

4 September 2013

My dear Fathers,

Fraternal Greetings from the Bishop's House! On 16 September, I will complete one year of my Episcopal ministry in the Diocese. During the past one year, we have moved ahead with fresh vigour and enthusiasm in the pursuit of the goals of our Diocese. It is really heartening to see the spirit of hard work and dedication that is prevalent in all our Parishes and Centres, despite the many constraints that you face, especially with regard to resources that are needed to achieve the expected results. I thank you for your understanding. We need to trust in Divine Providence. I want to remind you once again of my motto: **With God all things are possible (Mt 19:26)**. The visits to the different Parishes and Institutions were humbling experiences for me. I was able to see for myself your missionary zeal. You are able to move ahead valiantly in the face of oppositions of all types from within and from without. Through your ministry, you give a fresh meaning and identity to our common Priestly ministry. I am grateful to you dear Fathers for your love, respect, cooperation and support. I appreciate the sense of unity that you display among you. May God continue to bless each one of you, all our Religious Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, and the Faithful!

UCC – ANNUAL CONVENTION 2013

The United Christian Council organized a day-long programme on 9 August 2013 that brought together all the Christian groups on a common platform. The theme of the programme was UNITY. Everyone appreciated the initiatives taken by the CSI Church in organising the convention. Thanks to Mr Sounder Raj and the group of young people for representing the diocese.

BLESSING OF PLANKALAI CHURCH

The newly renovated Church at Plankalai was blessed on 9 August 2013. For many years, the need was felt to renovate the Church and finally the work was undertaken nearly 6 months ago with the active cooperation and collaboration of all the Parishioners and well-wishers. The ceremony of blessing was held at 3 pm. I presided over the celebration of the eucharist. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam and Fr. Peter Kizhakkeil were the concelebrants. Many Fathers, Sisters and Faithful took part in the celebration. The blessing coincided with the Golden Jubilee and inauguration of the Church Feast with *Kodiyettu* and the blessing of the new *Kodimaram*. The whole ceremony was solemn and meaningful. I wish to thank Rev. Fr Josy Puthenpurakal and all the Faithful for making this dream a reality.

BLESSING OF THE PRESBYTERY

At last the Jayamatha Forane Church, Nithravilai has a Presbytery. It was in Nithravilai that the first Syro-Malabar Church was built in the district of Kanyakumari. Hence, it was the dream of all the Parishioners to replace the old and dilapidated Presbytery with a new one. The work began nearly 7 months ago and was blessed on 15 August 2013. All the Priests from the Nithravilai Forane were present along with the Curia members. The Presbytery has all the basic amenities with three self-contained rooms, office, kitchen, etc. We thank Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Parish Priest, and all the Parishioners and well-wishers for working hard towards the completion of this project.

PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS SANGAMAM

On 15 August all the Fathers and Religious working in the Diocese came together at Padanthalumoodu Parish. The gathering was appreciated by everyone. All got opportunities to meet the members of various Religious Congregations and converse with them. Rev. Fr Robins Kuzhikodil organized a short

cultural programme with the help of the students of Sacred Heart Matriculation Higher Secondary School. This was followed by the felicitation talks delivered by Rev. Sr Celia, Provincial FCC Congregation and Rev. Sr Viji, Regional Superior, CMC Congregations. The short gathering came to an end with an agape meal. The gathering was an occasion for all to witness the strength of Thuckalay Diocese and to thank God for sending such a large number of workers into His vineyard. We thank Rev. Fr Robins, Rev. Fr Prince Malayil and the Religious and Faithful of Padanthalumoodu Parish for organizing such a significant gathering. We hope to continue such programmes in the future. Thanks to all the Sisters and Fathers for sparing their time and to be part of this programme.

