



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb
Diocese of Thuckalay

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30 April 2021

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

The Queen of Heaven is so revered for her relationship with Christ and her love and guidance of her earthly children that the Catholic Church has dedicated the month of May in her honour. We have special devotions performed during this month in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are many different factors that contributed to this association. In ancient Greece and Rome, the month of May was dedicated to pagan goddesses connected to fertility and springtime (Artemis and Flora, respectively). This, combined with other European rituals commemorating the new season of spring, led many Western cultures to view May as a month of life and motherhood.

In the early Church there is evidence of a major feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrated on 15 May each year. However, it was in the 18th century that the month of May received a particular association with the Virgin Mary. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “the May devotion in its present form originated at Rome where Father Latomia of the Roman College of the Society of Jesus, to counteract infidelity and immorality among the students, made a vow at the end of the eighteenth century to devote the month of May to Mary. From Rome the practice spread to the other Jesuit colleges and thence to nearly every Catholic church of the Latin rite.” Traditionally, the month of October is “rosary month” while the month of May is devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In his 1965 encyclical, *Mense Maio*, St Paul VI wrote about the importance of Mary's intercession for all the world, explaining that those who encounter her, encounter her Son, Jesus: “For what other reason do we continually turn to Mary except to seek the Christ in her arms, to seek our Saviour in her, through her, and with her? To Him men are to turn amid the anxieties and perils of this world, urged on by duty and driven by the compelling needs of their heart, to find a haven of salvation, a transcendent fountain of life.”

St Paul VI went on to write that May is the month in which the Christians offer the Virgin Mother more “fervent and loving acts of homage and veneration; and it is the month in which a greater abundance of God's merciful gifts comes down to us from our Mother's throne.”

Pope Francis consecrated his papacy to Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Fatima, and he invited all Catholics to consecrate themselves to her tender, loving care. By faith, we become the sons and daughters of Jesus, so it should be natural for us to ask Mary to intercede on our behalf.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls Mary our model of faith and charity, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship. “The Church rightly honours the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honoured with the title of ‘Mother of God,’ to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs... This very special devotion... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly

fosters this adoration. The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an epitome of the whole Gospel, expresses this devotion to the Virgin Mary” (§971).

There are a number of Marian feasts celebrated during this month. The most prominent Marian feast days in May, according to the ordinary Roman Catholic Calendar are 1 May, Queen of Heaven; 13 May, Our Lady of Fatima; 24 May, Mary Help of Christians; and, 31 May Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St Bernard was quoted as saying, “If the winds of temptation arise, look at your star, invoke Mary; if the greatness of your crimes troubles you, think of Mary.”

Although we are not permitted to hold Holy Qurbana and other liturgical celebrations in common for the public, our churches are always open for our faithful to make personal/family visits. During this month of May, I request you, to plan well for observance of the month. Some of the things that you can undertake are:

- Encourage families to prepare an altar at home for our Blessed Mother placing her statue or an image.
- Encourage families to pray the rosary at home regularly.
- Encourage families to visit the church and pray the rosary in front of the statue of Our Lady.
- Organise online (Zoom) Rosary service for at least five to ten families each every day.
- Engage the faithful by giving them different tasks about Our Blessed Mother. Talk to them about the importance of the month of May, make them read the Bible verses on Mother Mary, etc.
- Conduct family-wise chain rosary.
- Begin the practice of meeting a family in the church and pray with them every day.
- As in other years, the Eparchy will organise the chain rosary parish-wise on 23 May 2021.
- All the parishes are asked to organise chain rosary family wise on 16 May 2021

Dear Fathers, as we reflect on our Blessed Mother, let us also realise that the second wave of Covid-19 is rather serious and that we need to protect ourselves. Kindly cancel or postpone all your travels scheduled for these days and take utmost care to protect of your health and the health our faithful. We hear the sad news that many priests and religious are infected with the virus and that a number of them have died due to Covid-19 in recent days. Therefore, let us not take it lightly. Let us also find quality time for personal prayer during these days of lock down.

