



# 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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31 March 2026

Dear Rev. Fathers,

As we prepare to celebrate the glorious mystery of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I greet each of you with joy and pastoral fraternity from the Bishop's House, Thuckalay. Easter is the living heartbeat of our faith, the foundation of our priestly vocation, and the inexhaustible spring from which our apostolic zeal flows. I invite each of you to reflect on what Easter truly meant for **three witnesses who stood at the very threshold of the Resurrection: St Mary Magdalene, the Disciples, and our Blessed Mother Mary.** In their experience, may we discover the deeper meaning of our own Easter faith and the joy of our priestly mission.

## **From Grief to Encounter**

St Mary Magdalene holds a unique place in the Easter story. While many had fled and fear had silenced voices, she remained weeping at the tomb - not for lack of courage, but because she loved deeply. From her, seven demons had been cast out (Lk 8:2); she had been restored from fragmentation to wholeness. And now, the One who had given her life back seemed to have been taken away forever.

“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” (Jn 20:15). These words, initially mistaken for those of a gardener, are the most tender question the Risen Lord could ask. Easter began for Mary not in triumph but in tears. She sought the dead Christ; she had not yet imagined the living One. This is a profoundly human condition: we often seek God in the familiar, in what we can see and verify. Yet the Risen Lord shatters every such expectation.

When Jesus called her name - “Mary” - everything changed in a single word. He did not first appear to the powerful or the learned, but to one who had known both brokenness and healing, whose love kept her faithful when logic said there was nothing left to hope for.

Pope Francis described St Mary Magdalene as the *Apostola Apostolorum*, the Apostle to the Apostles. “Go and tell my brothers” (Jn 20:17). She, who came to embalm a corpse, was sent to proclaim a living Lord. This transformation is not accidental. It reflects the pattern of every genuine Easter faith — and it also shapes every priestly vocation. We, too, dear Fathers, are called to bring the joy of the Risen Christ to those who weep and to those who have not yet heard their name called by the Lord.

## **From Fear to Mission**

On that first Easter Sunday, the disciples were behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews” (Jn 20:19). These were men who had walked with Jesus for three years, witnessed his miracles, and shared his table. Yet fear had paralysed them. The crucifixion had shattered their dream of a messianic kingdom. Peter had denied him, and most had fled.

Their locked doors are not merely physical. They are spiritual and psychological, symbolising the closing of hope and retreat into self-protection when life overwhelms. How often do we encounter such locked doors — not of wood and iron, but of the heart? Fear of failure, of change, of the future of our mission in the diverse and complex region of our Eparchy?

Into this locked room entered the Risen Christ. His first word was not a rebuke but a gift: “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19). He showed them his hands and his side — not to prove a point but to reassure them that it was truly he, the One who had loved them to the end. “The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord” (Jn 20:20). It was not argument or evidence that changed them. It was his presence. This is why the Eucharist is not merely ritual but a genuine encounter. At every Mass, we receive the Risen Christ and are sent: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

Jesus breathed on them: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22). The imagery recalls the original breath of life in Genesis 2:7. Easter signifies a new creation. The community of frightened followers becomes the Church — missionary, Spirit-filled, forgiving, and witnessing.

Thomas, absent and doubtful for a week, was not disqualified. The Risen Lord returned specifically for him. Easter is patient. It seeks out the doubter, the sceptic, the one who needs to touch the wounds. “My Lord and my God!” — Thomas’s confession ranks among the most profound in the entire Gospel. His Easter came a week late, but it arrived, and it was complete. As we revere him as the father of our Church, let us imitate him in his deep attachment and faith in the risen Christ!