HOME MISSION

Home Mission is a means for the spiritual renewal of the Diocese, Parish and individual families. We need to seriously prepare for this spiritual event through our prayers. Let us allow ourselves and our Faithful be touched by God. The following Sisters have volunteered to conduct the Home Mission in our Diocese:

1. Rev. Sr Lysa FCC
2. Rev. Sr Alphy ASMI
3. Rev. Sr Anni James SH
4. Rev Sr Elsit SABS
5. Rev Sr Gorrethi SH
6. Rev. Sr Christy CMC

I thank their provincials for allowing the Sisters to animate the Diocese spiritually.

As I had mentioned to you earlier, we begin the Home Mission first in Padanthalumoodu Forane beginning with:

1. Padanthalumoodu Parish
2. Kunnuvilai Parish
3. Thettiyode Parish
4. Athencode Parish
5. Annikarai Parish
6. Kazhuvanthittai Parish
7. Kuzhithurai Parish

The Home Mission will begin from 15 September 2013. The preparation for Home Mission has already begun. We have composed a special prayer in order to prepare the Faithful spiritually and the Sisters have already started special adoration services for the success of the Mission. I request all of you to announce well in advance in your Parishes about this spiritual exercise to all the Faithful. I am writing a Pastoral Letter to our Faithful in this regard, which should be read in all the Padanthalumoodu Forane Parishes on 8 September 2013. The exact dates for other Parishes will be sent to you later. I have appointed **Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam**, our VG, to be the Director of Home Mission. You can contact him for further information. It goes without saying that during the Home Mission we all need to be present in the Parish.

YOUNG PRIESTS' MEET

The young Priests of the Diocese gathered together at Sangamam on 24 September 2013 for a day of prayer, reflection and sharing. The programme was animated by Rev. Fr Tom Kunnumpuram, the Rector of the Minor Seminary. The session on 'Life in the Holy Spirit' was an enriching experience for the participants. Everyone appreciated the personal sharing that encouraged one another to continue with zeal their Priestly ministries. I am grateful to Rev. Fr Tom and our VG for organizing this programme for our young Priests. I thank all the participants for attending the programme especially the Fathers

from Sengottai. The following Fathers could not take part in the meeting due to ill health and B. Ed classes: Fr Shojo, Fr Sajan, Fr Alex Puthettu and Fr John Paul.

ORIENTATION COURSE FOR NEW BISHOPS

There will be an orientation course for all the new Bishops in Rome organized by the Congregation for Oriental Churches. The course will begin on 10 September and will end on 19 September. I will be leaving the Diocese to attend this course on 5 September and will return to the Diocese on 9 October. After the course, I am planning to meet some agencies to request financial support for the Diocese. I ask you to pray for the success of these meetings. The financial situation of Europe is very grim. You can contact me through my email or in emergency please call **Mobile: +39-334.85.35.296** (Rev. Fr Maria Anthuvan). In my absence Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, our VG, will see to the normal running of the Diocese. I am attaching a copy of my Europe programme.

NEW SYRO-MALABAR BISHOPS

The Syro-Malabar Church has two more new Bishops: Rev. Fr Joseph Kollampampil, as the Bishop of Jagdalpur Diocese, whose Episcopal ordination will be held on 17 September 2012, and Rev. Fr Jose Puthenveetil as the Auxiliary Bishop of Ernakulam-Angamali Archdiocese. His Episcopal Ordination will be held on Saturday, 21 September 2013 at St Mary's Basilica, Ernakulum at 2.30 p.m. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam will represent the Diocese for both these ordinations. If anyone wants to go for the ordination of Bishop-designate Jose Puthenveetil you are welcome. Kindly inform the VG regarding your participation.

The Diocese of Thuckalay congratulates these two Bishops and wishes them God's blessings. With these two new Bishops, the Syro-Malabar Church has now 51 Bishops.

CONDOLENCES

Mr Alex Puthenpurakal, the younger brother of Rev. Fr Josy Puthenpurakal met with an accident on 17 September and passed away. It was a very painful experience for the family to accept it. On 18 September, along with Rev. Fr. Tom Kunumpuram, I visited the bereaved family and prayed for the departed soul. Many Fathers, Sisters, Catechism teachers and Faithful along with our VG were present for the funeral. We express our deepest feeling of condolence to Fr Josy and to his family members. May God comfort the family and give the departed soul eternal rest!

