

THUCKALAY TIDINGS

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DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY



Amid the calm, a silent night whispers joy
Let the magic of the silent night fill your heart



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THUCKALAY TIDINGS

December 2023 | Vol. 3 | Issue 12

A Monthly online newsletter of Diocese of Thuckalay

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Message

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Warm greetings in the spirit of the upcoming Christmas season from Bishop's House, Thuckalay! As we joyfully anticipate the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, I extend our heartfelt wishes to you.

Christmas is about a definitive moment in time, in human history, when God showed that He cared for every one of us by entering into our humanity so that He could walk with us, so that He could live with us so that He could lead us, carry us, and lift us to that better place. It is therefore not just about holidays but rather about the love of our God, who wanted to become one with us so deeply that he gave up his divinity to enter into our wretched humanity.

Christmas - the birth of God in a poor manger - is the most celebrated feast in this world. Christmas offers us all an opportunity to recapture glimpses of childhood's sacred memories. There is something unique about gazing into the crib and coming face-to-face with the truth that God came down from heaven and dwelt among us as a helpless baby. The gospel story tells us that at Bethlehem on a starry night, the Son of God was born. A burst of light startled the shepherds, and angels sang at his birth. In the simplicity of the stable, amid the lowly animals and the humble shepherds, God reveals His grand plan for salvation. The birth of Jesus is a testament to the God who enters into our human experience and who chooses to dwell among us amid our joys and struggles. It is a divine proclamation that no one is beyond the reach of God's love, no matter how insignificant or broken we may feel.

There was nothing idealistic about the first Christmas. Christ's birth was a hard and bitter experience for Joseph and Mary, two poor people with doors slammed in their faces. They were the picture of poverty, with neither room nor lodging, forced to shelter in a stable outside the entry walls, where animals gave up their manger for the child Jesus. The Christ who was to die on Calvary outside of Jerusalem was born outside of Bethlehem. The message is clear from the very beginning: the love of God is available to all, but especially the poor, the weak, and the disadvantaged. The stable is an indication of our need to see grace and goodness in the most deprived of people. As we kneel before the crib, we can pray for the vision during this short life of ours to see things God's way and for the courage to act according to his will.

Christmas becomes meaningful only when we welcome the Lord, who comes to us in the wonder of every human being and

as he reveals himself in the value and dignity of every person with whom we live and work. One of the things that makes Christmas very special is being remembered by friends. It is essentially a family feast and an occasion for exchanging gifts and sharing the warmth of our homes in the company of friends. Our hearts and our thoughts are especially with family members who are absent and unable to take part in our festivities. God's presence and love can be experienced in healing misunderstandings, patching up quarrels, and letting bygones be bygones. Sometimes removing bitterness can be extremely difficult, but forgiving and forgetting will enable us to enjoy our Christmas happiness to the fullest.

Christmas is also about giving, and about the return of love for love. It is the time of year when our hearts are in the right place and when we realise it is more blessed to give than to receive. We become alive and sensitive to the many needs of the poor, who are crying out for our generosity and caring. Spare a thought also for those people who find the going tough and whose lives at this particular time are in the shadow of the crib because of a cross or a recent death. Our joy highlights their sadness.

During this season, let us unwrap the gift of love bestowed upon us by God. Let us embrace the message of the Christ-child - a message of peace, goodwill, and reconciliation. In a world hungry for meaning and purpose, the birth of Jesus reminds us that true fulfilment comes from aligning our lives with the will of God

I wish you and your family dear friends, a Merry Christmas and a God-filled New Year 2024. May you have a faith experience of the Babe of Bethlehem as you prepare to celebrate Christmas! May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran sdb**
Bishop of Thuckalay



Fides 2023

Faith in Action; 27th Diocesan Day



In commemoration of the Diocesan Foundation Day on November 11, the diocese celebrated its 27th Diocesan Day on November 12, 2023, at Sacred Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu. The festivities commenced at 2:30 pm with a concelebrated Holy Qurbana, presided over by Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, the Vicar General, extended a warm welcome to all the faithful. An offertory procession, featuring contributions from the Kaikars of each parish and the Local Superior of the convents, took place before the Holy Qurbana. Following the Holy Qurbana, a cultural program unfolded in the parish auditorium, showcasing presentations from various departments and parishes. Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, the Chancellor, presented a concise audio-visual report on the diocese. Those who successfully completed their diploma course in theology from Sinai Theological Institute were honored with certificates. Numerous Fathers, Sisters, and Faithful actively participated in the event.





