



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb
Diocese of Thuckalay

Bishop's House, P B No: 12, Thuckalay PO,
Kanya kumari Dt- 629 175, Tamil Nadu, India

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31 August 2018

Dear and Reverend Fathers,

In the month of September, we celebrate one of the important feasts of Blessed Virgin Mary. The Nativity of Mother Mary falls on 8 September. The Gospel writers have not transmitted to us anything about the birth of Virgin Mary. Their attention is completely centred on the mystery of Christ and his salvific mission. The only documented source that we have is the *Proto-evangelium* of James, an apocryphal gospel written towards the end of the second century. From the *Proto-evangelium* of James (5:2), we learn about the birth of Mary and the names of Mary's parents, namely, Joachim and Ann. It also speaks about the tradition that the couple was childless until an angel appeared to Ann and told her that she would conceive. Though the work has no historical value, it reflects a long held belief in the eastern and western Churches.

Origin of the Feast

The origin of the Feast is to be sought in Palestine. It goes back to the consecration of a church in Jerusalem, which tradition identifies as the present Basilica of St Ann. In Rome, the Feast began to be kept towards the end of the 7th century. Gradually, it spread to the other parts of the Western Church. From the 13th century onwards, the celebration assumed notable importance and it became a Solemnity with an Octave and a Vigil. The Octave is celebrated as fast. The traditional date of the feast, 8 September, falls exactly nine months after the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Importance of the Feast

In the case of Saints, the Church commemorates their birthdays on the days of their return to the Lord. However, in the cases of St John the Baptist and Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church also celebrates the days of their earthly birth. The reason for this is not because of the greatness or the privileges of the persons involved but because of the singular mission that they undertook in the History of Salvation. The birth of the Blessed Virgin is to be considered - like that of St John the Baptist - in direct relationship with the coming of the Saviour into the world. Thus, the birth and existence of Mary take on a new significance that transcends her own person. It is explained solely in the context of the History of Salvation. Mary's birth lies at the confluence of two Testaments - bringing to an end the

stage of expectation and the promises, and inaugurating the new times of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Mary, the Daughter of Zion and ideal personification of Israel, is the last and worthiest representative of the People of the Old Covenant but at the same time she is “the hope and the dawn of the whole world.” With her, the times are fulfilled and a new economy is established (LG 55). The birth of Mary is ordained particularly towards her mission as Mother of the Saviour. Her existence is indissolubly connected with that of Christ. She partakes in the unique plan of grace. God’s mysterious plan regarding the incarnation of the Word embraces also the Virgin who is His Mother. In this way, the birth of Mary is inserted at the very heart of the History of Salvation.

It is a fact that every human birth is a call for new hope in the world. This is true in a magnificent way in the case of Mary. If Jesus has brought the fullness of salvation, Mary is its dawn. Next to the birth of Jesus, Mary’s birth offers greatest possible happiness to the world. Each time we celebrate her birth, we can confidently hope for an increase of peace in our hearts and in the world at large.

Eight Days of Lent

As the spiritual preparation to the feast of the Nativity of Mary, in our Church we have the custom of observing the *Ettu Noyambu* or eight days of Lent beginning from 1 September and ending on 8 September with special prayers in honour of Our Lady. During this period, we are expected to recite rosaries, undertake charitable activities, etc. This year we have special intentions. On 13 August 2018, an Inter-Eparchial meeting was held at Pala in order to discuss the pastoral coordination of various departments among the Eparchies which come under the Archdiocese of Changanacherry. Archbishop, Bishops and representative from the four Eparchies, namely, Changanacherry, Kanjirapally, Pala and Thuckalay, participated in this meeting. During the meeting, it was decided to celebrate the eight days of Lent for two major intentions: **to pray for the State of Kerala where our brothers and sisters are suffering due to the great deluge** and **to pray for the Church in India, which is going through great sufferings due to the rising fundamentalism and intolerance.**

I request you, dear Fathers, to instruct all our faithful to focus on the spiritual renewal of the Church both at the personal level and at the parish level. At the parish level, I request you, to conduct adorations, recitation of rosaries, and Holy Qurbana during these days. Kindly instruct the faithful to have daily meditation of the Word of God, to make a good Confession, to participate daily in the Holy Qurbana, to have some devotions to Mother Mary, to engage in charitable activities, to undertake fasting and to practise some forms of penance. I suggest that these eight days be spend just as we spend the days of major Lenten season. The Eparchy has given concrete directions as to how to coordinate the eight days of Lent at parish level below.