At the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 21), the disciples had returned to their nets — to the familiar. Peter’s reinstatement is among the most moving passages in Scripture. Three times: “Do you love me?” — corresponding to the three denials. Each affirmation was met not with condemnation but with commission: “Feed my lambs... tend my sheep... feed my sheep.” For Peter, Easter meant rehabilitation, recommissioning, and a renewed mission. Easter does not demand perfection. It calls for openness. The Risen Christ comes to us in our locked rooms, in our moments of failure and doubt. He asks: “Do you love me?” Our answer, lived out daily in fidelity to our priestly vocation, is our Easter proclamation.

### **From Compassion to Maternal Intercession**

The Scriptures do not mention a Resurrection appearance to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. However, the entire tradition of the Church maintains that the Risen Christ appeared first to his Mother. This belief is shared by saints such as Ignatius of Loyola and Alphonsus Liguori, and it aligns with the logic of love. Would the Son, who loved his own to the very end, have failed to visit the one who bore him, who remained faithfully by the foot of the cross?

If Good Friday was the sword that pierced her soul (Lk 2:35), then Easter was its reversal — the vindication of every act of faith Mary had ever made, from her *Fiat* to the silent vigil of Holy Saturday.

That Holy Saturday offers a profound theological insight: when the disciples had scattered, and all seemed lost, Mary alone maintained the faith of the entire Church. Her faith was not naive optimism but the result of a lifelong journey of contemplation, surrender, and trust. She did not know the how or when of the Resurrection, but she knew the Who — and that was sufficient.

Easter transformed Mary’s role. From Mother of the Lord, she became Mother of the Church (Jn 19:27), present at Pentecost (Acts 1:14) and gathered with the disciples in prayer. Her maternal intercession continues. We, as priests of the Eparchy of Thuckalay, serve under her maternal care, and we draw from this Easter grace as we shepherd our people.

## **Easter Joy Multiplied**

The joy of Easter is greatly enhanced in our Eparchy this season by the gift of three priestly ordinations. Our Lord, the Lord of the harvest, is kind to us. As you know, I will ordain our three deacons Bibin Vettakonam, Bibin K.J and Tony Kallamparpil to the Sacred Priesthood on 7, 8, and 14 April 2026.

I warmly invite and urge all the priests of the Eparchy to make every effort to attend these ordinations. The ordination of a priest is not merely a personal celebration; it is a grace for the entire Eparchy. Your presence, dear Fathers, signifies our priestly fraternity and the communion that unites us as shepherds of one flock. The newly ordained will draw strength and encouragement from the witness of their brother priests.

## **Vocation Month in Our Eparchy**

The month of April is observed in our Eparchy as Vocation Month, a time dedicated to prayer, awareness, and action to encourage priestly and religious vocations. This is not a minor issue but a matter of crucial importance for the future of our Church. The Eparchy of Thuckalay has been blessed with generous and dedicated priests and religious; however, the harvest is plentiful, and the workers must be increased. Every vocation that is nurtured and answered is a gift not only to the Church but also to the families and communities of our Eparchy.

We will organise a “come and see” Vocation Camp scheduled for 17 and 18 April 2026. This camp will gather young men who are discerning a call to priestly or religious life, providing them with a space for prayer, reflection, and encounter with the Lord. I ask each parish priest to identify promising, spiritually inclined young men in their parishes and personally invite them to participate in the Vocation Camp on 17 and 18 April 2026. Speak to their parents, encourage them from the pulpit, and — above all — pray with and for them. A word from a priest can make all the difference to a young heart that is wavering.

Let this Easter season, with its message of new life and fresh beginnings, be the moment when a future priest says his own *Fiat* to the Lord’s call.

## **Preparing Our Young in Faith**

As the academic year approaches its end, our students across the Eparchy are writing their annual examinations. I recognise the significant pressure this period places on young people and their families, and I encourage you all to keep them in your prayers and offer any pastoral support you can during this challenging time.

Following the conclusion of examinations, we will organise the VPV (*Visvasa Payirchi Vizha*) across all parishes of the Eparchy. This is a valued and vital initiative that educates our young Catholics in the core aspects of their faith, liturgical life, Scripture, and the moral and sacramental life of the Church. It presents an irreplaceable opportunity to strengthen the faith of our youth during a formative stage of their lives.

