

DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY

THUCKALAY TIDINGS

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**"Embracing Reflection
and Renewal"**



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THUCKALAY TIDINGS

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A Monthly online newsletter of Diocese of Thuckalay

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Message

Dear friends and benefactors of Thuckalay Mission
Greetings and prayerful wishes from Bishop's House!

On 12 February 2024, we began the holy season of Lent, a period of fasting, prayer, and penance. It is a significant liturgical season observed as a spiritual journey towards the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In our Syro-Malabar Church, Lent holds immense significance, and its observance is deeply rooted in East Syrian tradition.

The asceticism consists of fasting and abstinence. These practices are rooted in various religious traditions and hold significant spiritual and ethical implications. While interpretations may vary among different faiths, the underlying principles often include self-discipline, spiritual purification, and a heightened awareness of one's relationship with the divine.

It is a matter of tradition and good faith that most Christians eat only vegetarian meals for 50 full days and abstain from meat, fish and alcohol voluntarily. This has been praised as one of the finest spiritual offerings of the local Christians.

The practice of fasting and abstinence has deep roots in the Bible, appearing in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, figures like Moses and Elijah were engaged in fasting as a means of seeking God's guidance and demonstrating repentance. The New Testament highlights the 40-day fast of Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4:2), serving as a model for Christian fasting. Additionally, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount emphasize the importance of fasting as a private and sincere act, devoid of ostentation (Mt 6:17).

Fasting and abstinence are considered spiritual weapons aimed at cultivating self-control and

discipline. By abstaining from certain foods or activities, individuals create space for reflection, prayer, and a heightened sensitivity to spiritual matters. The intentional denial of physical desires serves as a way to focus on spiritual nourishment and the pursuit of a deeper connection with God.

For us Christians, fasting and abstinence are often linked to the sacrificial nature of the life and death of Jesus Christ. By willingly giving up comforts and indulgences, believers participate symbolically in the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This identification with Christ's sacrifice fosters a sense of solidarity with the redemptive work of Christ and a commitment to live by his teachings.

I invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to make this Lent a time of renewal of life through prayer and penance. It should be a time for personal reflection on where we stand as Christians accepting the Gospel challenges in thought, word and deed. It is also a time to assess our relationships with our family, friends, working colleagues and the other people we come in contact with. Let us convert Lent into a time for spiritual growth by being more attentive to the celebration of the liturgies. Let us use Lent to fight daily against the evil within us and around us by practising self-control relying on the power of prayer and Scripture. I hold all the readers of Thuckalay Tidings, the benefactors and friends of the diocese close to my heart, especially during this Season of Lenten season and praying.



+ **George Rajendran sdb**
Bishop of Thuckalay

A MILESTONE OF FAITH

St. Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal's Silver Jubilee Celebration



St. Mary's Minor Seminary is the fruit of the vision of His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, the first bishop of Thuckalay and the Major Archbishop Emeritus of the Syro Malabar Church. It started on 25 June 1998 with 26 brothers (I Years and II Years) and was blessed and inaugurated by Mar Joseph Powathil, the then Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry on 14 August 1998. The building for minor seminary was first used as an apostolic school, later it is transformed to the seminary. Since the minor seminary had not yet finished its maintenance, the first batch joined for the diocese in 1997, was sent to three minor seminaries in Kerala (Changanacherry, Pala and

Kanjirappally) for the first-year studies. The history reveals that the seminary had 10 rectors, 13 spiritual directors, 15 procurators, 10 dean of studies, 7 sisters and more than 60 professors in the past 25 years. There are 47 priests and 21 major seminarians who are formed by the minor seminary and currently there are 14 candidates in the seminary. As Silver Jubilee memorial, the renovated chapel of the seminary was blessed by me on 24 January 2024.