NEWS AND EVENTS

MAUNDY THURSDAY commemorates the institution of the Lord’s Supper. During every Eucharist, we re-enact the words of Jesus: “This is my Body. This is my Blood - Do this in remembrance of me.” A more accurate rendering would be, “Do this to make me present with you.” The day-long adoration that we had on that day helped the faithful to keep watch and to be united with Jesus’ agony in the garden of Gethsemane. We reminisce the words that Jesus spoke to Peter: “So could you not watch with me one hour?”

GOOD FRIDAY: The cross involves death as depicted in the passion narratives. Although the death of Jesus was something very cruel, it was a death accomplished out of love. The cross is a radical expression of love for others. On 2 April, all the parishes commemorated the Good Friday with prayers and meditation. Since Covid-19 protocol was in place, some parishes avoided using the public road for the Way of the Cross and confined themselves to their church campuses.

EASTER: Holy Week culminates with the Great Easter Vigil. It is evident from of the Gospels that the resurrection occurred sometime during the night. The exodus from Egypt began at night, and because of the

parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Christians expect the second coming of Jesus to happen at night. Hence, we have the widespread custom of vigil services in the Christian community. All the parishes had the Easter Holy Qurbana on the night of 3 April or on the early morning of 4 April. It was good to see our faithful taking part in the celebrations with great enthusiasm.

MAJOR SEMINARIANS: Major Seminarians came to the Eparchy directly from their respective seminaries on 25 March 2021 and they were engaged in the vacation ministry in the Eparchy. The Brothers helped with the Holy Week programme in the parishes. They attended the Tamil Classes for 13 days. They also took part in the work camp held at KKSSS and Perumchilampu for four days. On 22 April, they had a one-day retreat to prepare themselves to receive the minor and major orders, which were administered on 23 April 2021 at Sangamam. Br Antony Sunil received the Cassock. Br Albin Jose, Br Lindo, Br Amanto and Br Sanjoe Mon received *Karoyusa*. Br Liju, Br Prince, Br Shijin Dev and Br Ajin C. received *Heupathiaknousa* (Sub-Diaconate). Br Georgekutty, studying in Rome, received the order of *Heupathiaknousa* (Sub-Diaconate) in Rome from Bishop Stephan Chirapanath. Due to Corona restrictions, Br Mahesh and Br Jose Mon received the major order of diaconate on 27 April 2021 at Sangamam, which was supposed to be held at Palapallam on 8 May 2021. The Brothers went home for vacation on 27 April since VVP for the catechism students was cancelled. During their stay at Sangamam, they were informed and instructed about the Safe Environment Policy of the Eparchy, Statutes of the Major seminarians and about the Silver Jubilee Action-Plan. We are grateful to all the Brothers for their presence and ministry during the vacation. A special word of Thanks to Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, Director of Major Seminarians.

BLESSING OF THE ADDITIONAL BLOCK OF KARUNAI ILLAM: For many years the ASMI Sisters ministering in Karunai Illam have been staying in a limited space with bare minimum facilities. It was a long felt need to have additional rooms for the Sisters to reside. Through the prayers and hard work of the Sisters and the support of the benefactors, they have constructed an additional block for their residence along with the convent building on the vacant terrace on the ground floor. I blessed the block on 7 April 2021 in the presence of Curia Members, Parish Priest and some of their Sisters. I congratulate the ASMI Sisters and the Parish Priest for their wonderful services.

ALTAR BLESSING AT ANAYADI: The altar is the focal point in any church. St Gorge Mission Anayadi took the initiative to construct a new altar. It was blessed on 22 April 2021. I congratulate Fr Vinu and the parishioners.

FEAST OF ST GEORGE: St George is the second patron of the Eparchy as well as my own patron. His feast was celebrated on 24 April 2021 at Sangamam. All the priests and some of the religious Sisters participated. The celebration started with the priests' conference. The Sisters joined for the prayer session at 12.30pm. The celebration concluded with the felicitation ceremony and agape. It was a nice opportunity to gather as a family to thank the Lord for all his blessings. I thank you, dear Fathers and Sisters, for your prayers and wishes.