Heavy Floods in Kerala and Thuckalay's Response

The State of Kerala is facing the region's worst deluge of the century. I was happy that our Eparchy was able to participate and share in the sufferings of our brethren by offering our unending prayers and providing relief materials in the early stages of the floods. The torrential rains accompanied by flooding and landslides, caused loss of lives, displacement of people and extensive damages to houses and property. Over 400 people lost their lives, more than 7.8 lakh people lived in relief camps, more than 10,000 houses were washed away and around 30,000 houses were partly damaged. Many areas in Kerala continued to receive heavy downpour for many days hampering rescue works.

Among the victims, we have the families and relatives of priests, nuns and brothers working in our Eparchy. I thank whole heartedly, all of you, dear Fathers, for your prayers and generous contributions to support the victims of floods. On 12 and 19 August 2018, at Eparchial level, we collected the Sunday offerings. Our schools and institutions have generously come forward to support the cause. Again on 19 and 20 August we were able to collect various articles such as food, clothing, stationery items, fruits, vegetables, bakery items, etc. I could feel the active and generous participation of Eparchial community - priests, nuns, brothers, members of pious associations, departments, School children, etc. in providing materials for the people of Kerala. We sent all these materials to parts of Idukki, Changanacherry and Kuttanad. I was able to witness the genuine love that our people exhibited during these days. Even a one-rupee coin that was collected became valuable. I appreciate all the initiatives that the priests, nuns and the faithful took in order to help Kerala in this moment of crisis. Let us continue to offer our prayers and services to the victims of flood.

A similar situation we experienced in Kanyakumari district too. Due to heavy rainfall, all the reservoir dams were opened and some of the villages and towns were inundated. Many homes in Munchirai and Varuthattu areas were affected.

The Challenges of Indian Church

The Church is facing various kinds of persecutions and attacks in different parts of the country. We should be aware of these attacks especially when it happens through the social media. Social media is a gift of God but the filthy and unholy way of using it destroys social harmony and respect. People in a large numbers misuse the freedom of expression through the social media disregarding the sensibilities of others. The recent scandals involving priests have shaken the faith of many people. All those who are culpable need to be punished under the law of the land. Unfortunately, in the social media, instead of focusing on specific issues, some are attacking the whole institution. It could be part of a hidden agenda to tarnish the image of Christianity.

I suggest that during the **eight days of Lent**, let us keep the following spiritual practices and pray for the twin intentions that we have proposed.

- From 1-6 September, let the parishes organize rosary services, benediction and Holy Qurbana.

- On 7 September, the parishes can have a long period of adoration. This could be followed by rosary and Holy Qurbana.
- On 8 September, let us celebrate the birthday of Bless Virgin with due solemnity.

May our Blessed Mother intercede for the suffering people of Kerala and for the Church in India!

NEWS AND EVENTS

DOCAT – Dream of Pope Francis: Pope Francis wanted the young people all over the world to embody the Church’s social teaching through their lives. DOCAT is the result of this dream of Pope Francis. It is a personal gift of Pope Francis to the pilgrims of World Youth Day held at Krakow in 2016. It contains guidelines for life. Its content is both Biblical and ecclesial. Pope Francis places his trust in young people who have the strength to change the world for the better.

DOCAT assumes great significance today in the context of the Synod on Youth, which is going to take place from 3-28 October 2018 with the theme, “Young People, the Faith and the Vocational Discernment.” The forthcoming World Youth Day in Panama to be held from 22-27 January 2018, with the theme “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38) also highlights the importance of DOCAT.

