



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!

On 8 September, we celebrate the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St Louis de Montfort says that because we have not sufficiently known Mary, we do not sufficiently know Jesus. Hence, it is pertinent that we use every occasion that we get in order to know and love Mother Mary. Often, we like Marian devotions where we can get something out of it, like the scapular (protection from eternal fire), the miraculous medal (miracles and favours), the rosary (peace in the world and in our families) or Our Lady of Lourdes (healing). However, the feast of the Nativity of Mary should hold a special place in our lives.

There is only one reason why we celebrate this feast. It is the birthday of the mother of Jesus and our heavenly mother. Again, to neglect our own mother's birthday is unthinkable. In conception, Mary was created and filled with spiritual gifts and blessings. But she was shrouded by the mystery of the womb. She lived only in the society of God and the angels. When She was born, she was introduced into the society of humans. Born to the light of the world, her mission to be the universal mediatrix and co-redemptrix officially began, much in the same way the birth of the Messiah had.

In our tradition this feast is preceded by an 8-day fast, which we call *Ettu Noyinbu*. When we turn the pages of the history books, we read that in the seventh century, there was a town called Heera near Basra, which was predominantly a Christian township. The Caliph of Baghdad captured this town and appointed a fanatic Muslim governor, who implemented the caliph's every dictum with fervour. The caliph was known to be cruel and had a weakness for beautiful women. He was enamoured by the beauty and charm of the women of Heera and decided to reach there in three days. The chastity and modesty of the women of Heera were at stake. They sought refuge in the church of St Mary. The priest declared an uncompromising lent for three days invoking the intercession of mother Mary. On the 3rd day, in the middle of the [Holy Qurbana](#), a golden beam of light flashed down from above, then spread to illuminate the whole church. It is said that the priest had a vision of Mother Mary and also heard her saying, "Do not be afraid; peace be to you – Rejoice. The Caliph is no more. Tribulations are over." The priest then turned to the people and they could see an aura around the priest's face as he relayed the message. The whole congregation praised the Lord and thanked Mary for her intercessory prayers.

The women then decided to observe a lent for eight days, that is, from the 1st to the 8th of September in commemoration of this event. They believed that Mother Mary helped to safeguard their chastity, modesty and dignity. The missionaries who came to our land brought with them this pious practice to our Church and this tradition has continued even today in our churches and families.

When we consider various Marian devotions, we must keep in mind that true devotion to Mary is in imitation of the love and veneration Jesus has for his own mother. Without a doubt, Jesus celebrates her birthday in heaven. Since Jesus is the most perfect son, what person in the world could attribute anything less than loyal devotion and reverence to the most perfect of all mothers. We also learn much from the life of Mother Mary.

Mary is the symbol of contemplation and deep spirituality. Today, despite all the reminders from the magisterium of the Church, to be radically faithful to the practices of piety, many of us are still superficial, negligent, sarcastic and even trespass the priestly decorum. Remember that without Jesus Christ and Mother Mary at the centre of our lives, our priestly ministry becomes hollow.

Mary said yes to the humiliation of the Cross, to suffering and enjoyed closeness to Jesus and to the people. Unfortunately, we often chase easy success and are not willing to bear cheerfully the inconveniences and difficulties, that are connected with our mission, apostolate and ministry. The reflections on the adventures of the pioneers to our Mission show us how they faced cheerfully the manifold challenges of the missions for the sake of saving souls. Some of us seem to be very happy, if our self-will is respected, even if it goes against religious norms, and are entrusted with whatever we require.

Mary is known for simplicity, and yet being very powerful in helping the poor and the needy. She certainly remained poor in word and indeed. She was obedient. She said: "Behold, your servant, and let it be unto me according to your word." She was chaste and holy. That is why the angel called her "full of grace." She was sinless, that is why, God assumed her body and soul into heaven.

