traced back to his family joining the Catholic Faith in the Syro-Malabar tradition since the very arrival of the pioneer missionaries. Mr. Nesaiyan and Mrs. Rachel, very pious parents of Mr Sounder Raj had sewed together character, love, concern and charity into the heart and mind of the young child.

His childhood was well spent in the company of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) Fathers, with whom he moved door to door, assisting them in all aspects. The CMI Fathers identified the talent and commitment in the young person and educated him to be ready for taking up the challenges of life through a fruitful life of contribution. He first worked with the Fathers as a hostel warden and then took up the mantle of a teacher - teaching Tamil, English and Maths at different points of time at St. Joseph High School, Pilankalai, a dedicated service that is remembered by many of his former students who have achieved success in their lives and continue to remember and adore him for his contributions for their growth.

Mr. Sounder Raj had immense influence through the scouting movement that he had introduced in the Thuckalay educational district of Kanyakumari district. He initially become the teacher incharge of scouts in the school and gradually introduced the same from school to







school, trained teachers in the educational district, as the commissioner of the educational district for many years. He went on to win a state award in the year 2019-20 for his long service.

The mission in the Church that began as a child accompanying the CMI Fathers began to get matured as the years passed by and culminated in a selfless service through SSVP. He became one of the first members of SSVP in the earlier Kanyakumari Mission and now the Diocese of Thuckalay. He lived in its spirit and truth according to the objectives of SSVP. He imitated the life of St. Vincent de Paul and lived by the mission of Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam in founding the SSVP. He lived a Vincentian throughout his life with a heart for the downtrodden. He was not only the president of the Thuckalay Central Assembly of SSVP, but also moved beyond the borders of the Diocese or the state by serving as the Vice President of the National Assembly for two years and later in other roles. He professed strict discipline as a Vincentian and urged upon everyone to live by it. He not only provided dedicated leadership as a Vincentian but also provided opportunity, encouraged and guided

everyone to exercise their leadership skills. After his retirement from his service as a teacher, he strengthened his involvement by placing all this time, energy and financial resources to the formation and development of SSVP and for the education of rural and downtrodden youth. He is credited with the establishment of Ozanam Educational Centre at Asaripallam, Nagercoil. He would go to any extent, even postponing important family duties, to help and assist the people in need. He used all his contacts in SSVP to arrange for free or concessional medical treatment in the hospitals in Vellore, Chennai and other places.







Mr. Sounder Raj had been a die-hard son of the Church. He had a loving heart for the Syro-Malabar. Being a multi-faceted personality, he entered into the missionary life of the Diocese in every aspect of its service to the faithful and to the poor. He had always been one with the fathers in the Syro-Malabar Church. Though he had the age, experience and wisdom, he respected the authority of even young priests and religious. He would never speak ill of a priest or a religious, rather he would gently correct them. He possessed enormous love and respect for priests and religious. He closely collaborated with the Bishop and the leadership of the Diocese. The Bishop and other authorities could confidently entrust him with any responsibility or send him to any meeting to represent the Diocese and he would very proudly speak about the Diocese and often be its spokesperson. His involvement in ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, representing the Diocese most often, had been appreciated by all. He would travel by his two-wheeler even in the middle of the night, after his work for the Diocese in the Bishop's House or from any Parish or Mission Centre.

The undisputable commitment and involvement of Mr. Sounder Raj in the Church began with his direct interaction and initiation of missionary spirit to the religious sisters from Kerala to whom he taught the Tamil language. He also took leadership in directing, guiding and

spearheading laity leadership in the Diocese. Serving SSVP in different capacity in the state level, he had plenty of contacts with persons with a spirit of charity. When the ecclesiastical territory of the Diocese of Thuckalay was extended to all the southern districts of Tamilnadu, he contacted the Vincentians in all these areas to assist the Diocese.

He developed a personality around him with high intellect and integrity. He has received awards such as the Best Author Award in the year 2010, Diocesan Service Award in 2014 and the Metropolitan Jubilee Award in conjunction with the Golden Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Changanassery in 2006.

