

DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY

# THUCKALAY TIDINGS

JANUARY 2024 | VOL. 4 | ISSUE 1

**The Heart of Our Faith Community Beats Louder**



*Welcome*

**Major Archbishop Mar Raphel Thattil**



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## THUCKALAY TIDINGS

January 2024 | Vol. 4 | Issue 1

A Monthly online newsletter of Diocese of Thuckalay

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# INSIDE STORY

- ➔ Message from the Bishop . . . . . 3
- ➔ Celebrating a century of blessings: Syro-Malabar Hierarchy's radiant journey . . . . . 4
- ➔ Inspired by the Divine Narrative: Eparchial Bible Convention, where faith becomes a living testimony . . . . . 5
- ➔ Embarking on a journey of jubilation: The Inauguration of Iubilaeum 2025 . . . . . 6
- ➔ Emmanuel - God with Us : St. Mary's Minor Seminary and Major Seminary Christmas Celebrations . . . . . 7
- ➔ Revel in the sacred rhythm : Bible Fest 2023 . . . . . 8
- ➔ In the warmth of community: Diocesan Christmas Celebrations, where every heart finds home . . . . . 9
- ➔ Priests' Conference and Pre Christmas-Celebration . . . . . 10
- ➔ Lights, Love, and Laughter: Christmas with Moms, a celebration of endless joy . . . . . 11
- ➔ SMYM Christmas Celebration: Spreading Joy & Festivities 12
- ➔ From Self-Help to Shared Happiness: KKSSS SHG's Christmas Celebrations . . . . . 13
- ➔ A Season of Support: Our Palliative Care Unit lights up homes with Christmas care . . . . . 14
- ➔ K.K.S.S.S. Staff Celebrates Christmas with Joy and Remembrance. . . . . 15
- ➔ TWINKLE 2024: A Sparkling Showcase of Talent. . . . . 16
- ➔ Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil . . . . . 17
- ➔ Honoring a Spiritual Beacon: Last respects to
- ➔ Rev. Sr. Dorethi Maliyekkal SH . . . . . 18





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# Message

Dear Friends and Benefactors,  
Greetings from Thuckalay diocese!

The Syro-Malabar Church rejoices and thanks for having received its new Shepherd to lead the church in the person of Bishop Raphael Thattil, as Major Archbishop. Bishop Raphael Thattil was installed as Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church at a solemn concelebrated Mass at the Church headquarters at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanaad, on 11 January 2024, Thursday.

The Session of the Synod which started on 8 January 2024, having completed the canonical procedures of electing the new Major Archbishop on the second day, sent the Synodal letter addressed to the Holy Father Pope Francis, through the Apostolic Nunciature, signed by all the participants of the Session, together with the letter of the Major Archbishop-elect, in his own handwriting, requesting the confirmation of the Holy Father for his election. Having received the confirmation of the Holy Father, the Major Archbishop-elect made the profession of faith and act of fidelity before the Synod Fathers. Then the election Session of the Synod was concluded and the Synod Fathers proceeded to announcement of the election of the Major Archbishop. On Wednesday, at 4.30 pm on 10 January 2024, Archbishop Mar Moolakkatt, the president of the Election Session, announced that Bishop Raphael Thattil, currently the Bishop of Shamshabad, is elected the fourth Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.

He was born to Ouseph and Thresia on 21 April 1956 and was baptized on 30 April 1956 in Thrissur. Lazar (late), Thomas, Baby (late) Francis, Sosannam, Joy and John, are his brothers and sisters. After his primary education at St. Thomas College HS, Thrissur, he joined St. Mary's Minor Seminary, Thope on 04 July 1971. He completed his study of Philosophy and Theology in St. Thomas Ap. Seminary Kottayam in 1980. He was ordained by Mar Joseph Kundukulam in Thrissur Doloures Basilica. on 21 December 1980. He did his higher studies in Rome and took doctorate in Oriental Canon Law. His thesis was on "Clerical Formation in the Syro Malabar Church: A Historico-Juridical Study".

