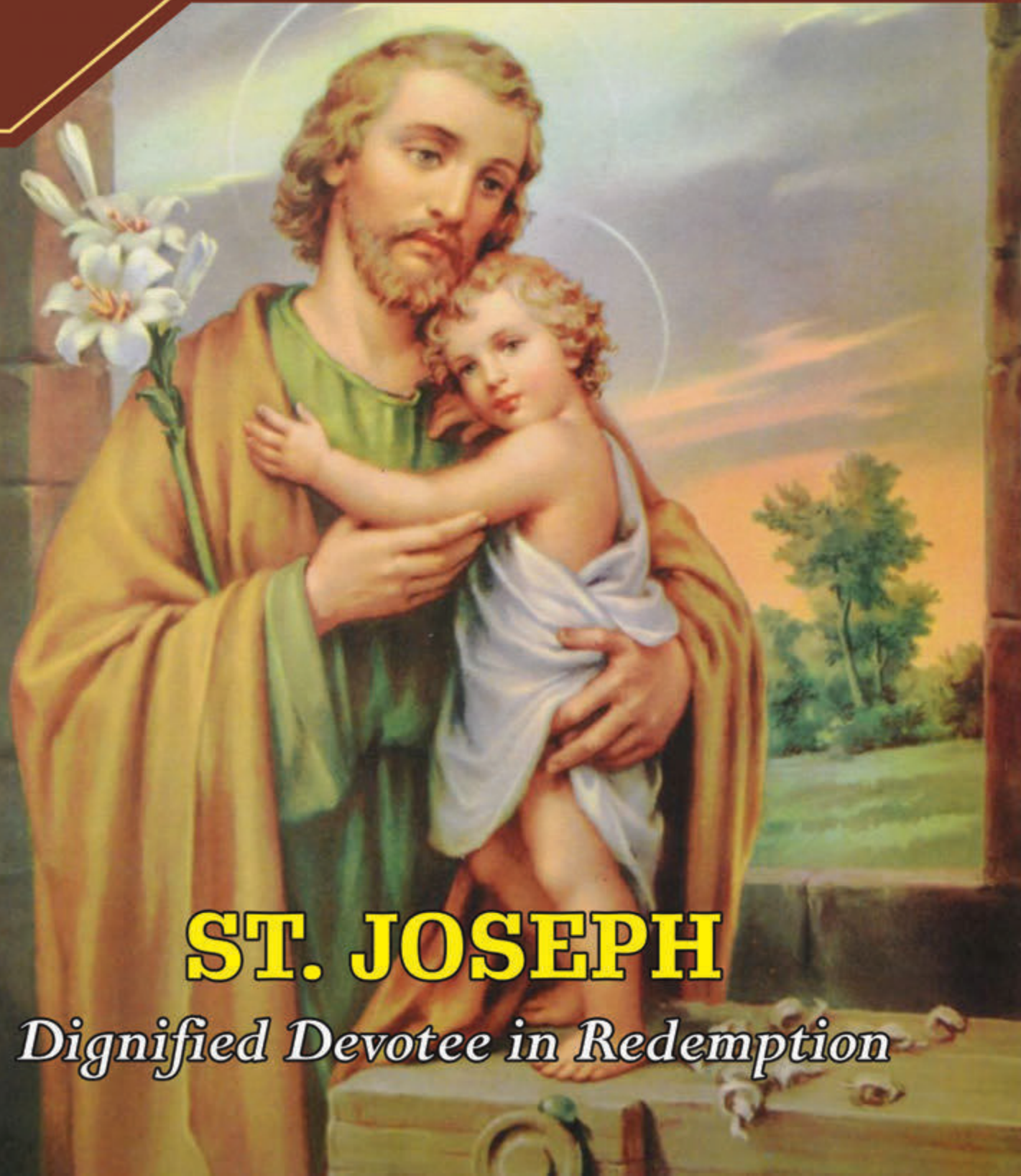


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DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY



ST. JOSEPH

Dignified Devotee in Redemption



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A Monthly online newsletter of Diocese of Thuckalay

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DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY
BISHOP'S HOUSE
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Message

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,
Greetings and prayerful wishes from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

We are in the Great Season of Lent. In continuation of the previous issue of the THUCKALAY TIDINGS, in this issue too let me reflect on this season of Grace which we have entered on 20 February 2023 – it is a time to prepare ourselves to reflect on the suffering, passion, and death of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of His public life, Jesus fasted and prayed for 40 days and 40 nights. We observe the Lenten season, recalling this event. Lent can be viewed as a time of grace given to us by God to live that aspect of the Christian life known as a “change of heart” more deliberately and consciously. St Paul, in his Letter to the Ephesians, challenges us to put away our former lives and put on the new self. In other words, he tells us to turn from our sinful ways and take on our new life in Christ. In so doing, we become one with Christ, where we find our true identity. We accept this challenge during Lent as we journey with Christ through life's difficulties to eternal life.

In the first place, we must be in constant communion with God through prayer. One of the main purposes of Lent is to be with God. This is possible only through deep personal prayer. Some of the types of prayer are meditation, repetitive prayer, and congregational prayer. Repetitive prayer is another form of personal prayer. For us Catholics, this word could be Jesus or phrases like “Jesus I love you,” “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me,” “My Lord and My God,” etc.

Among all the different types of congregational prayers, the most pleasing and acceptable form of prayer to God is the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, it is a privilege for us as baptized Catholics to participate with greater awareness and knowledge in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, offered by the priest who shares in the ministerial priesthood of Christ. During this holy season of Lent, let us make a firm commitment to participate in the Holy Eucharist with greater devotion.

During this season of Lent, let us be more fervent and regular in our daily family prayer. As followers of Christ, our unity and love are manifested when all the members of the family gather on our knees to recite the Rosary, read portions from the Holy Bible, and invoke God's blessings upon each member of the family. It is said that a family that prays together stays together.

Dear Friends, be assured of my special prayers for you and your families during the Holy Week and on Easter Sunday. I am happy to share the good news that this year we have three priestly Ordinations in the diocese. The following Deacons, Prince, George Kutty and Ajin C. will be ordained priests on 12, 13 and 15 April 2023 respectively. I wish to thank you, dear friends, for sponsoring and financially supporting these seminarians to reach the Altar. They will remember you all in the very first Eucharist they celebrate.



+ **George Rajendran sdb**
Bishop of Thuckalay



Eucharistic Convention

A Eucharistic Convention was held at Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS) Provincial House, Soosaipuram on 18th February 2023. It was conducted on the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary celebration of the founder of SABS Congregation, Venerable Mar Thomas Kurialacherry. Rev. Fr Benedict Analin animated the Eucharistic convention, which was followed by the Solemn Holy Eucharist concelebrated by His Excellency Mar George Rajendransdb. A Eucharistic Adoration and

Procession took place in the afternoon in the presence of the General Councillor, Rev. Sr Elsa Paikada SABS and all sisters of SABS Shanthal Province. About 200 faithful from the parishes and mission stations where the SABS Sisters render their service were present for the Convention. We congratulate the Provincial, Rev. Sr. Rose Martin and all sisters who took initiative to promote Eucharistic devotion among the faithful of the Diocese.



Life Orientation and Career Guidance Programme

A Life orientation and career guidance programme for catechesis students was held on 18th February 2023 for different Foranes. The programmes were held at Sacred Heart Forane Church for Padanthalumoodu and Nithiravilai Foranes, at Ozanam College for Higher Education, Utharamcode for Arukani, Manjalumoodu and

Kaliyal Foranes, and SMYM community hall, Kalluvilai for Soosaipuram and Thuckalay-Pilankalai Foranes. The entire programme was led and guided by Don Bosco Vazhikatti, Trichy in collaboration with Thuckalay Youth Educational Services(TYES).