The Silver Jubilee celebrations commenced with a concelebrated Holy Qurbana on January 27, 2024, at 3:30 pm. Bishop Mar George Rajendran was the main celebrant, and Fr. Tom Kunnumpuram, former Rector, delivered the homily. Following the Holy Qurbana, there was a tea break. The Silver Jubilee public meeting commenced at 5:15 pm, with Bishop presiding over the event and Fr. Rector extending a warm welcome to all present. During the meeting, Rev. Bishop delivered the presidential address. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, Sr. Tessa Maria SH, and Mr. Wilson Sir from Mukkoottukal Parish felicitated the event. On this occasion, Bishop released the silver Jubilee souvenir and a Seminary diary. The cultural programme, performed by the seminarians, added vibrant colours to the jubilee celebration. The programme concluded by 8:00 pm with a common



Answering His Call

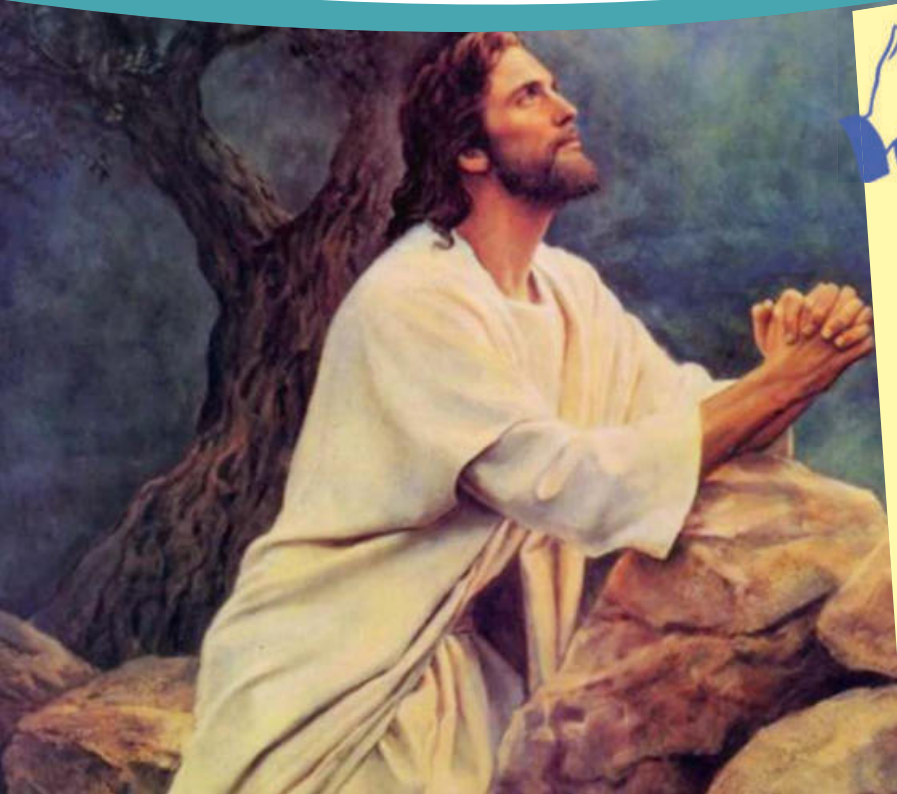
The Sacred Ordination of Dn. Liju Marattukalam




Every priest is a blessing to the Church and we have every reason to rejoice and thank God for the gift of a new Priest – Fr. Joseph (Liju) Marattukalam. On 02 January 2024, at Sacred Heart Church, Chethipuzha, Changanacherry, deacon Liju Marattukalam was ordained priest by Rev Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB. The solemn ceremony was a testament to the meticulous planning and execution of the devoted parishioners, family members, and Parish Priests. Rev. Fr. Mathew Arekalam CMI, regional superior of CMI Kanyakumari region delivered a profound homily that touched the hearts of all those present.

Feast of Denha


Denha is the feast of the great revelation of Jesus as the light of the world. Jesus is the real Sun that dawned in the world through Incarnation. During the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth, the public did not recognize him as the real Sun who illuminates the whole of humanity. He was manifested to the public by God the Father at his baptism. In the Diocese, the great feast of Denha was celebrated on 6 January in all our parishes. Taking inspiration from the Northern Kerala, some of the parishes observed as Pindiperunnal by decorating the plantain trunk with lighted lamps. It was encouraging to see that it was celebrated even in the extended Mission territories with great enthusiasm.



NEED PRAYER SUPPORT!