HALF A CENTURY OF DEDICATION SDS Congregation's Golden Jubilee

The Sisters of the Divine Saviour (SDS) joyously commemorated their Golden Jubilee in India on November 4, 2023, at Little Flower Forane Church, Manjalumoodu. Exactly fifty years prior, on December 5, 1973, twelve Sisters embarked on a mission to establish the congregation's charism on Indian soil, specifically in Manjalumoodu. Over the years, they endeared themselves to the local population in the district of Kanyakumari through dedicated humanitarian service, considering it the most profound form of service. Their impactful initiatives included promoting gospel values through catechism, aiding home deliveries, conducting mother and child welfare programmes, tending to leprosy patients, providing healthcare services through hospitals, and offering primary education through nursery schools.

The Jubilee celebration commenced at 9:30 am with a solemn thanksgiving Holy Qurbana officiated by Rev. Bishop. Most Rev. Anthonysamy Savarimuthu, the Bishop of Palayamkottai, delivered the homily, and numerous Fathers from the diocese of Thuckalay and neighbouring dioceses concelebrated. Following the Holy Qurbana, a public meeting unfolded at 12:00 noon. The pioneer missionary sisters received well-deserved honors from the Provincial Superior, Sr. Anish SDS, with the Assistant General Superior also gracing the event.





Golden Jubilee Radiance: Celebrating 50 Glorious Years of FCC

On 18th November 2023 at 10:00 am, the Franciscan Clarist Congregation, San Joe Province, Thuckalay, joyously celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their presence in the Kanyakumari mission. The commemorative event took place at San Jose Province, Azhakiyamandapam. The pioneer missionaries, Sr. Francelet FCC and Sr. Anila FCC, arrived at Azhakiyamandapam on 19th November 1973, marking the initiation of their evangelization work. Currently, the FCC province boasts 12 convents and 66 dedicated sisters.

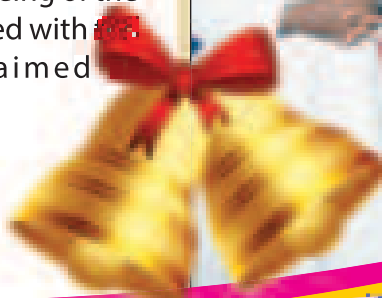
The Golden Jubilee celebration commenced with a Solemn Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana, presided over by Rev. Bishop, joined by numerous Fathers. The homily during the Holy Qurbana was delivered by Rev. Fr. Mathew Arekalam CMI, the regional superior of CMI. Following the Holy Qurbana, the Jubilee Gathering was inaugurated by our Bishop and presided over by Rev. Mother Litty FCC, the Superior General. Representatives from both the religious and lay communities expressed their felicitations, acknowledging the significance of the occasion. The program concluded with a heartwarming agape meal. Rev. Bishop extend the gratitude of the entire diocese for the dedicated service rendered by FCC Sisters across various ministry placements. Special appreciation goes to Rev. Sr. Celia FCC, the Provincial Superior, for her proactive initiatives in extending the services of the Sisters to the mission territories of the diocese.





A Day with the Missionaries


A gathering of all Fathers and Sisters working in the extended mission territories took place at Ariyur, Madurai on November 14, 2023. The event commenced with the Holy Qurbana at 10:00 am, by Rev. Bishop and concelebrated by Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil and Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil, along with other Fathers. Following the Holy Qurbana, a meeting convened at 11 am, during which all Fathers and Sisters shared their mission experiences and discussed challenges. Missionaries expressed their concerns about mission activities in various districts, underscoring the immediate attention needed for both missionary activities and the well-being of the missionaries. The meeting concluded with the formulation of resolutions aimed supporting mission renewal.



NEED PRAYER SUPPORT!

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Intentions:

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From Pencil to Prize: **'Varnam' Drawing Competition**

In connection with Children's Day celebration, Kanyakumari Social Service Society organized "VARNAM 2023" an interschool Drawing and painting contest for school children on 10 November 2023. Fr. Thomas Powathuparambil inaugurated the programme, and Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal distributed prizes to the winners. Fr. Jomy Kamukumattathil conducted a magic show on the theme of Say No to Drugs and Alcohol. The main focus of programme was to promote the creativity of children and to inculcate awareness about their dignity. Above 700 students actively participated in the competition and showed their talents.

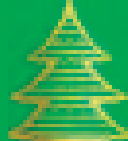




In Loving Memory of...