I earnestly encourage each parish priest to begin preparing the students early, so that the VPV can start without delay once the examinations are finished. Preparation should involve, of course with the support of Catechetical department, identifying catechists and resource persons, organising the student groups by age and level, planning the programme schedule, and ensuring families are informed and supportive. The VPV is most effective when it is well-organised and when students arrive prepared and eager. Let us not treat it merely as a routine activity; instead, let it be a sincere encounter between our young people and the Church’s living faith.

## **A Renewed Pastoral Zeal**

Dear Fathers, as we celebrate Easter, let us embrace the mystery of the Resurrection to be renewed from within. Mary Magdalene discovered the Risen Lord in a garden at dawn — in tears, in love, in fidelity. The disciples encountered him through locked doors, through wounds, in the breaking of bread, beside an ordinary lake. The Blessed Mother welcomed him in the silence of a faith that had never ceased believing. Each of these encounters reveals a different facet of Easter grace, and each one speaks to us as priests.

We, too, will discover the Risen Lord in our tears and loyalty, in our fear and openness, in our pondering and trust. In the words of St Augustine: “We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song!” Let that Alleluia resound in every parish and chapel, in every home we visit and every sacrament we administer, across all the cherished communities of our Eparchy.

## **NEWS AND EVENTS**

**Day of Prayer for West Asia:** The ongoing conflict and escalating violence in various Middle Eastern nations have brought profound concern and deep sorrow to us all. In response to this crisis, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church and the President of the Tamil Nadu Bishops’ Council called for a dedicated day of intercession on 06 March 2026. Following this direction, our Diocese observed Friday, March 6, 2026, as a Special Day of Prayer for Peace to plead for an immediate end to the war and the establishment of lasting peace through dialogue and compromise. To ensure a unified spiritual front, the following services were conducted in all parish churches, convents, and diocesan institutions on that day: Eucharistic Adoration dedicated to peace in the Middle East; The Way of the Cross offered for the intentions of those suffering due to the war and Holy Qurbana. All families were also requested to recite a special Rosary at home for this specific intention. I thank all the Parish Priests for observing the day with maximum participation of the parishioners.

**Women’s Day Celebrations:** International Women’s Day was celebrated on March 8, 2026, by the Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS) across various parts of the diocese. A total of 30 women’s clusters actively participated in the events, which featured cultural performances, competitions, and charitable initiatives. These efforts provided valuable social outreach to our parishes. I wish to thank Fr. Antony Mahesh and the entire KKSSS team for their dedication to organizing these programs and for their ongoing commitment to the empowerment of women.

**Forane Priests’ Conferences:** The Forane-level Priests’ Conferences were held across the diocese from March 9 to March 11, 2026. On March 9, the conference for the Padanthalumoodu and Nithiravilai Foranes took place at St. Matthew’s Church, Annikkarai. This was followed by a meeting for the Arukani, Kaliyal, and Manjalumoodu Foranes at St. Thomas Church, Marappady, on March 10, and for the Soosaipuram, Thuckalay, and Pilankalai Foranes at St. Joseph’s Forane Church, Soosaipuram, on March 11. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General, attended all sessions as the Curia representative. Most meetings commenced at 10:00 am with prayer and adoration, concluding with an agape meal. However, the Arukani–Manjalumoodu–Kaliyal meeting began at 6:00 pm with the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Discussions centered on pastoral coordination and departmental activities, specifically focusing on the diocesan agenda: catechetical formative programs, Cathedral construction, the promotion of the Sinai Retreat Centre, the Syro-Malabar Community Empowerment Year Forane-level rally, and Lenten activities. The intimate setting allowed for lively dialogue and numerous constructive suggestions for pastoral

improvement. These suggestions will be presented at the upcoming general Priests' Conference. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Forane Vicars for their effective coordination.