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Bible Quiz

The Diocesan level Bible Quiz was conducted for the catechesis students at Sacred Heart Forane church, Padanthalumoodu on 19th February 2023. It was heartening to see enthusiastic participation of 455 students. We congratulate the coordinators, especially the catechesis teachers, who made good efforts to prepare the students. We can observe an encouraging trend among young children in learning the Bible

Basic Training Course for Catechesis Teachers

Narcheithi Nilayam, a Centre for Catechesis is conducting various programmes for the students as well as teachers for deepening their faith. In this academic year, from January 2023, the centre for catechesis started a Basic Course for all teachers namely Basic Training for Catechesis Teachers (BTCT). The teachers are required to attend 6 Sundays to complete this course. The course started on 8 January 2023. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, inaugurated the course. He

highlighted the objectives of BTCT. The course consists of 30 academic hours spread through the 6 Sundays. In the first batch, 56 teachers successfully participated in the training programme. The second batch began on 26 February 2023 and 60 teachers have registered for this course. We are glad that the little efforts have begun to bear fruits. The Diocese is very hopeful that more and more lay volunteers will benefit from BTCT.





SMYM Trainers' Training and Workshop

A trainers' training and workshop was held for the Diocesan central team of the Syro - Malabar Youth Movement (SMYM) and selected youth on 12 February 2023 at SMYM Office, Kalluvilai. There were twelve members of the youth benefiting and sharpening their leadership and peer training skills. Rev. Fr. Arul Antony sdb, Director of the Vazhikatti, Trichy was the resource person. He guided the youth to take up leadership roles and to courageously stand up for what is vital for the greater good of the community. The program is part of a series of training programs for selected youth aimed at making them trainers.





Mathru Jyothis Seminar

A half-day seminar for the *Mathru Jyothis* (Mothers' Movement) members was conducted at St. Mary's Forane Church, Kaliyal for the mothers of Arukani and Kaliyal Foranes on 26 February 2023. Rev. Fr. Sebastian Ittiyappara, Director of Family Apostolate from the Archdiocese of Thalassery, animated the seminar. Around 150 members participated in the programme, which focused mainly on the challenges that mothers face in today's world and the need of transmitting faith through practical formation to our children.



Silver Jubilee Inauguration

Jothi Nilayam, School for the intellectually disabled, Palappallam turns to 25 years of dedicated service to the children and youth who are in most need of support and assistance. The inauguration of its Silver Jubilee and 25th Annual Day was celebrated on 25 February 2023. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb presided over the meeting and the occasion was felicitated by the presence of Rev. Sr. Elsa Paikada SABS,

General Councillor from Aluva, Kerala, Rev. Sr. Rose Martin SABS, Provincial Superior, and a good number of priests and religious. The public meeting was followed by a variety of entertainment presented by the students. We truly appreciate the young children and the dedicated group of teachers and sisters for the hard work they put in for the welfare of the differentlyabled.

Presbyteral Council General Body Meeting

The VI General Body Meeting of the first Presbyteral Council was held on 25 February 2023 at Sangamam, the Pastoral Centre of the Diocese. All the members gathered together to reflect and deliberate on the Mission in the extended territories – methods and challenges, Topics for the Diocesan Assembly, and Priests' Welfare. The Secretary of the Presbyteral Council, Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal presented the agenda and invited the members for an open discussion. The members actively participated in the discussions and offered fruitful suggestions for the growth of the Diocese.