To commemorate and express gratitude for the enduring mission and lives of the pioneers who have departed to their eternal abode, a remembrance Holy Qurbana was solemnized at St. Thomas Church, Marappady, on November 15, 2023, at 6:00 PM. The ceremony cantered around commemorating Fr. Thomas Muttathukunnel, Sr. Ann Maria SH, Sr. Anni Jameson SH, and Sr. Eugine Mary SH. Following the Holy Qurbana by Rev. Bishop, a prayer for the departed was recited, with Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal and Fr. Justin Cheruvilil co-celebrating the ceremony. The occasion saw the presence of SH Sisters from all their convents, and it concluded with an agape meal served for all the faithful.





Building Bridges...

KKSSS - CTWWC team conducted a Social Awareness Programme at Palapallam Anganwadi, Kanyakumari on 7 November 2023. They outlined a project, aiding children during Covid-19, assisting 300 kids across 16 villages. The case manager emphasized extending support to more families and spreading awareness about family importance. The session concluded with a 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' awareness campaign, well-received by attendees.





Pumping Knowledge: Heart Awareness Campaign Initiatives

The Health Commission of the Diocese of Thuckalay initiated several programmes aimed at raising awareness about heart health. Specifically, on November 16, 2023 a 'Care Your Heart' campaign was launched at Carmel Jyothi Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Velliyakula, Colachel. This campaign successfully engaged 700 students. Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB had inaugurated the campaign, and Dr. S. Senthil Kumar, a renowned social worker and the managing trustee of Sreeram Cancer Trust in Nagercoil, served as the resource person. During his presentation, Dr. S. Senthil Kumar discussed the multifaceted roles of the heart and provided valuable insights on preventing heart diseases. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a nutritious diet, advising the students to steer clear of colourful fast food. This guidance proved instrumental in helping the pupils take proactive steps to safeguard their heart health.





SMYM Central Executive Meeting and unit visits



The Central Executive Meeting of the SMYM Diocese of Thuckalay took place on November 5, 2023, at 2 PM in St. Paul's Church, Thettiyode. Fr. Joseph Santhosh presided over the meeting, with the participation of Central Executives. It was decided during the meeting that the Christmas celebration would be held at Soosapuram Church on December 10, 2023. Additionally, both Forane Executives and Central Executives conducted joint visits to the following units: Mankarai Unit on November 5, Pilankarai Unit on November 12, and Thackalivilai, Mukkuttukal, and Kaliyal Units on November 19.





Unlock Your Imagination: Writing Competitions Beckon in Padanthalumoodu

The Eparchial Level Bible Fest Writing Competition took place on November 5, 2023, at 2:30 PM on the Padanthalumoodu Forane Church campus. The participants of the competition comprised the first and second-place winners of the Forane level writing competitions. A total of 168 students took part in this competition. The results are scheduled to be published on January 13, 2024.





Tenkasi Speaking

A gathering of Fathers and Sisters from the Tenkasi mission was convened on November 13, 2023, at 04:30 pm at Pudur Border, with Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, the Vicar General, presiding over the meeting. The meeting comprised several sessions aimed at addressing various aspects of the mission and ministry. During the initial session, Fr. Dency Mundunadackal led a class on the anaphora of Mar Theodore and Mar Nestorius. The second session provided a platform for sharing experiences, works, and challenges encountered by priests and religious in their ministries. A productive discussion ensued regarding the activities of various departments, emphasizing the need to deepen catechetical formation and promote vocations. The meeting concluded with evening prayer and confession, followed by an agape meal.



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Dn. Liju Marattukalam
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Email: bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com



Priests' Conference

The Priests' Conference for the month took place at Sangamam on November 21, 2023, at 9:30 am. The conference commenced with adoration and confession, creating a prayerful atmosphere for the gathering. At 11:15 am, the meeting officially began, with Fr. Vicar General coordinating the proceedings. In the first session, an animation programme was led by Rev. Fr. Vaisilin Xavier from the diocese of Kuzhithurai. He presented the working

document issued from Rome for the Synod of Bishops – Synod on Synodality - held in Rome in October. He emphasized the need to journey together in the diocese and provided insightful reflections based on the document. During the second session, Some general information were shared by the Bishop, and various departments provided their news updates.





On the Road to Unity: CML Forane Level Rally

This year, the CML Rally took place in different Foranes on November 26, 2023, at 02:30 pm. For Arukani, Kaliyal, and Manjalumoodu Foranes, the rally spanned from Malaicode to Manjalumoodu. For Padanthalumoodu and Nithiravilai Foranes, it extended from Vayalinkarai to Varuthattu. For Thuckalay Pilankalai and Soosaipuram Foranes, the rally covered the route from Kalluvilai to Kattathurai. Curia members served as representatives at each location. This marked the first time we organized the rally at the Forane level without a competitive element. We witnessed enthusiastic participation in all areas, with students actively engaging in the event.