We must meaningfully prepare ourselves to celebrate the birthday of Mother Mary by encouraging our people to mark the 8-day fast. With proper dispositions, when we keep this fast, I am sure, we shall be better prepared to enter into the feast of the nativity of Our Blessed Mother. There are also other Marian devotional practices that can help our people to come close to our heavenly Mother. On 8 September being the solemnity let's have Holy Qurbanana in all our churches without fail.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Inauguration of Sinai Academic year: The Sinai Theological Centre in the Eparchy gives doctrinal and spiritual training to our lay people. The classes for the degree and diploma courses resumed with inauguration of the academic year. It was held on 1 August 2021. There are 18 new students who have joined for the two-year diploma course. The simple inaugural ceremony was held at KKSSS campus in the presence of all the students and professors. Rev. Fr Sathianesan, Director of Sinai Theological Centre, welcomed the gathering after which, a detailed report of the activities was presented. In my address, I encouraged the students to listen to the voice of the Lord and become defenders of faith and morals in the Church. I am grateful to Rev. Fr Sathianesan and his team of professors for taking forward the formation of laity.

Vianney Day Celebration: The feast of St Maria John Vianney, patron of all the priests, especially the Diocesan priests, was observed in the Eparchy in a meaningful way. As in other years, this year all the priests gathered in our Minor Seminary on 4 August 2021. The programme began at 9.30 am with a prayer service. The Minor seminarians conducted the service. This was followed by the traditional volley ball match between the priests and the Seminarians. Although both teams played the match well, the seminarians over came the stiff challenge and won the trophy. There was a brief cultural programme in

which the Seminarians displayed their talents. The celebration concluded with a solemn lunch. We are all grateful to the Rector and his team for hosting the Vianney Day Programme even though the number of Seminarians was less. A special word of thanks to the Sisters who prepared the meal for all the Fathers.

Meeting of Consulters and Forane Vicars: Following the announcement of Tamil Nadu Government regarding the restriction of movement on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 9-23 August, the consulters and Forane Vicars met together online on 7 August to assess the situation and to plan alternative ways to sustain the liturgical and spiritual life for our faithful. The meeting proposed to have the liturgical celebrations from Monday to Thursday in all the parishes and to encourage people to take part in Uravium wise. A brief circular was prepared and sent to all the priests regarding the celebration of holy Qurbana and other liturgical events during the lock down period.

Fr Stan Swami – Today’s Prophet: TCYM in collaboration with the Department of Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue of our Eparchy organized a social awareness seminar on Fr Stan Sami - Today’s Prophet on 7 August at Sangamam. The seminar was more of academic in nature. It was meant to create awareness among our people on the issues on Social Justice. The main resource persons were Rev Fr Maria Alphonse, Fr Wilson, Mr Boss and Mrs Sankundala. I welcomed the gathering. Fr Santhosh presented paper entitled “The Need of Prophets Today’ World. Fr Maria Alphonse moderated the session and Fr Antony Jose proposed the Vote of Thanks. There were more than sixty participants, mostly youth and prominent personalities from our Eparchy. There was a panel discussion on how to be prophets today by taking forward the mission left by Fr Stan Swami. I am grateful to Fr Santhosh and his team for organising this seminar.

UCC Meeting with District Collector: In the wake of the arrest Fr George Ponnaiya, a priest from the Diocese of Kuzhithurai, for hate speech and subsequent denial of bail, the United Christian Council (UCC) of Kanyakumari district decided to present a memorandum to the District Collector for his intervention in getting the release of Fr George Ponnaiya. Although he was given bail by the High Court, the UCC members went ahead to meet the Collector. The meeting was held on 10 August 2021. There were 15 Church leaders and they handed over a memorandum to the Collector. The members assured the DC that they would give full support and cooperation in maintaining peace and harmony in the district.

Church Blessing: The Kudukachivilai mission had its humble beginning in 2015 in a make-shift house. Fr Subin Scaria, parish priest of the Mission, with the help of the parishioners and some generous benefactors began the work of renovation of the church. A beautiful mondolam was built and a well-designed Madubaha with new altar was constructed. The church was consecrated on 12 August 2021 in the presence of many priests, religious and faithful of the parish. The ceremony was well-planned and everything went off well. I congratulate and thank Fr Subin Scaria for preparing a beautiful house for God with the help of the people.