The Diocese has prayer groups.
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Name:
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Intentions:

In detail you wish to express,
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Empowering the Future

Skill Development Workshop for Students at St. Joseph's High School

On the bright morning of Thursday, January 11, 2024, St. Joseph's High School, Mathiravilai, became a hub of learning and empowerment for students of 9th and 10th grades. A special skill development training session, meticulously organized from 10 am to 1 pm, drew the participation of more than 50 eager young minds, all keen to explore new horizons of personal and academic growth.

The workshop was spearheaded by Fr. Ajin C. Joseph, the esteemed Director of the Health Commission of the Diocese of Thuckalay, whose expertise and dedication to youth development shone throughout the event. The session was rich with valuable insights, covering a wide range of topics essential for the holistic development of students. Among the key areas discussed were goal setting, self-assessment techniques, effective study methods, and memory enhancement tips, each designed to equip the students with the tools they need to succeed in both their academic and personal lives. This event is a testament to the ongoing commitment of Thuckalay Youth Educational Services (TYES) to foster a culture of continuous learning and



improvement among the youth. Under the visionary guidance of Fr. Joseph Santosh, TYES has been instrumental in bringing such enriching opportunities to the doorstep of the students, ensuring that they are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the future head-on.



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:

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Contact Mission Procure:

Fr. Liju Marattukalam
+91 4651 250633; +91 94871 65903;
Email: bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com



Syro Malabar Bishop's Synod at Kakkanad



The First Session of the XXXII Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church took place at the Major Archbishopal Curia at Mount St. Thomas Kakkanad from January 08 to 13, 2024. Election of the New Major Archbishop was the only agenda of this synodal session. On the second day itself the synod Fathers could complete all the canonical procedures of electing the new Major Archbishop and sent the necessary letters to the Holy Father Pope Francis. Having received the confirmation from the Pope, the Major Archbishop-elect made the profession of faith and act of fidelity before the synodal Fathers. Then the election session of the Synod was concluded and the Synod Fathers proceeded to the announcement of the Major Archbishop. The second session of the XXXII Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church was inaugurated by the new Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil on 12 January 2024 and it was concluded by the next day evening, on 13 January 2024.



Priests' Conference

The Priests' Conference for the month occurred at Sangamam on January 16, 2024, starting at 9:30 am. The conference initiated with adoration and confession, fostering a prayerful atmosphere for the assembly. At 11:00 am, the meeting officially commenced, with Fr. Chancellor coordinating the proceedings, and Rev Bishop presided over it. Initially, the Presbyterium extended a warm welcome to the new Priest, Fr. Liju Marattukalam. During the first session, the conference conducted the election of new members to the presbyteral council under the guidance of Fr. Chancellor. Through secret balloting, 10 priests were elected from various categories based on their ordination year. The Presbyterium congratulated the newly elected members. In the second session, Fr. Sajan Nettapongu presented the report of the first department's core committee meeting, including discussions with the directors of departments. Mission coordinators and directors of departments then presented updates and upcoming programmes. In the last session, the Presbyterium welcomed Mar Ephrem Narikulam, Bishop of Chanda, who shared his mission experience and pastoral activities in his diocese. Rev Bishop expressed gratitude to Bishop Ephrem and shared updates from the Synod of Bishops and other general information. The conference concluded with an agape meal.





KKSSS Day at Kalluvilai

On September 20th, 2024, Kanyakumari Social Service Society celebrated the feast of St. Devasahayam and Patron's Day. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, the president of KKSSS, and other dignitaries, including Rev. Fr. Barsleebi Rambachan and Rev. Fr. Jesusoss, participated. Fr. Aby Poovathummootil, the director of KKSSS, welcomed the attendees and presented the previous year's activities. During the programme, 54 students were awarded scholarships of Rs. 10,000 each. The event featured various entertainments by staff and Educare students. My appreciation to the director and the entire team for organizing well the patron's day celebration.



Compassionate Outreach: Marking World Sick Day



The Health Commission of the Eparchy of Thuckalay solemnly observed World Sick Day with a campaign held at the International Cancer Centre, Neyyoor. A total of 120 individuals participated in the event, during which small gifts were distributed to 75 cancer patients. Dr. Sentil Kumar was chosen as the resource person for the day, where he provided valuable information on cancer and its causes. Additionally, members of the S.C.Y.M. contributed to the event by presenting a variety of entertainment activities.





