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Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Recently, I received a letter from Rev. Fr Joseph Madathil, one of the pioneer missionaries of Kanyakumari Mission. At present, he is living at Priests' Home in Changanacherry. The letter reminisces the good old days that he spent in the missions of Kanyakumari spreading the Gospel while undergoing much privation. In recent times, the Holy Father extended the territory of our Eparchy. During the Synod of Bishops that was held in January 2018, a considerable time was spent in evolving strategies for the mission work in the Syro-Malabar Church. In these contexts, I believe, the letter that Fr Joseph Madathil wrote will have much significance for us. Hence, I want to reproduce his letter in my circular.

May it please your Excellency,

I wish your Excellency a very happy Christmas and a grace-filled New Year. I received this morning your greeting card that mentions the new missions that you have begun at Kuzhithurai: Kallukatti. In 1963, I came to settle at Manjalumoodu. From there, I used to visit Marthandam and Padanthalumoodu regularly. Kuzhithurai was an important town at that time. We had also missions at Nagercoil and Soosaipuram near Karungal, Padanthalumoodu. At that time, we could not find a suitable place at Kuzhithurai. I am happy that you are able to start the missions at Kuzhithurai: Kallukatti now. In those years, on Sundays after the mass at Manjalumoodu, I used to go by bicycle to Vayalinkarai. After two years of my stay, I was able to gather sufficient money with the help of an American friend to purchase a scooter.

After purchasing the scooter, I was able to travel regularly to Soosaipuram and Nagercoil. We were able to register two societies at Soosaipuram and Manjalumoodu with the help of Rajayan from Soosaipuram. Through these societies, we were able to help the poor people. We had many opportunities to start new missions around Manjalumoodu. But due to financial constraints, we could begin only five Centres. They were Thettivilai, Mukkoottukal, Malaicode, Karode and Marappady.

I also approached late Rev. Fr Andrews CMI, then Regional Superior, to open new Centres at Kaliyal, Muzhucode, Azhakiyamandapam and Netta. At Muzhucode I visited all the Catholic houses and arranged the list of families for the CMI Fathers. Two CMI Fathers were sent to begin the Centres in the Kanyakumari Mission. Rev. Fr James stayed at Manjalumoodu while Rev. Fr Benedict stayed at Kaliyal.

The then Archbishop of Changanacherry, Mar Mathew Kavukatt recognized the importance of the missionary work at Kanyakumari region and sent two Priests to help in the work of evangelization. He also requested SH Sisters to work in the missions in running the schools. Whenever the Archbishop visited the Missions, he used to stay with me at Manjalumoodu. With the financial assistance of the Archbishop and a loan taken from SD Sisters, we were able to purchase 14 acres of land at Karode. We also bought 3 Acres of land at Manjalumoodu for SDS Sisters, another 8 acres of land at Mukkoottukal where we had planned for a Higher Secondary School, a Church in honour of Holy Family and a Minor Seminary.

Only after 4 Years I could return the loan to the SDS Sisters. I was transferred to Amboori, where I was able to construct a Church. Archbishop Mar Antony Padiyara blessed it in 1975. Afterwards, I left Amboori for a year for on-going formation. While developing the mission Centres, we also gave much emphasis to the education of poor children. I have sent many boys and girls after their Matriculation to Bangalore for TTC. After their TTC, they were invariably appointed in our Schools as teachers. We already had Schools at Varuthattu and Soosaipuram. Later, we opened Schools at Mukkoottukal, Kaliyal and Arukani. All these three Schools are now become Higher Secondary Schools. I also rendered my services in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry in the Changanacherry Social Service Society and in other Parishes. I returned a second time to Kanyakumari Missions. I worked at Nithiravilai, Vayalinkarai and Christurajapuram. Later Archbishop Padiyara asked me to take charge of KKSSS. I also served at Palugal and Annikkarai Centres.

I am concluding this very long letter. I hope under your able leadership, the Eparchy of Thuckalay would flourish in the fields of evangelization, education and social development. May the infant Jesus bless you, and all Fathers and Sisters working with you!