**Beginning of Cathedral Construction at Soosaipuram:** On the occasion of the Feast of St. Joseph, 19 March 2026, the official inauguration of the Cathedral construction took place at Soosaipuram. It began with the Solemn Holy Qurbana presided by me and at the end I officially inaugurated the construction work, invoking blessings upon the site and the workers. With the formal blessing, the physical labour of building the Cathedral officially commenced. A highlight of this year's feast was the introduction of a new tradition in Soosaipuram—Oottunercha: the practice of providing a "Nercha" (offering) lunch to all present. By launching this tradition on the Feast of St. Joseph, the parish emphasizes the values of hospitality, community sharing, and the paternal care associated with St. Joseph. I extend my sincere gratitude to Fr. Johnsial Arackaparampil for his efforts in organizing both the inauguration and the entire programmes very well.

**Last respects to Most Rev. Bishop Jerome Dhas Varuvel SDB:** With deep sorrow, we received the news of the passing of Most Rev. Jerome Dhas Varuvel, SDB (74), the former Bishop of the Diocese of Kuzhithurai on 24 March 2026. Bishop Varuvel was the first bishop of the Diocese of Kuzhithurai, established in 2014. He shepherded the diocese from 2015 until his resignation on 6 June 2020 due to ill health. Bishop Jerome was a shepherd of profound faith and a pioneer for his people; his dedicated service and spiritual leadership have left an indelible mark on the Church. The funeral was held on Wednesday, 25 March 2026, at 3:00 pm at the Most Holy Trinity Cathedral, Kuzhithurai. On the same day at 11.30 am we came together at Kuzhithurai Bishop's House to offer our prayers for the departed soul and express our condolences to the Bishop, Priests, Religious and laity of the Diocese of Kuzhithurai. A good number of Priests and religious participated in the liturgy of the office for the dead presided by me. I thank everyone who joined in the prayer service as a sign of our solidarity and shared faith. Let's continue to pray that the merciful Lord may grant him eternal bliss.

**Eucharistic Healing Retreat at Killiyoor:** A 52-Day Eucharistic Spiritual Healing Retreat has officially started at SABS Convent, Killiyoor on 27 March 2026. The retreat began solemnly with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana presided by the Parish Priest Fr. Jose Purayidathilkunnel, setting a foundation of grace for the weeks ahead. Currently, 33 participants have dedicated themselves to this intensive period of prayer, reflection, and healing. The entire diocesan family is invited to support them through our prayers. I thank the SABS Provincial and team for organizing such a retreat for the spiritual renewal.

**Special Lenten Retreat at Kalluvilai:** A Special Lenten Retreat was organized by the Uraviyam on 28 March 2026 from 10 am to 2 pm at Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai. The retreat was specifically organized for the Uraviyam Animators, Coordinators, and Office Bearers. The programme began with Way of the Cross followed by praise and worship. The spiritual sessions were led by Fr. Vinu D Joseph and Fr. Mijo Puthenpurackal, who guided the participants through deep reflections on the Lenten journey. The retreat focused on the central themes of the Lenten season, emphasizing prayer, penance, and the Word of God. Participants were encouraged to bring their personal copies of the Holy Bible for active engagement during the sessions. After the Eucharistic Adoration, the Holy Qurbana was celebrated presided by Fr. Jose Muttathupadam. Around 260 people participated in the retreat. The gathering concluded with a call for all leaders to carry the spiritual insights gained back to their respective administrative and ministry roles, strengthening the Uraviyam in all the parishes. I thank Fr. Mijo Puthenpurayil, the Director of Uraviyam for organizing it in a fruitful manner.