HEART MATTERS: Empowering Youth with Awareness

The Diocesan Health Commission of Thuckalay conducted a heart awareness program on January 12, 2024, at St. Michael School, Kattathurai. Dr. Ajikumar, a Varma and massage therapist, along with Dr. R.P. Ramya Sundaram, BSMS, served as the resource persons for the event. Following the

educational session, an awareness rally and a comprehensive body checkup were conducted by the speakers. A total of 500 students benefited from this initiative, gaining valuable insights into heart health and overall well-being.





New Year & Denha Celebrations at Cumbum

The pre-Christmas celebration scheduled for December 17, 2023, at Cumbum Mission was cancelled due to heavy rain. The programme was rescheduled as the New Year and Denha celebration and took place on January 5, 2024, at Angurpalayam, Cumbum, in the presence of Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB. The celebration commenced at 5 pm, with the Cumbum Mission coordinator, Fr. Benny Thattampampil, extending a warm welcome to everyone. Rev. Bishop presided over the meeting, and individuals from numerous villages attended the event. Special prizes were awarded to the children who emerged victorious in the competitions held in honour of Christmas. The meeting concluded with an agape meal served to all attendees.





GROUND BREAKING DEVELOPMENT

Launch of Parish Hall Construction at Kaythar Mission

The Kaythar Mission is embarking on a significant development project with the construction of a new Parish Hall, aiming to create a multipurpose space for community gatherings, worship, and events. This initiative marks a milestone in the mission's history, promising to enhance the social and spiritual fabric of the community.





SILVER JUBILEE EXTRAVAGANZA

Celebrating 25 Glorious Years of Jothi Nilayam, Palappallam

Jothi Nilayam Special School for Differently Abled Children managed by the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacraments (SABS) St. Chantal Province, Thuckalay has successfully completed 25 years in the field of special education. The school started functioning in a small shed with two sisters and nine children on 1 February 1999. The then Vicar General Rev. Fr. Thomas Muttathukkunnel inaugurated the school. Sr. Alphonse Maria SABS was the first correspondent of the school. Ever since the beginning of the school in 1999, the sisters and staff had been doing their best to bring these children to the main stream of the society by empowering them through their integral formation. In the different steps of growth, its infra structure also got developed.

The Silver Jubilee Public Meeting began at 05.30 pm on 30 January 2024 and presided by Bishop Mar George Rajendran SDB. Mr. P. N. Sridhar, the district collector of Kanyakumari was the guest of honour. Mr. S. Sivasankaran, Kanyakumari district differently abled welfare officer and Rev. Sr. Ancy Mapilaparampil SABS, the General councillor were the special guests. Rev. Sr. Rose Martin SABS, Fr. Ajin Jose and Mr. Viju mon, ward member, felicitated the occasion. children have shown their talents through variety entertainment programmes.





BIBLE FEST 2024

Diocesan-Level Biblical Competition for Students

The Bible Fest Diocesan level competition was conducted on 13 January 2024 at Sacred Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu. Registration began at 9.30 am. The Bible Fest Diocese level competition was inaugurated by Rev Fr. Thomas Sathianesan. Almost 452 students participated in various items. For the first time, students from Tenkasi region participated in the competitions and were awarded two prizes. The concluding meeting was presided over by Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil and winners were awarded by him.



Thenkasi Speaks...

The Pongal festival, celebrated on January 14, 2024, by the Pulari Community Service Centre, underscored the rich cultural tapestry of the Tamil community. This event, marked by the participation of numerous women's self-help groups and sewing trainees, was not just a celebration but also an affirmation of communal harmony and skill showcasing. Fr. Mahesh, the director of Pulari, inaugurated the festivities with a warm welcome to all attendees. He eloquently spoke about the cultural significance of the Tamil community and underscored the importance of virtues such as austerity. His address was not merely an opening remark but a bridge connecting the participants to the deeper meanings and values inherent in the Pongal celebration.