YOUTH FEST 2021: The Eparchial Commission for Youth Apostolate conducted special competitions in the month of April 2021 as part of the jubilee celebrations of the Eparchy. Some of the events for the individual competitions were prove yourself, Just a Minute Speech and WhatsApp Status creation. Group Song, Group Dance, Best Choreography and Mime were the events held as group competitions. Eparchial Jubilee was the main theme of these competitions. Just a Minute Speech and WhatsApp Creation were based on '25 years of the Eparchy of Thuckalay' and for Group Dance, Jubilee Anthem was assigned.

The Forane level competitions were held on 14 April 2021. Two members each from the Diocesan Executive team were sent to conduct the competitions. Forane Youth Directors supervised the competitions. Those

individuals and groups who secured the first two places in the Forane level competitions, took part in the Eparchial level competitions, which were held on 24 April 2021 at St Joseph's Church Campus, Soosaipuram. Rev. Fr Antony Jose delivered the inaugural address. Christ the King, Palapallam and St Xavier's, Varuthattu with 80 points each jointly secured the first place while St Antony's, Vayalankarai with 75 points secured second place. Mr Isaias, Principal of Alphonsa College of Arts and Science, Karinkal, distributed the prizes. Rev. Fr Subin Scaria, Forane Director of Soosaipuram with the help of youth from St Joseph's, Soosaipuram arranged the venue for the finals.

INTENSIVE TAMIL CLASSES: Language impacts the daily lives of the members of any society. It helps to express feelings, desires, doubts and puzzles of life. In order to preach the Gospel and to share one's faith with the people, language is essential. Realising its importance, the religious Sisters of the Eparchy both young and old took a step to learn Tamil language. They began the classes in the first week of January 2021. However, from 5-13 April, the Sisters had serious classes from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm at Sangamam. The Tamil teachers were Mr Kamala Selvaraj, Mr Selvamani and Mr Ayyappan. I appreciate very much the initiative taken by the Sisters in learning Tamil.

Golden Jubilee of Marapady Church: With Manjalumoodu Mission as Centre, the pioneer Missionary Rev. Fr Joseph Madathil began many mission stations like Thettivila, Kukkootukal, Malaicodu, Karodu and Marapaddy. Rev. Fr Cyriac Kootumelil was the Assistant Parish Priest who helped him in this mission.

In 1970, near the house of Mr Muttupillai at Marapaddy, a thatched house was built for the Christians to gather for their prayer. At first 6 families joined the mission. Among them are Mr Muthunayagam and Mr Rasalraj. On 3 July 1972, Fr Joseph Madathil baptised 36 members and later in the same year Archbishop Antony Padiyara baptised 33 members.

Rev Fr Jacob Kadattukalam became the Mission in-charge in 1973. He worked till 1975. Late Fr Cyriac Kootumelil bought a piece of land and built a church in 1975. The Sacred Heart (SH) Sisters reached Marapaddy in 1971 under the leadership of Sr Isabella and Lisy Jose. In 1998, the Mission became an independent Parish and Rev. Fr Geo Choozhikunnel was appointed its first Parish Priest. He built the present presbytery in the year 2000.

Rev Fr Tomy Alappattukunnel Csr with the accompaniment of Rev Fr Zacharias Kanjuparampil Csr renovated the church and it was blessed by then Bishop of Thuckalay and now Major Archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry.

Due to COVID restrictions the year long golden Jubilee celebrations were concluded in a simple manner on 13 April with Solemn Holy Qurbana. A brief meeting was held in the church itself during which all the pioneering missionaries were remembered gratefully. On behalf of the Eparchy, I thanked all the faithful, Fathers and Sisters for their dedicated ministry in Marapady. Congratulations and best wishes to Fr Vinod and parishioners!

INFORMATION

- **VPV for the Catechism Students:** Narcheithi Nilayam had made arrangements to conduct VPV for the children from 25 April to 9 May 2021. However, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, it is postponed and now it will be held from 17 May 2021 online. Dear Fathers, please prepare the children for the online VPV classes.