The culmination of his insurmountable love for the Church was exhibited when he sowed the seed, prepared and offered his elder son, Rev. Fr Abilash Xavier Raj to the Diocese and we could feel the pride of ultimate missionary spirit in him when his son was ordained a priest on April 24, 2019.

The laity in the Diocese of Thuckalay will continue to draw inspiration from this wonderful lay missionary of the Church. The priests and religious will ever renew the missionary spirit and place ourselves in the service of the poor on the dedicated path shown by Mr. Sounder Raj, a man with a heart of gold for the Church.



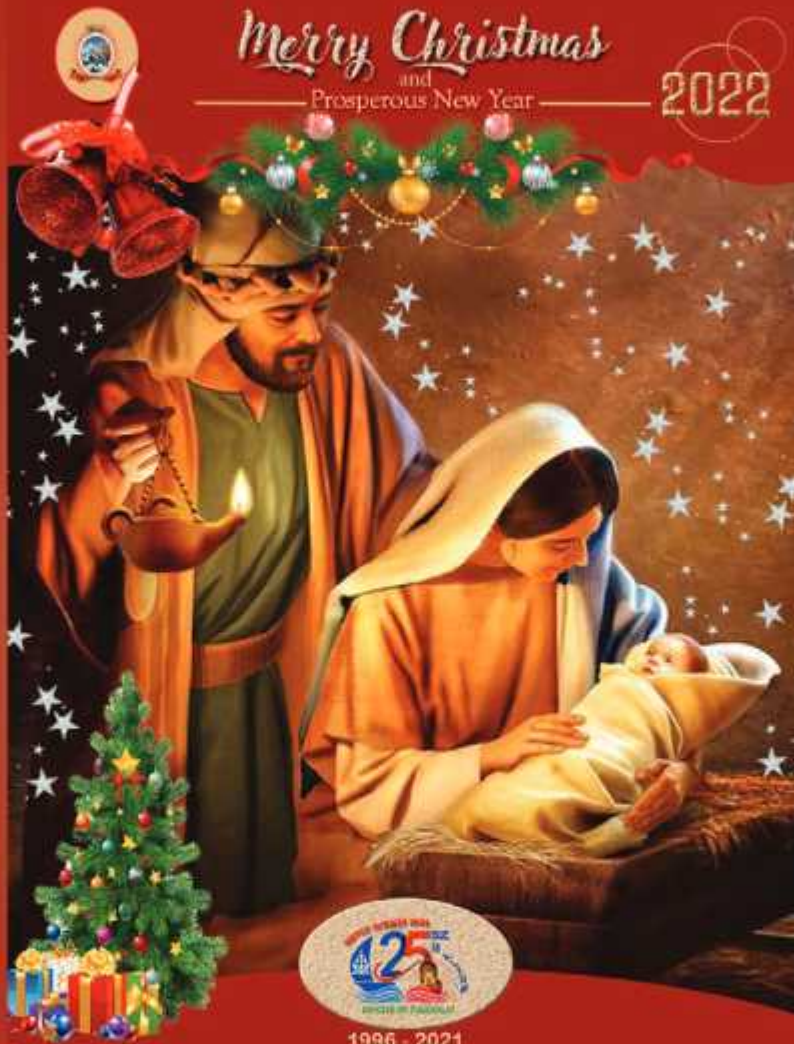


**THUCKALAY**  
MISSION  
DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY

*Merry Christmas*  
and  
Prosperous New Year

2022

May the  
Christmas  
Stars  
being lit all  
over the world  
bring a  
consoling  
spirit  
to the  
suffering  
of humanity!



The Diocese of  
Thuckalay  
wishes all our  
Friends,  
Benefactors  
and Well Wishers  
**A MERRY  
CHRISTMAS**  
and  
**A BRIGHT AND  
FRUITFUL  
NEW YEAR 2022**

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