The TCYM, the youth movement of our Eparchy, had decided to organize classes on DOCAT for our youth some time back. We conducted a camp in the month of January for three days, where 72 of our young people were trained in DOCAT. Today in more than 15 parishes, classes are held on DOCAT every Sunday. The Youth Department intends to begin classes in all our parishes in the coming months so that all our young people understand and value DOCAT.

Hence, dear Fathers, I invite you to take an active part in promoting DOCAT in your respective parishes by providing the necessary infrastructure and facilities for conducting the Sunday classes in DOCAT. Rev. Fr Santhosh, our Youth Director, will approach you soon. The classes are mostly taken by the trained youth. Therefore, it’s our responsibility to welcome them in our parishes and encourage them. This exercise has two important goals:

- To form a younger generation who will bear witness to Christ in their daily life with their strong leadership.
- To create a positive atmosphere in the parish, where the youth can realize their true self by creating positive vibrations in the society.

St John Maria Vianney Day Celebrations: St John Maria Vianney Day has been observed in the Eparchy as the Priests’ Day for the past many years. This year, the celebration was held on 4 August at St Mary’s Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal. The celebration began with the Eucharistic Adoration. Thereafter a friendly volley ball match was conducted between Fathers and Brothers. The Fathers won the match. The Brothers of the Minor Seminary organised a felicitation programme. I congratulate all the Fathers for taking part in the celebrations. I also thank Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, Rector and Rev.

Fr Sumesh Valliyamthadathil, Procurator of the Seminary and all the Brothers for organizing the programme well.

Vellampi Mission: The Mission at Vellampi, started in 2008, completes 10 years. Rev. Fr Vinu D Joseph is in-charge of this mission. I visited the mission on 12 August 2018 and celebrated Holy Qurbana. We remembered late Fr Philip Kodiyanthara who celebrated his last Holy Qurbana before his tragic accident. We are having the liturgical celebrations in a private family. Recently the house was renovated for our celebration. We are also extending our educational and developmental programmes to help the people of Vellampi.

Inter-Eparchial Meeting at Pala: The Inter-Eparchial meeting held on 13 August 2018 at Bharananganam, Pala. The meeting started at 11am and ended with moments of prayer near the tomb of St Alphonsa at 1.30 pm. All the Bishops, namely, Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Mar Mathew Arackal, Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, Mar George Rajendran sdb, Emeritus Mar Joseph Pallikparampil, Mar Tomy Thadathil and Mar Mathew Murickan were present for the meeting along with the Directors of various departments of the Eparchies. The influence of media and its attack on the Syro-Malabar Church was discussed in this meeting. It was felt that the people need to be made aware of the negative influence that the media can play in their spiritual lives. To this end, it was decided to organise seminars. It was also decided to observe in a special way the *Ettunonpu*, from 1 to 8 September, as days of prayer days for the Church.

St Alphonsa Mathematics National Seminar: Mathematics Department of St Alphonsa College conducted a national Seminar on 14 August 2018. Many colleges from in and around Kanyakumari district took part in the seminar. I addressed the students at the inaugural function highlighting the need to cultivate a sharp mind and a compassionate heart. After the inaugural function, the invited resource persons delivered lectures. Various types of inter-college competitions based on mathematics were held.

Blessing of Renovated Killiyoor Church: The altar and the interior of the Killiyoor Deva Matha Church are very beautifully renovated, thanks to the hard work of Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh and parishioners. I consecrated the altar and blessed the renovated church on 15 August 2018. Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan, Chancellor, and Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Parish Priest concelebrated with me. A number of priests, religious and parishioners were present and their presence gave a spiritual ambience to the entire celebration. I congratulate and thank Rev. Fr Santhosh and the parishioners for their hard work in beautifying the temple of God.