After his ordination he served as Asst. Vicar, Aranattukara (1981-82), Fr. Prefect & Asst. Procurator, St Mary's Minor Seminary (1982-83), Acting Vicar, Koonammoochy (1983), Acting Vicar, Cherumkuzhy (1983). On returning back from Rome, he served in the Archbishop's house as Vice Chancellor, Chancellor, Adj. Judicial Vicar, Judge and later as Syncellus and Proto-Syncellus. He was the director of DBCLC & Catechism (1992-1995). On 20 January 1998, he was appointed as the project officer of the new Marymatha Major Seminary, after a few months appointed as the first Rector of the Marymatha Seminary (1998-2006). He also worked as president and member of many a committees and commissions.

He was ordained as Bishop on 10 April 2010 and appointed as Auxiliary bishop of Trichur and Titular Bishop of Bruni. In 2014, he was appointed as Apostolic visitor for the Syro-Malabar faithful residing outside the territorium proprium. Pope Francis named him the first Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Shamshabad on 10 October 2017 and he was installed on 7 January 2018. The diocese of Thuckalay expresses congratulations and best wishes to the newly appointed Major Archbishop.

His Beatitude Cardinal George Alencherry has been a pillar of strength and a revered figure, serving as the father and head of the Syro-Malabar Church for the past 12 years. His dedication and tireless efforts have played a pivotal role in fostering unity and ensuring the growth of the Syromalabar Church globally. The Diocese of Thuckalay expresses deep gratitude for Cardinal Alencherry's leadership, wisdom, and commitment to the spiritual well-being of the Syromalabar community. His tenure has been marked by a profound sense of responsibility and a genuine desire to strengthen the bonds of unity and faith among the Syro-Malabar diocese and faithful.

Yours in Christ



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





## Celebrating a century of blessings: Syro-Malabar Hierarchy's radiant journey

Pope Pius XI established the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy on December 21, 1923 by his decree, Romani Pontifices. The growth of the Syro-Malabar Church after the establishment of the Hierarchy with Ernakulam as the Archeparchy and Trichur, Changanacherry, and Kottayam as the Suffragan Eparchies has been phenomenal. Even though the Syro-Malabar Church had pastoral jurisdiction all over India until the 16th century, which underwent restrictions later for four centuries, has now been restored. It should be especially remembered that the two events, the establishment of the Vicariates in 1887 and of the hierarchy in 1923 accelerated the development of our Church. We shall remember with gratitude the blessings the Syro-Malabar Church has received through the establishment of the Hierarchy.

In accordance with the directives received from Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, the Administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church, in our diocese, we celebrated a Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana to mark the centenary celebrations of the establishment of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. The event took place on December 21, 2023, at 5:30 pm at Sacred



Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu. Rev. Bishop served as the main celebrant, and Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam delivered the homily. Fr. Anil Raj also concelebrated, and Provincial Superiors, along with other Superiors, participated as representatives of religious sisters. Representatives of the lay faithful from the Padanthalumoodu Forane parishes were also in attendance.





## Inspired by the Divine Narrative:

### **Eparchial Bible Convention, where faith becomes a living testimony**

The Eparchial Bible Convention took place on December 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 2023, at Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai. The retreat for both elders and youth was animated by Fr. John Kennedy SHS and his team from Holy Spirit Retreat Centre in Madurai. The Malayalam session was conducted by Fr. Vimal from Mount Carmel Retreat Centre in Trivandrum. The retreat started with a Bible procession presided over by Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil. Fr. Anil Raj, the director of Sinai Retreat Centre, extended a warm welcome to all participants. Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB

inaugurated the retreat with an opening sermon. Throughout the event was blessed with various activities, including praise and worship, preaching the Word of God, adoration, confession, and a Eucharistic procession. In parallel, a special retreat was organized for catechism students. Fr. Printo Kurias and Fr. Abhilash led the retreat for the students, while Fr. Toji Sebastian and the CMC Sisters animated a separate retreat for the children of Jesus' Kids. The three-day convention witnessed the attendance of faithful from numerous parishes.