Theni: Presbytery Blessing

Theni District of Tamil Nadu, one of the extended territories of the Diocese, was entrusted for pastoral care to the Diocese of Kanjirapally in June 2019 and Rev. Fr. Benny Thattampampil was appointed as director. Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) sisters from Idukki Province started their mission work in Sukkangalpatti, near Chinnamanoor. Staying in a rented house, they started visiting villages and houses and commenced two tuition centers in nearby villages. Meanwhile, a land of 2.30 acres was bought by them in Jangalpatti, and construction of a convent was started. At the same time, an acre of land was bought for the Church to be constructed adjacent to the convent land. Blessing of the convent was held on 22 January 2022 by His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb in the presence of His Excellency Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of Kanjirapally. On the same day, the foundation stone for the presbytery was laid. Construction of the presbytery started in June and it is now completed. The newly constructed presbytery was blessed on 26 February 2023 by His Excellency Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of



Kanjirapally. From the Diocese of Kanjirapally, the Curia members and Kumali Forane Fathers were present for the ceremony. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb, Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathupampil, priests and religious from extended mission territories were present. We are very grateful to Rev. Fr. Benny Thattapampil for his tireless efforts to realize the dream of constructing a presbytery at Theni and steering the pioneering mission of the Diocese. Gaining a new vigour and enthusiasm we look forward to a new evangelical awakening and spiritual growth in the Theni mission.



Silver Jubilee Celebration of St. Mary's Church

The conclusion of the Silver Jubilee of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay was solemnly celebrated on 12 February 2023. The thanksgiving Holy Eucharist was concelebrated by His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb along with Rev. Fr. Geo Chuzhikunnel, the first priest in charge of the mission, and Rev. Fr. Ajin Jose the current priest in charge. The Holy Eucharist celebration was followed by a public meeting presided over by

the Bishop. Rev. Fr. Geo Chuzhikunnel, Rev. Sr. Cicy Maria FCC, and Mr. Siby Michael, the pioneer missionaries of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay were the chief guests of the function. The cultural programs performed by the catechism students made the event colourful. The Silver Jubilee endowment was given to the students who passed the 10th public exam with good marks. The memorable programme came to an end with a





Outing for Priests

The priests from our Diocese went out expressing their comradery during a two-day picnic to Hogenakkal in Dharmapuri on 13 & 14 February 2023. There were many fathers and lay volunteers, benefactors, and friends who helped to make all arrangements for the relaxation and expression of oneness among the missionaries serving in the Diocese. The transport and every meal and refreshment were arranged well. On our way to Hogenakkal, with the help of Rev. Fr. Tobin

and Jomon, and Rev. Fr. Peter Kizhakkal arranged our breakfast at Virudhunagar mission. Mr. Anil, who is a friend and benefactor of the Diocese, offered lunch to all the Fathers at Salem. The owner of CS Grand resort at Dharmapuri extended his generosity in offering the resort to all with concessional rates. Indeed, the two days were spent away from hectic activities to refresh and recharge.




Revised Text Practice of Liturgy of the Hours for Religious

The newly revised text of the Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malabar Church came into effect on 19 February 2023. The Diocesan Liturgical Commission organized a one-day practice of prayers and hymns of the newly revised text for the religious sisters of the Diocese on 18th February 2023. Rev. Sr. Cilia FCC, the President of

the Conference of Religious India (CRI) welcomed all. Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal inaugurated the session and Rev. Fr. Justin Cheruvilil, the director of the Liturgical Commission introduced the text and explained the changes made in the new text. Around 40 Sisters participated in the one-day programme.




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On-Going Formation Programme for Priests Departments' Report Presentation

The Presbyterium of our Diocese gathered together for a two-day exercise at Sangamam on 6 & 7 February 2023. 'The ongoing formation of priests is the natural and necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary with the training program which aimed at ordination' (Ref. PDV no. 71). Rev. Dr. Jerry Rosario SJ, a well-known theologian, pastor, spiritual counselor, writer, social activist, motivator and civil lawyer, animated the priests on priestly responsibility and graces needed for radical pastors. The first day ended with the priests' conference being held before the agape meal.

The second day was spent on the evaluation and presentation of the report on the activities of various departments and pious associations of the Diocese. It was for the second time that the Diocese spent an entire day on this exercise. The Directors of departments came well prepared with PowerPoint presentations and presented beautifully one-year activities of their respective departments. The presbyterium discussed and gave valuable suggestions. Everyone felt happy and proud to have been informed of the enormous work that is being carried out in the various departments of the Diocese.