**Drama Competition for Mothers:** On March 28, 2026, a drama competition titled 'Susanna' was organized for mothers by the Mathru Jyothis at the Asir Vidyalaya Auditorium, Thettiyode, for the Mathru Jyothis members of the Padanthalumoodu Forane. Approximately five teams of mothers from various

parishes within the Padanthalumoodu Forane participated in the event. The prizes were awarded as follows: First Prize: St. Maria Goretti Church, Athancode; Second Prize: Sacred Heart Church, Padanthalumoodu and Third Prize: St. Paul's Church, Thettiyode. The participating mothers expressed their joy, stating that the event was a memorable experience and a wonderful opportunity to showcase their hidden talents. I thank Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil for organizing the event.

**Hosanna Sunday Celebrations at Fathimapuram:** Palm Sunday commemorates the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, where He was joyfully welcomed by the people waving palm branches. It serves as a profound reminder for us to open our hearts to Christ and to faithfully follow His teachings. This year, I presided over the Hosanna Sunday liturgical celebrations at Fatima Matha Church, Fathimapuram (Kudukkachivilai), on 29 March 2026. The procession began at 10:00 a.m. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Fr. Johnsilal Arackaparampil, the Parish Priest, Fr. Lijo Thekkel and all the parishioners for their sincere spiritual preparation and active participation in this meaningful celebration.

**Minor Orders and Vestition at Mukkoottukal:** On 30 March 2026, the Minor Orders were administered at St. Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal at 7:00 a.m. During the ceremony, Bro. Joseph JS (Abishwin) received the Cassock. Bro. Antony Raj, Bro. Sebastian (Sibin C.K.), and Bro. Sebastian (Melvin) received the Minor Order of Karoyusa, and Bro. Solomon (Godwin Christudhas) received the Minor Order of Heupadiyaknusa. The parents and family members of the brother who received the Cassock, along with members of the Curia, were present for the celebration. The Holy Qurbana was concelebrated by Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Fr. Toji Parambilparambil, Curia members and Fr. Robin Koorumullil. Bro. Abishwin expressed words of thanks on behalf of all the brothers and Bro. Divin Raj felicitated them. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone for their warm greetings, kind wishes, and prayers—for me and for our brothers. Let us continue to pray that the Lord may fill them with His Spirit and bless their formation journey abundantly.

**Diaconate Ordination at Manjalumoodu:** On 31 April 2026, at Little Flower Forane Church, Manjalumoodu, I conferred the Major Order of Diaconate upon Bro. Denis (Divin Raj). The liturgical celebration commenced at 5:30 p.m., with Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam serving as the Archdeacon and Rev. Fr. Shijo Aikkarakunnel concelebrating the Holy Qurbana. Following the Holy Qurbana, a brief felicitation meeting was held inside the church. Deacon Divin offered words of gratitude, thanking all those who contributed to the organization of the event. The celebration concluded with a joyful dinner, marking the occasion with warmth and fellowship. I extend my sincere appreciation to Rev. Fr. Toji Parambilparambil, the Parish Priest, and to the parishioners of Little Flower Forane Church for their meticulous planning and wholehearted involvement in making the day a truly memorable one for everyone present.

## **INFORMATION**

- **Meeting of the Forane Vicars** was held at Bishop's House on 02 March 2026.
- **Eparchial Finance Council** was held on 11 March 2026.
- **St. Alphonsa College of Arts and Science, Karingal** celebrated its 12<sup>th</sup> annual day 'Sacfiesta 2K25' on 12 March 2026.
- **Shanthi Nilayam, Special School, Paruthivilai** celebrated its 32<sup>nd</sup> annual day on 12 March 2026.
- **St. Alphonsa College of Arts and Science, Karingal** conducted its 9<sup>th</sup> Graduation Ceremony on 13 March 2026.