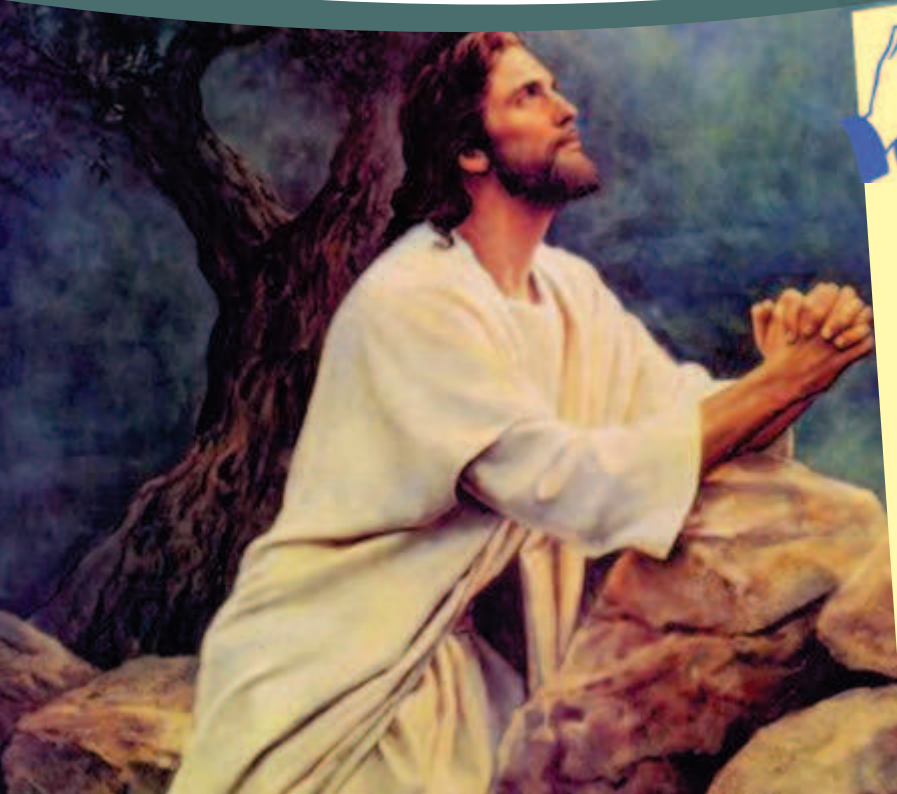


# EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY OF JUBILATION:

## The Inauguration of *Jubilaem* 2025




Together with our Holy Mother Church, we have initiated the Jubilee 2025 in our diocese, marking 2025 years since the birth of Jesus. On December 31, 2023, we inaugurated the Jubilee in our parishes by lighting the Jubilee candle, reciting the Jubilee prayer, and incorporating special prayers in Karosoosa during the Sunday Holy Qurbana. Bishop Mar George Rajendran presided over the Jubilee inauguration Holy Qurbana at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Kaisalavilai. With this inauguration, we have embarked on a year-long preparation for Jubilee 2025. During the first half of 2024, we will focus on studying four constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, and the second half will be dedicated to promoting individual and communal prayers. All Fathers had to actively participate in the Jubilee preparatory programme organized by the Jubilee committee for priests and to guide our religious Sisters and lay faithful in engaging wholeheartedly in this year of learning and prayer.



### NEED PRAYER SUPPORT!

The Diocese has prayer groups.

Please write the following and send SMS

 +91 94871 65903:

Name: .....

Place: .....

Intentions: .....

In detail you wish to express,

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# *Emmanuel – God with Us :*

## **St. Mary's Minor Seminary and Major Seminary Christmas Celebrations**

The Christmas celebration at St. Mary's Minor Seminary was a festive and joyous occasion, bringing together seminarians, staff, and guests to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The event was inaugurated by Chancellor, Rev.Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal. The event aimed to foster a sense of community, spiritual reflection, and shared joy among the seminary members. This year's Christmas celebration at Seminary was centered around the theme "Emmanuel - God with Us." The theme emphasized the divine presence in our lives, especially during the Christmas season.

Seminarians showcased their talents through various cultural performances, including music, dance, and drama. These performances were not only entertaining but also carried spiritual and moral messages.



**You can support the missionary activities by sponsoring a Seminarian in his formation:**

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

**Postal Address:**  
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# Revel in the sacred rhythm : Bible Fest 2023



This year the Forane level Catechism Bible competitions were held on 27 - 30 December 2023. All the parishes took part in the various competitions. Narcheithi Nilayam organized the competitions. The themes for the various competitions were taken from the Bible itself. This helped the children to read the Bible and to engender love for the Word of God. All the children after much preparation and rigorous practice took part in the competitions. Rev. Fr. Abilash Xavier, Director, and Rev. Fr. Jacob Ayyamathra, Assistant Director, of Catechism Department for organizing the events in a professional manner. A special word of thanks to all the Parish Priests, Sisters and teachers who have trained and prepared the children well. The events were held at APJM School, Soosaipuram; St Michael School, Kattathurai; Holy Family School, Mukkoottukkal; St Mary's School, Kaliyal; Sacred Heart School, Padanthalumoodu; Jaya Matha School, Christurajapuram and Holy Family School, Arukany.