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

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 Tamilnadu – 629 175, INDIA

Contact Mission Procure:
 Rev. Fr Robin Jose
 +91 4651 250633; +91 94871 65903;
 Email: bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com



Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr Philip Kodiyanthara

The 10th death anniversary of Rev. Fr Philip Kodiyanthara, former Diocesan Administrator and an ardent missionary, was commemorated on 09 February 2023 at Kayalpuram, Kerala. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb celebrated the Requiem Holy Eucharist and Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, along with 10 other priests from the Diocese concelebrated the

Holy Eucharist. Representatives of teachers of aided schools of the Diocese were also present for the memorial Holy Eucharist. The congregation also prayed the Office for the Dead at the tomb of Rev. Fr. Philip Kodiyanthara. We continue to recollect and admire the selfless services of a great soul.





Talent Fest for AIDACT Schools and World Cancer Day Celebration

Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS), the social arm of the Diocese held a Talent Fest, in collaboration with the Association of Institutions for Differently Abled Children of Thuckalay (AIDACT), on 03 February 2023 at Aseer Auditorium Kalluvilai. Various competitions were organized to expose the hidden talents of differently abled children. We were happy that children from 7 special schools participated enthusiastically. Karunai Illam, Nithiravilai received the coveted overall championship.

The same day a cancer awareness rally was organized from Karunalayam to Aseer Auditorium, Kalluvilai to bring about awareness and knowledge on cancer to the general public on account of World Cancer Day which is commemorated on the next day. The President of Mulagummoodu Panchayat flagged off the rally. We were pleased that about 100 people participated in the rally which culminated in the Auditorium with awareness talks.



VOCATION AND MISSION

REV. SR. GEOMARIA SABS For the Love of the Blessed Sacrament

A 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 Greek adjective "beautiful" – kalos, and the verb "to call / call" – kaleo, have the same root. 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 testimonies of such beauty in and through many religious vocations, expressed through missionary zeal and service for the people. Tidings proudly introduces the missionary life of a religious sister belonging to the Congregation of the sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS). Rev. Sr. Geomaria SABS is originally from the Diocese of Thoothukudi and currently serves the mission of Thuckalay teaching at M.M.K.M. High School, Varuthatt.

Tidings: Thank you very much, dear Sister, for your kind acceptance of our request for this interaction. We are sure about the fact that your testimony of religious life will inspire our readers. We shall start with your family. Can you share with us some unforgettable moments of your life with family and infancy?



Sr. Geomaria: Thank you very much for your service to the whole world, bringing the updates of our Diocesan good tidings and stories of ordinary people like me. I was born in a middle-class family in a village called Rajapalayam in Thoothukudi on 17 October 1988. My parents are Mr. Jeyapaul and Mrs. Jeyarani. My brother is Maria Montfort and my sister is Maria Vincyma. My family has been a great support to me. I belong to Madu Jebamaalai Matha Parish, Rajapalayam. the close relation to the parish and its activities have infused in us a special love towards Jesus and the Catholic Church. For us nuns, the role of the parents is key in our initial formation. I see my parents praying and attending Church regularly. I am always thankful to my parents for making me realize this precious gift of religious life.

Tidings: May God continue to bless your parents! What about your schooling?

Sr. Geomaria: After nursery education, I was sent to VRC primary school, Alngarathattu to complete my lower primary education. It was a nice time for me to build up a good network of friends. Then I did my upper primary as well as high school at V.V.D. memorial school, Arockiapuram. I desired to join a Catholic school at least in the final years of my school education and God's plan was the same; I joined St. Aloysius Higher secondary school,



Thoothukudi for my higher secondary education. I was gifted with another group of good friends, with whom I have shared my life.