Presbyteral Council

The VII General Body Meeting of the Presbyteral Council took place on November 28, 2023, at Sangamam, commencing at 10:15 am. The purpose of the gathering was to reflect and deliberate on the following agenda items:

- 1) Renewal of faith formation in liturgical matters, the life of departments, and the priorities of the diocese
- 2) Participation of the laity in evangelization in the extended territory
- 3) Celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025.

Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, the Secretary, presented the agenda and invited the members to engage in an open discussion. Actively participating in the discussions, the members offered fruitful suggestions for the benefit of the diocese. From these suggestions, decisions were made, and the outcomes will be communicated in the next priests' conference. This concluded the last Presbyteral Council of its first session, with the next Presbyteral Council set to be formed in the upcoming year.





Silver Threads of Compassion: Karunalayam's 25th Anniversary

Karunalayam, a school for differently-abled, managed by the CMC Sisters, joyously marked its Silver Jubilee on November 29, 2023, at the Karunalayam school auditorium in Kalluvilai. The public meeting commenced at 04:00 pm, and Rev. Bishop was the chief guest. Rev. Sr Vinaya CMC, the Provincial Superior of the Chavara Province, presided over the meeting. Mr.

Sivasankaran (DDAWO, Kanyakumari district), Fr. Aby Poovathummoottil, Mr. Tiby Thomas (Lions Club of Marthandam), and Mrs. Jenusha Ajith (Panchayath President) graced the occasion with their presence and offered felicitations. The students showcased a variety of entertaining programs, adding vibrancy to the jubilee celebration.





Mathru Jyothis Animators' Meet

A meeting of all animators at diocesan, forane, and parish levels for Mathru Jyothis took place at Kalluvilai on November 5, 2023. The director, Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil, presided over the meeting. Discussions during the meeting included collaboration with forane directors, planning the celebration of Christmas at the diocesan level, and outlining the program schedule for the year 2024. Nearly 80 animators actively participated in the meeting





Empowering Lives: Cumbum-Theni Mission in Action

Under the compassionate guidance of Medical Trust Hospital Mundakayam, a significant medical camp was conducted in Angoorpalayam Village. The camp aimed to extend healthcare services to the residents, promoting well-being and offering medical assistance to those in need. The event successfully fulfilled its objectives, offering medical assistance, promoting health awareness, and fostering a sense of unity in the community. As we reflect on the impact of this outreach initiative, it is evident that collaborative efforts between healthcare institutions and local communities play a vital role in creating a healthier and more informed society.





“By the Grace of God, I am what I am”

Sr. Linse Vallomthara SABS

Religious vocation is a precious gift from God. There is always a close connection between calling and beauty — a spiritual, human and etymological connection. The call, therefore, appears as beauty. In fact, we are called, we are chosen from eternity; we just have to discover the calling destined for us. The diocese of Thuckalay has got the privilege to testimony such beauty of many religious vocations, expressed through their missionary zeal and service for the people. In this current issue, Tidings team proudly introduces the missionary life of a religious sister, belonging to the congregation of Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Sr. Linse Vallomthara SABS.

Tidings: Thank you very much dear Sister, for your kind acceptance of our request for this interaction to be published in this issue of Tidings online Monthly. We are sure about the fact that your testimony of religious life will inspire our readers. We are so grateful to you dear sister for the kind acceptance of our invitation to share your life story with our readers. Let us begin with your family?

Sr. Linse: As for every religious, the root of my vocation is none other than my family. Being a member of a traditional catholic family, I was always instructed by my parents to lead a pious life, from the very beginning of childhood. We were 9 children and my father was a farmer. Being the last child, it was my privilege to be an apple in everyone’s eye. Daily prayer in family and the daily holy Qurbana were the two pillars of our family. I

was born and brought up in a prayerful atmosphere in the family. My house was situated in a parish called Padaharam. During my childhood, it was only a station church and Holy Qurbana was celebrated only on Sundays. But my parents were strict about the participation of daily holy Qurbana and we were walking at least half an hour to reach in the Church. Besides, family catechesis was also helpful to shape my moral life.

Another important pious practice of my father was the daily reading of Bible, with loud voice at early morning. For us it was like an alarm to get up and ready for Holy Qurbana. We, sisters and brothers were with one heart, to play together, to pray together, to eat together etc. We used to play dramas at home, taking different ecclesiastical characters. We have grown seeing our parents, taking care of our grandparents with much love, passion and





patience. It helped us a lot to mold our lives with such a caring heart. As we were near to St. Mary's Forane Church kalloorkad, Champakulam, it was a tradition to participate in 13, 24 hours adoration. In such a way the Holy Qurbana became a part of my life.