## NEWS AND EVENTS

**Priestly Ordination of Deacon Anto Prabin CMI:** Deacon Anto Prabin from the Little Flower Church, Pilankalai was ordained a Priest on 1 January 2018. He joined the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate in 2005. I congratulate and wish him all the blessings and greetings for the future ministry.

**Blessing of St Alphonsa Women Hostel:** The SABS Sisters constructed a hostel for women at Soosaipuram. The hostel was blessed on 6 January 2018. The hostel is primarily meant to look after the students, who are studying at St Alphonsa Arts and Science College, Soosaipuram. I encourage you, dear Fathers, to speak about the hostel facility that is available for girls in our College when you encourage them to take admissions.

**Inauguration of the Eparchy of Shamshabad:** The Eparchy of Shamshabad in Telengana State is the thirty first Diocese of the Syro-Malabar Church in India. On 7 January 2018 with a Holy Mass, Mar Raphael Thattil was installed as its first Bishop.

55 Bishops from across India, including Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, Head of the Syro-Malabar Church, Mar Baselios Cardinal Clemis, Head of the Syro-Malankara Church, took part in the event. Officials from Vatican, Priests, nuns and lay people from across the country participated in the programme.

The territory of Shamshabad Diocese comprises of 23 States of India. It excludes all the existing SMC Dioceses outside Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Mar Thattil will serve about 1,20,000 faithful spread across 100 cities in the country. The Eparchy has 11 functional Churches. Seven Churches are under construction. It has around 88 Priests and a large number of nuns. We congratulate Mar Thattil and his people.

**Syro-Malabar Synod:** The Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church was held from 8-13 January 2018. There were 54 Bishops present for the Synod. With gratitude to God, the Synod thanked the Holy Father for granting all India Jurisdiction to the Syro-Malabar Church. This great decision of the Universal Church led the Synod to reconsider and set priorities for mission work in the new territories. The Bishops spent much of their time in discussing and formulating strategies for mission work. This awareness must be given among the faithful in Kerala and the Synod decided to invite volunteers to work in the missions

including Priests and Religious.

The Synod culminated with the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the granting of Archiepiscopal Church Status on 13 January 2018.

**Feast of Devasahayam Pillai at Nattalam:** As in last year, during the feast of Devasagayam Pillai, we celebrated a Syro-Malabar Qurbana at Nattalam, the birth place of Blessed Devasagayam Pillai on 14 January 2018 at 4.00pm. Priests belong to the Soosaipuram Forane and a large number of people participated in the celebration. Along with Curia members and Rev. Fr Antony Jose, I celebrated Holy Qurbana. I thank Rev. Fr Antony Jose for organizing the programme. I thank the Sisters and the faithful for their participation.

**KKSSS Day Celebration:** The Annual Day of Kanyakumari Social Service Society was held on 14 January 2018. A short public programme was organised in which all the staff, well-wishers and associates of KKSSS took part. During the programme, Ms. Sudha from Holy Family Church Malaicode was awarded *Sevai Nayahi* for her outstanding social and charitable works that she is carrying out in the Eparchy through KKSSS. On this occasion, a spoken English book titled *Learn English Cheerfully* that Rev. Fr Saji Elambasseril prepared was released. I congratulate and appreciate the KKSSS team for their hard work.

**Sinai Theological Institute:** As it was informed, the Sinai Theological Institute (STI) of Thuckalay is going to be functional as a full-fledged theological faculty for the lay people soon. The Theological Institute will become the faith formation organ of the Eparchy and it will teach theology and Church history to the people. It is meant to inculcate love for the Church among the people through the study of Church history, theology, liturgy and Church traditions. The faculty members conducted awareness classes for all the interested candidates Forane-wise and explained to them the formalities regarding the entire study programme on 28 January 2018. I congratulate and thank Rev. Fr Christudas, Director of the Institute, and the Faculty members for giving awareness classes for the people.