Suguna was one of my best friends in primary school. She received Holy Communion at the age of nine. I was waiting for my turn to receive Jesus. But my mother allowed me only in the next year. We had only two Holy Masses per week in our village. I attended Holy Mass every day to receive Jesus more than my friend. Though it seemed to be a competition, what inspired me more was the personal love of God towards me. I used to walk every day to reach early, at least half an hour before the Holy Mass, to remain in silence before the Blessed Sacrament. I was faithful to this during my entire school education.

Tidings: It is amazing and inspiring! It is the base of your vocation, isn't it? Could you please share with us about your vocation?

Sr. Geomaria: In my childhood, my grandma used to narrate many stories about the life of saints. The story of St. Philomena imprinted in me a strong desire to become a Saint and Martyr, serving Christ and His Church. While in 12th Standard, I expressed my desire to become a religious sister. While my parents accepted immediately, my brother had his reservation as I scored high marks in the examinations. He placed a condition. If I scored more than a thousand marks, I should step back from my decision, otherwise, I could go ahead and join a convent. Funny indeed, I started praying to get fewer marks in the final examination. When the results came, all were shocked that I got only 996 marks. I was thanking and praising God. I believe that it was the first miracle of my vocation journey.

Tidings: Praise the Lord; why did you choose particularly the Adoration Congregation?

Sr. Geomaria: In my Diocese, there are many religious congregations. I wanted a long habit as I wear now in my congregation. Once my father met Rev. Sr Jane Mary and Rev. Sr Merlit Thoompukal,



who was studying at St. Mary's College, Thoothukudi. They came to my home and met me. We talked about many things including life in the convent, discipline, studies, etc. Their testimony of religious life inspired me to say 'Yes' to the Lord in the Adoration Congregation. On 17 February 2006, I reached Aruthivilai Convent in the Diocese of Thuckalay. I received a warm and spiritual welcome from the sisters. I liked very much the way they greet – *Praise be to the Blessed Sacrament of Jesus*. I matured more by reading the inspiring life stories of the founder Venerable Mar Thomas Kurialacherry, Mother Chantal, and the members of the Congregation. It was a privilege for me to narrate about the two trips of Mar Kurialacherry to Rome from the port of Tuticorin. I started loving my congregation beyond all the limits of language, rite, and culture.

Tidings: Praise be to the Blessed Sacrament of Jesus. How blessed you are! Please share something about your formation.

Sr. Geomaria: Rev. Sisters helped me a lot in learning Malayalam during the first three months and so the subsequent training sessions were easy for me. Personal prayer, meditation, and spiritual exercises transformed my life. I was always ready to sacrifice my small desires for the highest will of my God. The mystery behind my joyful formation was the deep relationship that I have always kept with God through Eucharistic Adoration. After my aspirancy at Vadavathoor Loreto Bhavan, I did my postulancy at Little Flower Convent, Vazhappally;

Mammood's novitiate house. On 17 April 2010, I did my first profession at Sacred Heart Adoration Chapel, Vazhappally, and then, on 6 April 2019, I said my total YES to the Lord during my perpetual vows at Cenacle, Aluva.

Tidings: Whom do you remember most as the inspiration behind your vocation?

Sr. Geomaria: Of course, there are many. First of all, I consider my vocation as the expression of my love of Jesus towards me. As we read the election of twelve disciples by Jesus on the mountain in the gospel of St. Mark, the election of each religious is not human but divine. Then my parents by their ordinary and Christian moral life have inspired me. Their faith is very strong. For the nuns, the role of the parents is key in the formation of the vocation of the children. They seek to live as Christians, as good Christians, because it is not so much talking, but living evangelizes much more. We saw our parents praying, and attending Church. At the end of the daily prayer in the family, my mother used to pray for good vocations in the Church. My aunt, Sr. Helena Immaculate LSP was another motivating force behind my vocation. During her vacation, once in three years, we talked for long hours about different mission experiences of hers and my desire. Besides her, another sister, who helped me a lot to grow in my vocation was Sr. Joy, a teacher at St. Aloysius Higher Secondary School, Thoothukudi during my higher secondary education. Her kind heart and caring nature made me think about religious life; if she can, why can't I?