Tidings: It is blessed family and thanks to God. Can you share about your schooling and various influences for your religious vocation??

Sr. Linse: I finished my SSLC from St. Mary's High School Champakulam and continued my pre-degrees studies in St. Aloysius college Edathua. In 1994, after my pre-degree studies I joined in convent of adoration sisters. From my early childhood, it was my dream to render my life for Jesus and for His services.

Besides, the life of my elder sister, who was already in a convent influenced me a lot and infused in me a spirit of religious thirst. Another life example was that of St. Alphonsa. Her simplicity and selfless life were a challenging factor for me to follow her path. I wanted to join in the Franciscan Clarist congregation, but the will of God was different. I went to Changanacherry for a vocation camp, and during which I recognized the call of God in my heart addressing me to the Adoration sisters. The devotion which we kept from our childhood onwards to the Holy Eucharist and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, helped me a lot to ease my choice to become a nun. It was during my pre degree studies I heard the voice of the Lord asking me, "I need you". It is my strength even today especially amidst of trials and troubles.



Tidings: Great! How was the formation period? hobbies?

Sr. Linse: The first days away from the family was so painful. Those days, I had spent many hours before the holy Eucharist and our Mother Mary, with tears. Later I could have found in mother Mary, my own mother and I started loving her more. It gave me strength to go ahead peacefully with other sisters. I took more time for personal prayers and persona adoration. During my novitiate, I had knelt down before God for many hours. I know that I could not have anything by my own, but the strength of the prayer life of my father and my mother. Reciting the ejaculatory prayers was another powerhouse of my religious life.

My hobbies are very simple. I enjoy reading books especially the life stories of saints. St. Theresa of Lisieux, St. Philomena, St. John of the Cross, St. Alphonsa, St. Charles de Foucault etc. were some of them.

Tidings: You are working with the differently abled children? What is your inspiration to this field?

Sr. Linse: The inspiration to serve the differently abled children began so early during my school days. There was a differently abled child on my way to school and every day I stopped for a while with him to talk. Then it became my dream to offer my life for these children and to share my joy with them. Later as a sister, as I completed my degree in commerce, my superiors decided me to apply for the accountant post in the college, though my wish was to spend my life with the differently abled children. My application was rejected and my superiors reconsidered my request to work among the children.

Tidings: How did you come to Tamilnadu Mission? Your experiences?

Sr. Linse: In my batch there were a few sisters from Tamilnadu. I used to listen to them and





slowly I started loving the language, culture and people. In 1998, I came to Palappallam convent, near to Colachel. I liked the simplicity and hard - working attitude of the people. We started a small school for the differently abled children. It was built with coconut leaves. But it is not the building but the communion between the members makes a house a home. Our small school was a home for everyone. One day I scolded one child for an error that he had committed. But, at late night he came with his parents to ask pardon to me. It helped me to realize the innocence of my children. My life with them gave me a heavenly experience and they were angels.

As these children were belonging to poor families, I was forced many times to stretch my hands before them begging economical support. I had never felt shy to ask help for them. We feel so proud of them, when they reach up to a level of auto sufficiency. During their journey God helped us a lot to achieve many goals in their life. Recently we could have presented two of our children for the World Special Olympics game, held in Germany and they achieved the first positions. It was not easy, each step which we had taken to participate them in the games. Diplomatically we struggled a lot. But I always believed in the words, "nothing is impossible to God".



Tidings: Are you satisfied in your missionary services and what do you want to share with the readers of Thuckalay Tidings?

Sr. Linse: This year I complete my 25th year in the Thuckalay mission. I enjoy each day here in the mission, making house visits, charity works, prayer services etc. Visiting the houses of people helped me a lot to understand the real situation of the life of each one, which is different from the other. I felt always that we are mere instruments in the hands of God.

Now, as an animator of mission league, youth etc. in the parish and principal of the special school, I feel closely the presence of God, who hears the cries of fragile human beings. Looking at my life, I don't merit anything but I received everything as a gift from God.

Being a sister changes the very context of my life. It presents me with great joy and also with great challenges and decisions that I sometimes wish were not there. But in the midst of it all, I recognize that for me, religious life is the path to becoming who I am called to be. Every vocation is born of sacrifice, is maintained by sacrifice and is measured in the apostolate by the sacrifice of those whom God calls to the priesthood or the religious life. This should not be surprising, once we realize that it was by His sacrifice that Christ redeemed the world. The servant is not greater than his Master. In fact, the more intimate is one's vocation to the service of Christ, the more demanding will be the sacrifices required.



THUCKALAY
MISSION



WISH YOU A

*Merry
Christmas*

HAPPY NEW YEAR



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