Syro-Malabar Synod: The Syro-Malabar Bishops’ Synod was held from 16-27 August online. For the success of the synod our beloved Major Archbishop asked the entire Syro-Malabar Church to observe one-month of prayer from 27 July to 27 August. The Synod decided to make the celebration of the Holy Qurbana uniform in the entire Church. Prior to the Synod, the Holy Father and the Congregation of Oriental Churches requested the Syro-Malabar Church to implement promptly the uniform mode of Holy Qurbana. The members of the Synod spent nearly 9 days to discuss the letter of the Holy Father and finally decided to bring unity and uniformity in the celebration of the Holy Qurbana. The uniform mode of Holy Qurbana is to be implemented in all the Eparchies from 28 November 2021. Let us pray that all the members of the Church may abide by this decision of the Synod. In our Eparchy, the Liturgical

commission will study the new text of the Holy Qurbana and will be discussed in our Forane level priests' conferences.

Rev. Sr Canicia SH is no more: One of our pioneer missionaries to our Mission, Rev. Sr Canicia SH breathed her last on 20 August 2021. She was admitted at the Medical Centre Hospital, Kottayam and was undergoing treatment for some days. Sr Canicia SH reached our mission territory in 1969 and worked with great zeal and enthusiasm for 52 years. She loved the then Kanyakumari Mission and now the Thuckalay Eparchy. The early life in the mission was rather tough. But with great commitment, she visited families and prepared the faithful for the reception of the sacraments. The salvation of souls was her only concern and whenever she met people she would speak about spiritual matters. Sr Canicia had a kind heart and she felt one with the poor and the needy. She shared with them whatever resources she had. She learnt Tamil well and became a teacher at Holy Family School, Mukkoottukal. She was the first Headmistress of the school and served in that post for 13 years. Sr Canicia used to visit the families and encourage the parents to send their children to school.

Sr Canicia was a very happy Sister and would make sure that everyone in her company was happy. She was a person without guile. She loved priests and helped them in their pastoral and spiritual ministries. She had great respect for superiors. She generously shared everything she had with the community.

The funeral of Sr Canicia was held at Parel, Changanaserry on 21 August. Along with some priests and sisters from Thuckalay, I took part in the last rites and bade farewell to the departed soul. The Eparchy is grateful to the SH congregation and family of Sr Canicia for sending her to the Thuckalay Mission.

Visit to Thenkasi Mission: The priests and the religious of Thenkasi mission came together for a monthly recollection and meeting on 28 August. Fr Justin Sudeesh led the group into prayer. Opportunity was given for everyone to make confessions. During the meeting, those who celebrated their feast days or birthdays were felicitated. Three new Sisters, namely, Rev Sr Anchu DSHS, Sr Alphonsa FCC and Rev. Sr Clare FCC, were formally welcomed. All the departments shared their progress. Rev. Fr Thomas, coordinator of the mission, gave a comprehensive overview of the activities in the mission and urged the members to plan well for the silver jubilee of the inauguration of Thenkasi Mission. In my talk, I encouraged the missionaries, especially the new comers, to learn Tamil language and to inculturate with the people of the area. The meeting came to an end with a meal.

Inauguration of Thenkasi Palliative care mission: The Thenkasi Mission is actively involved in the healing mission for last 20 years through dispensaries. There are a number of bed ridden patients who are poor and hence need more attention. It was decided to begin a mobile palliative care unit. The nurse Sisters Sr Helen DSHS and Sr Libia FCC are entrusted with the task of carrying out this mission. On 28 August 2021, after the meeting, I blessed and inaugurated the Mobile Palliative care unit and officially handed over the key of the vehicle to Sr Helen DSHS. As of now, the Sisters would visit the families in the villages twice a week. I congratulate Rev. Fr Thomas and the Sisters for realising this need for the poor people.