Visit of Rt Rev. Dennis Panipichai SDB: The recently consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Diocese of Miao, Rt Rev. Dennis Panipichai sdb was given a warm welcome in the Bishop's House on 16 August 2018. Rt Rev. Jeromedas SDB, Bishop of Kuzhithurai, Rev. Fr Joseph Antony SDB, Salesian Provincial of Trichy and Rev. Fr Arun OCD, Provincial of Trichy, were present. Some of our priests and religious also came to felicitate the Bishop. Bishop Dennis hails from the parish of Colechal in the

diocese of Kottar. He is a Salesian and belongs to Dimapur province. We wish him God's blessings in his new ministry.

Kerala Floods: We are all very much concerned and aware of the Kerala Floods that the monsoon rain caused. The gesture of solidarity among our people is unique. The Latin Catholics belonging to the fishing community saved thousands of people. The Christians opened the doors of their churches and schools. They walked shoulder to shoulder with others eating, sleeping and helping one another. I could see and witness the support that people from different walks of life extended to one another.

Our Eparchy also helped the flood victims by distributing food, medicine and clothes collected from different sources. I sincerely thank all the parishioners, school children and their families, priests and religious for your generous help. Rev. Fr Vinod Kanakalil, Rev. Fr Printo Kurias, Rev. Fr Jose Vayalil and Rev. Fr Linslal distributed the materials in Idduki on 20, 21 and 22 August 2018. Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan, Rev. Fr Jinu Thekkethalackal, Rev. Fr Subin Puthenpurackal and Rev. Fr Anil Raj distributed them in Changanassery. Mar Joseph Perumthottam and Rev. Fr Joseph Mundakathil and Directors of the CHASS expressed their gratitude. They were very proud to receive help from their own mission diocese. I sincerely thank the coordinators Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Fr. Dency Mundunadackal, Rev. Fr. Johnsilal, Rev. Fr. Antony Jose, Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, Rev. Fr. Tobin Alapurackal, and Rev. Fr. Robins Kuzhukodiyil.

A team of skilled labours are engaged in cleaning, repairing the houses and also giving medical care service at Thekkekara, organised by KKSSS on 1 and 2 September. I will personally visit some affected areas and on 2 September and will celebrate Holy Qurbana at Thekkekara parish and take part in the relief activities. Dear Fathers, I thank each and every one of you for taking the efforts to collect money and materials from the parishes and institutions. Kindly submit the money collected from the Schools to Rev. Fr Johnsilal and from the parishes to Rev. Fr Dency as early as possible.

New Mission in Shenkottai: We have begun a new mission in Sundarapandiyapuram, Shenkottai. The apostolate of our Eparchy is extended to different parts of our territory. I congratulate all the missionaries in Shenkottai especially Rev. Fr John Paul for his effort in finding out the people and bringing them together. Rev. Fr John Paul has already baptised some of the people from this area. The baptism ceremony took place at Puthur, Shenkottai on 22 July 2018. I wish them God's blessings.

Thirunelveli Mission: Rev. Fr Ginoy Thottiyil and Rev. Fr Alex Puthettu are in Tirunelveli. They brought together the dispersed Syro-Malabar families and are now celebrating Holy Qurbana on Sundays on a regular basis. There are more than 40 faithful attending the Sunday Holy Qurbana. We appreciate the missionary zeal and commitment of our Fathers at Tirunelveli. Let us continue to pray for them.

On-going Formation for Junior Priests: This year the on-going formation programme for Junior Priests (batches 2014-2018) will be held on 13 and 14 September 2018. In my personal letter to each of the junior Priests I had mentioned the details of the programme.

The resource person is Mar Jose Puthenveetil, auxiliary bishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly. He was a professor of many of our fathers at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary Vadavathoor. I feel, he can guide you effectively during the days of animation.