- **Mrs. Cathri Varghese (81)**, beloved mother of Sr. Lisieux CMC, was called to the eternal rest on 13 March 2026. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Sr. Lisieux and her family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Jyothi Nilayam, Special School, Palappallam** celebrated its annual day on 17 March 2026.
- **Nambikkai Alayam, School for the intellectual disabled, Kazhuvanthittai** celebrated its 28<sup>th</sup> annual day on 18 March 2026.
- **I visited our Major Seminarians** in their Major Seminaries, celebrated Holy Qurbana and personally met the Rectors on following days: St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor on 05 March, St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Mangalappuzha on 07 March, Mary Matha Seminary, Trissur on 09 March and Ruhalya Major Seminary, Ujjain on 22 March 2026.
- **Karunai Illam, School and Home for mentally challenged children, Nithiravilai** celebrated its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual day on 24 March 2026.
- **Mrs. Thankamma (77)**, beloved mother of Sr. Tessy Illampally SABS, was called to the eternal rest on 28 March 2026. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Sr. Tessy and her family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Good Friday Collection:** Kindly submit the Good Friday collection for the up-keep of the Holy Land to the Eparchial Procurator at the earliest.
- **Undiyal Collections:** Kindly submit the Lenten Undiyal collection in support of the Cathedral Construction to the Eparchial Procurator at the earliest.
- **Cathedral Collection:** The Diocese extends its heartfelt gratitude to the faithful for the overwhelming spirit of unity and generosity displayed on February 15, 2026 toward the construction of our Cathedral Church. This historic spiritual home, built to serve generations to come, is rising upon the foundation of your sacrifices. I sincerely thank everyone of you dear priests for encouraging our people to submit their special contribution envelopes and offer one day's wage toward this noble cause. I request you to make the involvement of each family from your parishes collecting the contribution from those who were unable to submit until now.
- **Year of St. Francis Assisi:** In observance of the 800th Anniversary of the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi and the special Year of Indulgences proclaimed by the Holy See, I am pleased to announce that St. Francis of Assisi Church, Mezhaicode, has been designated as the official site for our Diocesan Pilgrimage for the upcoming year. This sacred destination will be solemnly declared a Pilgrimage Shrine for our Eparchy during the Holy Qurbana on 19th April 2026. As we commemorate this historic milestone, all faithful are encouraged to visit this sanctuary to obtain the Plenary Indulgence, fulfilling the usual conditions of Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the Holy Father's intentions. I kindly request you to communicate this spiritual opportunity to your parishioners and organize parish pilgrimages to foster a spirit of Franciscan peace and renewal within our diocese.

### **FORTHCOMING MAJOR EVENTS**

01 April	-	Recollection for Priests and Religious, Kalluvilai
02 April	-	Pesaha Thursday
03 April	-	Passion Friday
05 April	-	Easter Sunday
07 April	-	Ordination of Dn. Bibin Vettakonam
08 April	-	Ordination of Dn. Bibin Koyickakudiyil
14 April	-	Ordination of Dn. Tony Kallamparampil
21-22 April	-	Priestly Koinonia journey
18-24 April	-	Work camp of Major Seminarians

26 April - VPV Begins  
28 April - Priests' Conference

## CONCLUSION

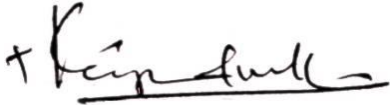
On 12 April, the Second Sunday of Easter, we observe Divine Mercy Sunday, rooted in the mystical revelations of St Faustina Kowalska and enriched by special promises from Our Lord and indulgences granted by the Holy See. I invite each of you, dear Fathers, to make this a day of authentic encounter with the merciful heart of Christ for your communities — through the solemn recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and other suitable devotional programmes in your parishes.

I also wish to encourage you to stay attentive to our ongoing missionary outreach in the extended territories of our Eparchy. As we rejoice in the Risen Lord who sends us as the Father sent him, let us renew our missionary zeal and invoke His blessing upon all our initiatives, so that the Gospel may reach every corner of the flock entrusted to our care.

I extend my prayerful wishes for a blessed and grace-filled Easter to each of you, to your parishioners, to your families, and to all those in your pastoral care. May the Risen Lord walk beside you and fill you with His peace!

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



† **George Rajendran SDB**  
Bishop of Thuckalay