## **IN THE WARMTH OF COMMUNITY: Diocesan Christmas Celebrations, where every heart finds home**



The Diocese organized a series of Pre-Christmas celebrations. On December 9, we hosted Christmas Celebrations at Sangamam with the departments of catechesis, CML, and Kuzhanthai Isso Iyakkam. A Christmas gathering with migrants took place on December 10 in Chennai. On December 12, Christmas celebrations were held at Sangamam with the Heads of Institutions, and on the same evening, a Christmas celebration was organized for the staff of the Sychar Resource Centre at Kozhiporvilai. Another Christmas gathering with Irai Arul staff occurred at the Bishop's House on December 13, with CRI members and Mathru Jyothis members at Kattathurai on December 16, and with the missionaries of Tenkasi Mission at Pudur on the same day evening. On December 17, a Christmas celebration with the missionaries of extended territories took place in Madurai, and on December 19, a celebration with the heads of charitable institutions was held. Further

Christmas gatherings included one with the Seeds members and Minor Seminarians at Mukkottukal Seminary on December 22 and with Major seminarians at the Bishop's House on the evening of December 23. The neighborhood around the Bishop's House celebrated Christmas on December 23.







## Priests' Conference and Pre Christmas-Celebration

On December 19, 2023, the Priests of the Eparchy gathered at Sangamam to celebrate Christmas and strengthen our sense of brotherhood. From 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm, there was an opportunity for confession and adoration. The get-together commenced with a Priests' Conference at 4:30 pm. During the first half of the Priests Conference, the Presbyterium officially expressed gratitude on behalf of the diocese to Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, the Major Archbishop Emeritus of the Syro-Malabar Church. During the Priests' Conference, Fr. Mathew Thekkekkuttu and Fr. Thomas Sathianesan shared their experiences with Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, expressing the gratitude of the entire presbyterium. During the concluding talk, Rev. Bishop thanked him for his significant contributions as the first bishop of Thuckalay and his remarkable service to the Syro-Malabar Church as the Major Archbishop for the past 12 years.

In the second half of the priests' conference, Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal provided a detailed



explanation of the discussions and decisions made during the last Presbyteral Council. Additionally, Fr. Justin Cheruvelil briefly discussed the history and significance of the centenary celebrations of the establishment of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. The presbyterium also congratulated Fr. Jinu Thekkethala on his recent appointment by the Prefect in the Vatican Dicastery of Communication.

Following the Priests' Conference, all the Fathers processed from the chapel to the hall, singing carols, with the junior priests and deacons organizing the event. At the beginning of the gathering, all the Fathers joined together to cut the Christmas cake and share it. Fr. Sebastian Pothenparampil MST delivered the Christmas message. Each Father revealed the name of their Christmas friend and exchanged gifts. The program concluded with a family meal.





# Lights, Love, and Laughter:

*Christmas with Moms, a celebration of endless joy*



Weeks before Christmas, the Matrujyotis home transformed into a wonderland of festive decorations. Laughter echoed through the halls as they crafted Christmas cards and practiced carols, eager to share the festive spirit with everyone. A delicious Christmas meal, prepared with love and care, filled the home with the aroma of spices and warmth. The children, dressed in their festive best, gathered around to sing carols, their voices blending in perfect harmony. The air crackled with excitement as they exchanged gifts, each wrapped with love and anticipation.



They shared stories, sang carols, and played games, their laughter echoing through the halls. The spirit of Christmas, with its message of love, hope, and togetherness, filled the hearts of everyone at Matrujyotis.





# SMYM Christmas Celebration:

*Spreading Joy and Festivities*



On December 10th, 2023, the St. Joseph's Forane Church in Soosaipuram was filled with the sounds of carols, laughter, and Christmas cheer as the SMYM held their annual Christmas celebration. The joyous event brought together youth from various parishes to celebrate the spirit of Christmas through music, film, and fellowship.