Rev. Sr Betty CMC passed away on 26 September 2013 in Changanacherry. She was a pioneer missionary in our Diocese and established many religious and Christian communities. We express our condolences!

SYRO-MALABAR BISHOPS' SYNOD

The Syro-Malabar Bishops' XXII Synod, Session 2 was held from 19 - 31 August 2013. Forty eight Bishops attended the Synod. It was moment of grace and blessing for our Church. The entire procedure was intense but participatory. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Bishops held discussions on many matters pertaining to the Church. As a young participant, it was an enriching experience for me to be part of the Synod.

HEALTH BULLETIN

1. Rev. Fr Alex Puthettu was complaining of knee pain for long time and underwent a surgery in Kothamangalam hospital. At the moment, he is resting at home.
2. Rev. Fr Sanjan and Rev. Fr Kurian Koipuram are still at home taking treatment and rest.

3. Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil is resting in Sengottai missions. After two weeks he will be going back to Hyderabad for artificial eye treatment.
4. Rev. Fr. John Thekkeil was in the hospital for some time and now he is back to Sangamam
5. Two minor seminarian brothers are admitted in St. Joseph Hospital, Panachamoodu

Lets continue to remember and pray for all the sick fathers and brothers.

INFORMATION

1. Our annual retreat will be held from 21-25 October. Rev. Fr Mani Puthiydam, Parish Priest of Athirampuzha will animate the retreat. Kindly make yourself free from all the activities on these days to attend the retreat.
2. The inter-province meet will be held this time in our Diocese on 14 October 2013.
3. Kindly submit the *Sabhadinam* collection to Rev. Fr Mathew Muzhagacherry, Procurator. We are asked to hand over the amount to Kakanad as early as possible.
4. Mission Sunday, this year, falls on 20 October. All are encouraged to commemorate this day. Our Diocese is a mission Diocese. Hence, it will be highly appreciated if Parishes take some resolutions and initiate some activities to support the missionary work in the Diocese. A special collection should be taken on this day, which will be sent to Rome.
5. The monthly allowance is raised to Rs. 6500/-from August on wards, the same should be taken from the respective parishes. The mess fee will be Rs. 2000/-
6. As you know, we have been thinking of establishing a Higher Educational institution our Diocese for many years; may be this is a right moment God has given to us. We are seriously thinking of beginning an Arts and Science College in Soosaipuram. The official name will be ST. ALPHONSA ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE. I requested Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuparambil and Rev. Fr. Antony Jose to initiate the basic requirements including the papers works etc. I request every one of you to pray for this new venture. I will let you know the detail of the project when we have the next priests' conference on 25th October after the annual spiritual retreat.
7. September 15, 2013 is to be observed as Catechism Day in our parishes. All the parish priests with the help of Headmasters/Headmistress are to prepare some special programs on this day for the children. That day's collection and special offering should be sent to the catechism office.

CONCLUSION

We are approaching the Feast of the Nativity of Our Blessed Mother. Since 8 September falls on Sunday this year, some of our parishes are celebrating their parish Feast on this day. Let me wish each one of you a very Happy Feast of our Blessed Mother. As true devotees of our Mother, let us reflect briefly upon this important Marian Feast. It is true that the Scripture does not give an account of Mary's birth. However, the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* fills in the gap. This work has no historical value, but it does reflect the development of Christian piety. According to this account, Anna and Joachim were infertile but prayed for a child. They received the promise of a child who will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. Such a story stresses the special presence of God in Mary's life from the beginning.

St Augustine connects Mary's birth with Jesus' saving work. He tells the earth to rejoice and shine forth in the light of her birth. "She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious lily of the valley. Through her birth the nature inherited from our first parents is changed." The opening prayer at Mass speaks of the birth of Mary's Son as the dawn of our salvation and asks for an increase of peace. May Our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ,

+ George Rajendran sdb
Bishop of Thuckalay