Tidings: Sister, it is a heavenly experience. Could you please share some experiences?

Sr. Geomaria: Yes. My whole life itself is a blessing from God. An extraordinary experience is a privilege, which God has granted me to work in three different Dioceses in Tamil Nadu – Ooty, Vellore, and Thuckalay in two different rites – Latin and Syro-Malabar. The experiences in different



places and different rites have helped me to open my mind and heart to the various realities of life. As our Pope Francis exhorts us, 'life of a religious is an outward life, getting out of ourselves to the other.' I want to see the meaning of my life for others. It is the philosophy of Martin Buber. But it is the example of our Lord to each one of us.

Tidings: Great to hear about the philosophy of Martin Buber. Do you like the Diocese of Thuckalay?

Sr. Geomaria: Well! I was expecting this question. I belong to a Congregation, which originally belongs to the Syro-Malabar tradition. Vocation, I understand is the acknowledgment of the will of God. If it is the will of God, I am only an instrument in His hands for the mission. There are no defined boundaries of differences. It is the mystery behind my transitions from one rite to the other. Thuckalay Diocese has granted me many unforgettable moments. I did my various services at Soosaipuram, Paruthivilai, and Killiyoor. Geographically each place has got its particularities though we are in the same district. The common thing is the thirst of the people for the Word of God and hunger for the Holy Eucharist. I think it is the mission entrusted to each one of us, to prepare these poor and ordinary people to form a big family of Christ and that is called the Kingdom of God. I involve in parish activities for catechism, house visits, prayer meetings with families, altar decoration, etc. I thank God for all these blessings.

Tidings: You have prayed, worked, studied, and served in different parts of Tamil Nadu. Any special and unforgettable incident which comes to your immediate memory?

Sr. Geomaria: In 2019, I was in the Masinagudi (Diocese of Ooty) community. We were only two sisters there. One day, early in the morning, the superior heard some strange noise and woke up. She called me and we went to the working area. Oh, Heavens! we saw a giant elephant eating banana leaves near our kitchen. We put on the torch and directed it into its eyes. The elephant started running with the leaf in its mouth. I couldn't see the elephant through the grill; so, announced that I would go to the terrace to see the elephant more clearly. We went running together to the terrace and we saw the elephant breaking our compound wall before leaving the place. It is very vivid in my memory and I do not fail to thank my God for protecting us that day.

Tidings: Do you feel any challenge in the mission, especially in the Diocese of Thuckalay?

Sr. Geomaria: Yes, of course. Challenges are many. But these challenges are the motivating force for our missionary zeal. Our Thuckalay Diocese is now extended to Tuticorin, Madurai, Sivagangai, Theni, and Virudhunagar. Many need our mission services and they are thirsty for Divine consolation. But the decline in the number of vocations especially in the women's congregations is a real challenge which in turn causes the scattering of the faithful.



Tidings: Are you satisfied with your religious life?

Sr. Geomaria: Let me tell you frankly that every satisfaction in religious life arises out of sacrifices. My sacrifices render me great satisfaction. One who called me is trustworthy and He doesn't know to abandon His children. This faith is the basis of my whole life.