## From Self-Help to Shared Happiness: KKSSS SHG's Christmas Celebrations

Marapady and Thettiyode Self Help Groups organized the Christmas Celebrations for SHG women's in association with Kanyakumari Social Service Society on 15th and 21st December 2023 respectively. Marapady Christmas celebration was presided by Fr. Robin, Parish priest Marapady church and Thettiyode Christmas celebration Presided by Fr. Ajin C, Asst Director, KKSSS. In these programs the dance and skit performances were also held. The charismas cake was cut and shared with everyone.

The CTWWC team from Kanyakumari Social Service Society actively engaged in a recent PRI leaders meeting, eloquently presenting the transformative CTWWC concept. Their impactful project, focused on aiding over 300 children across 24 villages amidst the challenges of COVID-19, is a testament to their commitment. The adept case managers underscored the significance of expanding support to additional families and championing awareness about the paramount importance of family bonds.



## **A Season of Support: Our Palliative Care Unit lights up homes with Christmas care**

Palliative care services are provided by the KKSSS. More than 150 patients in Kanyakumari District avail this service. Everyday the team members are going to various places and attended the patients. They are provided Blood and Sugar checkups free medicines and other hospices. In Christmas season most of the vulnerable families were given grocery, cake and other essential items. The families are very happy of patients felt very happy during the Christmas eve by the palliative care services of K.K.S.S.S.







## **K.K.S.S.S. Staff Celebrates Christmas**

*with Joy and Remembrance*



On December 22nd, 2023, the K.K.S.S.S. office was filled with cheer as the staff gathered for their annual Christmas celebration. The event was a heartwarming blend of festive merriment and solemn remembrance, marking a special occasion for the K.K.S.S.S. community. The celebration began with a poignant note as the K.K.S.S.S. Director, Fr. Thomas Poovathumottil, inaugurated the function. He delivered a short message, expressing his gratitude for the staff's dedication and hard work throughout the year. He also took a moment to commemorate the passing of the former director, Rev. John Thekkel, who had sadly passed away on December 21st.



Dr. Sathiya Das delivered a lively Christmas message, reminding everyone of the true meaning of the season – love, hope, and peace. festive activities, including carol singing, dancing, and games. Christmas gifts were handed out to each staff member, spreading smiles and good cheer throughout the room. These gifts served as a token of appreciation for the staff's hard work and a symbol of the Christmas spirit of giving.





## **TWINKLE 2024:** **A Sparkling Showcase of Talent**

Christmas, a day synonymous with love, peace, and affection, was embraced with heartfelt joy at the Kanyakumari Social Service Society (K.K.S.S.S.). Aligning with its mission to empower individuals and nurture talents, K.K.S.S.S. once again provided a platform for joyous expression through its Educare program's annual Christmas celebration. On December 17th, 2024, the Educare students orchestrated a captivating Christmas celebration titled "TWINKLE 2024" at K.K.S.S.S. Kalluvilai. The program, commencing at 2.30 pm, was graced by the presence of esteemed

guests, including Mr. Siluvai Vasthian, Founder and Director-Cum-Secretary of HEAL, as the Chief Guest, Fr. Thomas Poovathummootil, Director of K.K.S.S.S, Ms. Anushiya Ajith, President of Mulagumoodu Panchayath. These esteemed guests delivered inspiring messages, encouraging and motivating the Educare students to embrace their potential and strive for excellence. The Educare program, with its focus on empowering underprivileged students and fostering their talents, aligns perfectly with K.K.S.S.S.'s core values. TWINKLE 2024 exemplified this commitment, providing a platform for the students to shine and celebrate the spirit of Christmas. The event concluded with the distribution of Christmas gifts, spreading joy and gratitude among the students.

The resounding success of TWINKLE 2024 was a testament to the dedication of K.K.S.S.S., the talent of the Educare students, and the blessings of God. It served as a heartwarming reminder of the transformative power of education and the enduring spirit of Christmas.





## Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil

The 10th death anniversary of Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil was commemorated on December 14, 2023, at Mankulam. The Holy Qurbana in the parish church was celebrated by Fr. Aby Poovathummoottil and Fr. Josemon Purayidathikunnel. Five staff members from KKSSS also participated in the Holy Qurbana. Following the Eucharistic celebration, the Office for the Dead was recited at the tomb of Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil.