**Bible Fest:** After the Forane level Bible Fest competitions for Catechism children, the Diocesan level competitions were held on 15 January 2018. In the diocesan level competition, Holy Family Church, Arukani won the first prize and Little Flower Church, Manjalumoodu won the second prize and Christ the King Church, Christurajapuram won the third prize. The Forane-wise teachers' competition was held at Padanthalumoodu on 26 January 2018. Under the leadership of Rev. Fr Alex Puthettu, Director of Catechism Department, all the Forane Catechism Directors, promoters and teachers planned painstakingly to organise these competitions. Presence of many Fathers gave great enthusiasm and happiness to the participants. Thank you dear Fathers.

**Silver Jubilee of Karunai Illam:** Karunai Illam, a unit of KKSSS, was begun in 1992 with the aim of looking after the physically challenged children. It has now turned out to be a home and school for the mentally challenged children. The Institution has completed 25 years of service. As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, a Holy Qurbana was celebrated on 17 January 2018. After the Holy Eucharist, a new stage and a play ground at Karunai Illam were blessed. The conclusion of the Jubilee celebration was held on 20 January 2018. I congratulate and thank Rev. Fr Sanil and all the ASMI Sisters for having organized the celebrations well.

**TNBC Meeting:** The Tamil Nadu Bishops Council was held from 24-25 January 2018 at St Thomas Mount, Chennai. 20 Bishops took part in the half yearly meeting. Mar Sebastian Pazhayoliparambil, Bishop of Hosur, was formally welcomed as he was attending the meeting for the first time. There was a

concelebrated Holy Eucharist at the St Thomas National Shrine in the evening. After the mass, the new Latin Tamil Missal was released.

**New Bishops:** During the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, new Bishops were announced for the Eparchies of Idukki in Kerala and Sagar in Madhya Pradesh. Rev. Fr John Nellikunnel, till now secretary of the corporate education agency of the Eparchy of Idukki, was nominated as the Bishop of the Eparchy of Idukki.

Pope Francis, on the recommendation of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, has appointed Rev. Fr James Athikalam as the new Bishop of the Eparchy of Sagar. He was the Director of the Nirmal Jyothi Mental Health Programme in Bhopal. We congratulate the newly elected shepherds.

### INFORMATION

- ❖ **Diocesan Bible Convention:** The next Diocesan Annual Bible Convention will be held on **10 and 11 February 2018**. This is meant to prepare the people for the great Lent.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Jose Vayalil will return to his parish on 1 February 2018.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Anil Raj is attending a five-month course in printing technology at SIGA, Chennai. In his absence, Rev. Fr John Joseph will assist the Kattathurai parish while continuing his ministry at Mathapuram.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Jimmy's grandmother passed away on 27 January at the age of 103. We express our condolences and prayers to Fr Jimmy and his family members
- ❖ The CMC Sisters celebrated their Province Day on 20 January 2018.
- ❖ For your information that I am going for the CBCI Meeting at Bangalore and Jubilee Celebration in Kalyan, so that I will be absent in the Eparchy from 1-13 February 2018.

### FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES


01-10 February 2018	- CBCI Meeting at Bangalore
09 February 2018	- 5 <sup>th</sup> Death anniversary of Fr. Philip Kodiyanthara
10-11 February 2018	- Bible Convention at Kalluvilai
12 February 2018	- Ash Monday
14 February 2018	- Priests' Conference
17 February 2018	- Home Day at Minor Seminary at Mukkoottukal
20 February 2018	- Inter-diocesan Meet

### CONCLUSION

We are entering the holy season of Lent on 12 February 2018. During the Holy Qurbana, we pray: "Through fasting, prayer and repentance, let us please Christ and his Father." Let us thank God for this time of Lent. As we enter into this discipline, let us God to show us what we need to see in order that we may more fully follow the Gospel. Let us seek to be filled, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit so that we can overcome temptations in our own lives just as Jesus overcame the temptations in the desert. Let us also ask for the grace to be effective in our ministries as we take up on ourselves the Lenten discipline.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



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Bishop of Thuckalay