- **Kayathar Mission:** FCC Sisters of Thuckalay province have bought a piece of land for the mission work at Kayathar. I congratulate Rev. Sr Ancilin FCC, Provincial, for her initiative. Let us support them with our prayers.
- **Promoting of Vocations:** Vocation promotion is the bounden duty of every Priest especially of the Parish Priests. We need to take special care and initiative in meeting those boys who show signs of priestly vocation. The Fathers in-charge of promoting and following up the vocations at the Forane level will meet the Parish Priests on a regular basis for assistance and support. I personally
- **Good Friday Collection:** Kindly submit the Good Friday collection for the up-keep of the Holy Land to the Eparchial Procurator at the earliest.
- **Regency:** Br Bibin and Br Jubin have completed their philosophical studies. Br Jubin is appointed at St Alphonsa School while Br Bibin is at Bishop's House for regency
- **Liturgy Commission:** The Eparchial Liturgical Committee met on 9 April in order to study the changes suggested in the prayer 'Our Father' so that it will be in agreement with the new Tamil version of the Catholic Bible. The modified version of the prayer is sent to our Major Archbishop for his approval and for imprimatur.
- **College Personal Policy:** The Curia members together with the Correspondent and Principal of St Alphonsa College met together to prepare the new Personal Policy and Service Rule for the College.
- **Fr Printo Kurias** has already completed his LLB studies and has successfully registered as a member of BAR Association. He has obtained the title Advocate. We congratulate Fr Printo and wish him God's blessings in his future ministry.
- **Transfers** this year will be held after our Silver Jubilee Celebrations in November.
- **RIP Fr John Nattunilathu MST** passed away in a road accident. While Fr John was travelling to a mission station early morning of 2 April, he collided with a truck and died on the spot. We express our condolence to MST community and pray for the departed Soul. Fr John worked in our Eparchy for five years and he helped in building the church at Anumugam. On 6 April, along with a some of the priests and parishioners, I celebrated a Requiem mass and prayed for the departed soul
- **RIP- Mr JoseKutti (79):** father of Fr. Jiji Koipuram passed away on 14 April, 2021 due to some serious illness. The funeral was held on 15 April. Due to Covid restriction I along with five more priests took part in the funeral in his home town at Madapally. We express our sincere condolences and prayer to Fr. Jiji and his family and pray for the departed soul.

SILVER JUBILEE ACTIVITIES

- Due to Covid-19 restriction, some programmes in the Eparchy are either cancelled or re-scheduled. They are:
 - The Philocalia Retreat for catechism teachers from 16 to 18 April 2021, Postponed
 - Popular Mission retreats organized in the months of April and May 2021, cancelled
 - Chain adoration in the parishes from 26 to 29 April 2021, Postponed
 - Pastoral Council on 1 May 2021, cancelled

CURIA NEWS

- **Rev. Fr John Joseph** is sent to the Eparchy of Ujjain for the pastoral work for next two years. Bishop of Ujjain will give him appointment.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

05 May 2021	-	Diaconate ordination of CMI Brothers
06 May 2021	-	First Profession in CMC Provincial House
07 May 2021	-	Fasting and prayer
16 May 2021	-	Family wise chain Rosary in the parish
23 May 2021	-	Parish wise Chain Rosary
28-29 May 2021	-	Symposium on Evangelization
31 May 2021	-	Blessing, MMM Convent, Padanthalumoodu

CONCLUSION

As mentioned already, the month of May is a special time for us to pay homage to our Blessed Mother Mary. She has a unique role in salvation history as the Mother of God, conceived without Sin, who by her own free will agreed to bring the “Word made flesh,” (John 1:14) our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into the world. Mary is prefigured as the one who would crush the head of the serpent in Genesis 3:15 through her Divine Son. Still she in no way overshadows him, nor would she ever wish to! Her life in the Gospel years was one of service and great devotion to Jesus, from the cave in Bethlehem where she gave birth to him, to Calvary in Jerusalem where she stood by his cross in his Crucifixion, from Crib to Cross, as it were.

During month, in the churches and individual homes, the most affectionate and fervent homage of prayers and devotions from the hearts of Christians are raised to Mary. Let us join the entire Catholic world in offering special presents to Our Blessed Mother during this month of May. Through pilgrimages, visits to churches dedicated to her, offering little sacrifices in her honour, attentive recitation of the rosary, and many other ways, we can spend this month fruitfully in her company. Let us also encourage our people to come closer to our Blessed Mother by inculcating various Marian devotions!

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