Eparchial level Cricket Tournament: The Christ King parish on the occasion of its diamond Jubilee in collaboration with TCYM organised a Eparchial Level Cricket match. Nearly 18 teams took part in the tournament. Each team was given six overs and only 7 players could take part. It was held at St Alphonsa College campus. I congratulate the winning team.

Bishop's Meeting with SH Sisters: Last few weeks, Rev. Sr Amala SH, Provincial of Sacred Heart Congregation, was making her visitation in all the communities. On 30 August, she completed her visitation. I was able to attend the meeting of leaders of communities with the Provincial at Kazhuvanthittai convent. It was a time for fruitful sharing, evaluation and discussion on religious life and pastoral activities of SH Sisters in the Eparchy. I appreciate the initiatives taken by the Provincial and her council members.

INFORMATION

- Although there is no Sunday Holy Qurbana, we have not cancelled the Sunday School classes. Kindly have classes on Sundays or any other preferred days without fail. We do not have online classes.
- Translation of Liturgy of the remaining Propria is going on at Padanthalumood under the guidance of Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadakal.
- Father of Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam passed away on 5 August 2021. Due to Covid-19 protocol, the funeral was held only with a few people. However, a number of priests visited the home of Fr Jose and prayed for the departed Soul. We express our heart-felt condolences and prayers to our brother priest Fr Jose Muttathupadam and plead with God for the eternal rest of the departed
- A team of 11 nurse Sisters and laity took part in the TNBC Health Care Commission's Training of Trainers' Programme at Poondi Matha Retreat Centre. Rev. Fr Abin Poovathumootil, Director, organised the team and he was present for the meeting
- The diocese of Trichy has a new Bishop. The Episcopal Ordination of Most Rev. Arokiyaraj was held on 15 August. I attended the ordination. We wish him God's blessings to the newly consecrated Bishop.
- The door step of Kunnuvilai church was blessed on 16 August. The parish priest and the faithful were present on this occasion. The building work is in progress.
- The Thettiyode parish is beginning the celebrations of the golden jubilee in the coming month. We wish God's blessing to the parish priest and the faithful.
- The Vicar General and I had an online meeting with Fr Anilraj Dominic, Coordinator of Madurai Mission, on 31 August. During the meeting, Fr Anilraj presented the current situation of the mission. Some new plans and activities were discussed.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

01 September	-	Ettu Noyonbu begins
03 September	-	Jubilee Committee meeting
08 September	-	Feast of Nativity of Our Blessed Mother
13 September	-	Priests Conference Manjalumoodu, Arukani and Kaliyal foranes
14 September	-	Thenkasi, Madurai, Thirunelveli, Virudunagar Mission gathering
15 September	-	Priests Conference Thuck-Pilankalai and Soosaipuram Foranes
16 September	-	Priests Conference Padanthalumoodu and Nithravilai Foranes
18 September	-	Online Priests conference

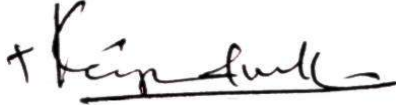
CONCLUSION

During the month of August, we had come together as fellow workers of the Eparchy to celebrate the feast of St John Maria Vianney. This celebration gave us an opportunity to recall our own priesthood and to resolve to live it like St John Maria Vianney by administering the sacraments especially the sacrament of reconciliation as he did. Let us make use of occasions such as Feasts of patron Saints of our parishes

to boost the faith of our people. In the coming month, as we have already reflected, we shall celebrate one of the important feasts of Blessed Virgin Mary, namely, the Nativity of Mother Mary. The celebration of this feast is a wonderful opportunity for us to grow in Marian piety. Let us prepare our people well and celebrate it meaningfully. Let us continue to storm the heavens for the people who are suffering due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown that was imposed in the past months have put the lives of our people in peril. Our own institutions, especially College and Schools, have borne brunt of the lock down. Kindly keep the mission of the Church and the needs of our Eparchy in your daily prayers so that we may move out of the pandemic that is plaguing all of us.

May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