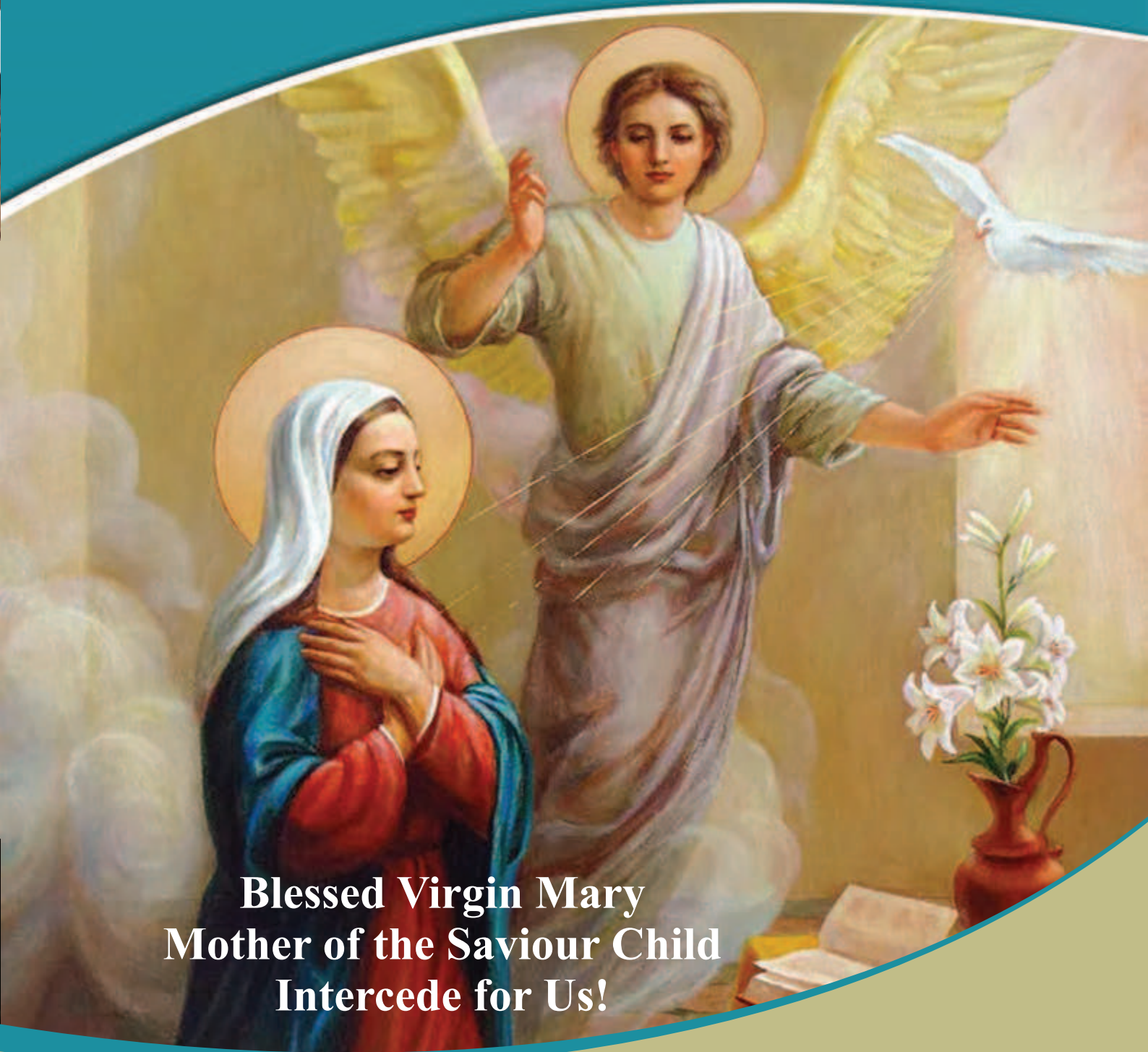
Tidings: Thank you very much, Sister. We assure you of our prayers. Do you have any messages for the young generation?

Sr. Geomaria: I am not a senior member to share many experiences of life with you. However, I shall assure you that God has a plan for each one of us and he desires us to listen to Him. God loves you. He has given His power to you to make changes in the world. Let us become His own and try to change the world with His power of LOVE. May God bless all the young people.





THUCKALAY
MISSION
BISHOP OF THE THUCKALAY



**Blessed Virgin Mary
Mother of the Saviour Child
Intercede for Us!**

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