## Honoring a Spiritual Beacon: Last respects to Rev. Sr. Dorethi Maliyakkal SH



It is with profound sorrow that we received the sad news of the passing of Sr. Dorethi Maliyakkal SH on December 15, 2023. Her dedicated service spanned an impressive 53 years in our diocese. Sr. Dorethi was a pioneering missionary who devoted herself to the kingdom of God, particularly in the Kanyakumari mission and the diocese of Thuckalay. Throughout her service, she made significant contributions to various ministries in different locations: Arukani and Anamugham (1970 – 2003), Varuthattu School Headmistress (2003 – 2008), Palugal and Anamugham (2008 – 2015), and Mukkoottukal (2015 – 2018). The funeral service for Sr. Dorethi SH took place on December 17, 2023, at 12:00 noon at St. Mathew's SH Province House in Changanacherry. From our diocese, Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, the Vicar General, participated and delivered the homily. Representatives from the clergy and lay faithful, where she had rendered her ministry, visited and offered prayers at her tomb. Rev. Bishop presided over a remembrance Holy Qurbana and the Office of the Dead at her tomb on December 18, 2023, Monday.







## Honoring the Spiritual Shepherd: Rev. Fr. John Thekkel

With deep sorrow, we received the heartbreaking news of the passing of one of the great missionaries of our diocese, Fr. John Thekkel, on December 21, 2023, at 3:45 pm. Immediately following his demise, arrangements were made to pay final respects to Fr. John Thekkel and organize the funeral ceremony. The mortal remains of Fr. John Thekkel were placed at Sangamam Chapel from 7:00 pm on December 21 until 9:00 am on December 22. Subsequently, it was taken to Sacred Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu, and kept there for paying final respects until 7:00 am on December 23.

Throughout the day, time slots were allocated for each Forane to visit the mortal remains and bid their last respects. On December 23 at 7:00 am, his body was taken to St. Francis Assisi Church, Mezhacode, for the funeral ceremony. The first part of the ceremony commenced at 10:00 am in front of the FCC convent, Mezhacode, during which Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil delivered a message. Following the first part, a procession moved to the parish church. The second part occurred in the church, and the Holy Qurbana was concelebrated by all priests. Rev. Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB presided the Holy Qurbana and delivered the homily. After the Holy Qurbana, the concluding part of the funeral took place, with a procession around the church and then to the cemetery. Priests, Sisters, and laity paid their respects to Fr. John Thekkel. Family members of Fr. John were present, along with almost all the Fathers, Sisters, and lay faithful from the parishes and institutions where he had served. Rev. Sisters accompanied the mortal remains of Fr. John throughout the day and night.







under the guidance of CRI. Special thanks to all the Fathers of different committees who organized the funeral ceremony, especially Fr. Vinod Kanakkalil, Sangamam director; Fr. Lijo Thekkel, Mezhacode Parish Priest; Fr. Geo Choozhikunnel, TPWA treasurer; and Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, President, TPWA.

Fr. John Thekkel was one of the great missionaries who dedicated himself tirelessly to the advancement of the Kingdom of God, playing a pivotal role in the development of the Kanyakumari mission and later of the Diocese of Thuckalay. Born on November 20, 1934, he belonged to Sacred Heart Church, Peringulam, of the Diocese of Palai. Ordained a priest on March 14, 1966, he spent 7 years in ministry in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. His active ministry in the Kanyakumari mission began in 1973, lasting until his official retirement in 2013. Fr. John Thekkel rendered his ministry in the following places: Jaya Matha Church, Nithiravilai & St. Antony's Church, Vayalinkarai(1973 – 1974); St. Xavier's Church, Varuthattu, St. George Church, Munchirai & Correspondent MMKM School, Varuthattu (1976 – 1989); Holy Cross Church, Malaicode & St. Martin de Porres Church, Kazhuvanthittai (1989 – 1997); Holy Family



Church, Mukkoottukal, St. Joseph's Church, Karode & Correspondent Holy Family H.S. Mukkoottukal (1997 – 1998); St. Maria Goretti Church, Athencode (1998 – 2003); St. Francis Assisi Church, Mezhacode (2003 – 2013). Secretary KKSSS, Padanthalumoodu (1976 – 1979); Secretary KKSSS, Kalluvilai (1997 – 2003); Retirement life in Sangamam (2013 – 2023). The Diocese of Thuckalay expresses deep gratitude for his selfless dedication, offering prayers for his eternal rest.





**THUCKALAY**  
**MISSION**  
DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY



*Beyond Words:*

**Gratitude as a Transformative Force**

**Major Archbishop Emeritus Mar George Alencherry**

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