The event featured a spirited competition among the women's self-help groups, which was not just a contest but a celebration of talent, teamwork, and the spirit of community. The competition saw the Sri Om Shakti team securing the first prize, followed by the Indira team and the Kurinji team. This competition, with 12 participating teams, was a testament to the vibrant community spirit and the diverse talents within the Pulari community. The inclusion of a special guest, Maker, in the latter part of the function, added an additional layer of excitement and recognition to the event. This gesture of inviting a special guest not only honored the participants and the



winners but also highlighted the importance of external support and acknowledgment in community activities.

Furthermore, the Pulari Social Service Center's commitment to the educational development of its community members is evident through its initiative to conduct English training sessions. These sessions, led by Mrs. Rita, an English teacher, every Sunday, are crucial in providing the students with the necessary language skills to navigate broader opportunities and challenges. The choice of English training reflects a forward-looking approach, aiming to equip the community members with global language skills, thereby enhancing their personal and professional prospects. The Pongal festival celebration by the Pulari Community Service Centre was not just a cultural event but a comprehensive community engagement program that celebrated traditional values, showcased talents, and promoted educational advancement. The efforts of the Pulari team in organizing such a multifaceted event underscore their commitment to the holistic development of their community members, blending cultural heritage with contemporary needs for skill and education.



Uniting for Compassion

It's heartwarming to hear about the compassion and support from Kaythar health mission, Thirunelveli being extended to a 45-year-old lady with arthritis and her 86-year-old mother, both of whom face significant challenges due to their disabilities and health conditions. Living together in a village and struggling to make ends meet, their situation underscores the vulnerabilities faced by many in our communities, especially those with health issues and the elderly who have limited means of support. The dedication of individuals and groups to care for them, by distributing food, clothes, and providing financial assistance for medicines, is a remarkable example of humanity and community solidarity. It's actions like these that often provide a lifeline for those in the most desperate situations.

Taking the initiative to seek the permission of the City Police SI to move the lady to Assaripallam indicates a well-thought-out plan aimed at providing her with better care and support. This step not only demonstrates a commitment to ensuring her safety and well-being but also respects the legal and procedural aspects of care and guardianship. This scenario is a powerful reminder of the importance of community support systems and the difference they can make in the lives of individuals who are in need. It highlights the value of compassion, the impact of collective action, and the critical role of local authorities in facilitating and overseeing such support measures.



FINAL FAREWELL

Honoring the Legacy of Rev. Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam

With profound sadness, we received the sorrowful news of the passing of one of the pioneering missionaries of our diocese, Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam, on January 17, 2024. As a diocese deeply indebted to the Archdiocese of Changanacherry, we wish to express our heartfelt condolences and offer our prayers. The funeral ceremony took place at 09:00 am on January 23, 2024, at St. Athanasius Church in Mallappally. Travel arrangements for the people from our diocese were organized by the Parish Priests of the parishes where Fr. Sebastian served, and a large number of Priests, Sisters, and lay faithful attended the funeral. Approximately 150 faithful from our diocese participated. The first part of the funeral ceremony was conducted by our Vicar General Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, and Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam delivered funeral message based on his mission in our diocese. During the Holy Qurbana presided by the Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Major Archbishop of the Syro Malankara Church, Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis delivered the homily.

Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam was a pioneering missionary who dedicated himself tirelessly to the advancement of the Kingdom of God and played a pivotal role in the development of the Kanyakumari mission. Later, of the Diocese of Thuckalay. Following his priestly ordination on March 14, 1966, he arrived in the Kanyakumari mission in 1969. With commitment and missionary zeal, he served for 18 years in the soil of Kanyakumari. During these years, he served in different mission places, including Nithiravilai, Annikkarai, Vayalinkarai, Christurajapuram, Varuthattu, Munchirai, Padanthalumoodu,



Thettiyode and Athencode. After the erection of the diocese he served almost five years as Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu and correspondent of Matriculation School, Padanthalumoodu. He is the founder of Annikkarai, Vayalinkarai and Christurajapuram parishes. He only started the school at Annikkarai. He also served for many years as the President and Treasurer of KKSSS, Kalluvilai. The Diocese of Thuckalay is truly grateful to Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam for his selfless dedication and prays for his eternal rewards.





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“Do not be afraid of confessing your sins. The priest is there in the confessional not to condemn you but to forgive you on behalf of Jesus.” - Pope Francis

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