The participants are:

Number	Name	Ordination	Remark
1	Fr Linslal Mangalath	28-04-2014	
2	Fr Seby Manimalakandathil	28-04-2014	
3	Fr Jinu Thekkethalackal	13-09-2014	
4	Fr Shoji Puthenpurackal	06-04-2015	
5	Fr Ajeesh Attiyil	06-04-2015	
6	Fr Jose Vayalil	07-04-2015	
7	Fr Printo Kurias	08-04-2015	
8	Fr Abin Poovathummoottil	08-04-2015	Chennai
9	Fr Vinod Kanakalil	09-04-2015	
10	Fr Sumesh Valliyamthadathil	11-04-2015	
11	Fr. Anil Raj Dominic	01-04-2016	
12	Fr Ajin Jose	02-04-2016	
13	Fr Justin Sutheesh	02-04-2016	
14	Fr Vinu Joseph	19-04-2017	
15	Fr John Joseph	20-04-2017	
16	Fr John (Subin) Scaria Puthenpurackal	02-04-2018	
17	Fr Thomas Jebanesh	07-04-2018	

Theology Diploma course: The three year Theology Course conducted by Sinai Theological Centre (STC) on Sundays at Sangamam is going on exceptionally well. Thirty three students regularly attend the course and benefit from it. Rev. Fr Christudas is the director, along with him our trained priests from the diocese and neighbouring dioceses are in the faculty. As we have announced earlier, soon we are also thinking of beginning a two year Diploma course in Theology for all those who are interested in learning Bible, Liturgy, Church History, Catholic tradition etc. Though it is open to all, we are mostly aiming at our Catechism teachers. The classes will be on two Sundays (First and Fourth Sundays) in a month, from 2.30pm to 5.30pm. The notice has already reached in your parish. I request all of you to positively promote this course in your parish and encourage all the Catechism teachers, at least a few numbers, every year from your parish.

INFORMATION

❖ **Rev. Fr Josy Puthenpurackal** is in Kerala and in our Eparchy for vacation. He landed in Kerala on 2 August 2018. He will leave for Germany on 5 September 2018. We wish him God's blessings and happy stay with us.

- ❖ **2 September 2018** will be celebrated as Communication Day in our Eparchy. The Sunday collection of that day will be used for the upkeep of Matha TV. Kindly inform our people and ask them to contribute generously towards this cause.
- ❖ **The Priests and Religious Sangamam** will be held on **29 September 2018** at St Little Flower Church, Pilankalai, Azhahiyamandapam. I request all the Fathers and Sisters to mark this date and to participate in this programme. During the programme, those who are celebrating their Silver or Golden jubilees of their ordination or religious profession will be honoured.
- ❖ Due to the heavy floods in Kerala the August Session of the **Syro-Malabar Synod** is postponed to January 2019.
- ❖ **As we know, Rev. Fr Mathew Kuzhinjalil** who had joined the Benedictine religious order has now returned to the Eparchy as a permanent member. We warmly welcome Fr Mathew, the great missionary of our Eparchy. I am sure his presence and ministry in the Eparchy will give more impetus to our missionary activities. Fr Mathew is appointed as the Spiritual Father in the Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal. We wish him God's blessing.
- ❖ **The next inter-Eparchial meeting** will be held in our Eparchy on 19 November 2018. I request all the heads of departments and pious association to take note of the date and attend the meeting. The main theme will be "Thuckalay Mission in the extended Area."
- ❖ I am happy to announce that Rev. Fr Mathew Mulangasseril MST is supporting the Eparchy financially from the month of August 2018. He is passing on us the proceeds that he gets from the Kozhipporvilai estate. We have decided to invest this money to augment the monthly allowance of our Fathers. We are grateful to Fr. Mathew for the sincere and dedicated work he is doing on behalf of the diocese at Kozhipporvilai.
- ❖ The nine first year brothers from the minor seminary have gone home for a short visit and will return on 5 September 2018.
- ❖ The construction of Deva Matha Garment Unit at Killiyoor is complete. The machinery has been set up. It is now ready for production. The official blessing and inauguration of the unit will be held on 16 September by 5.00 pm. At present, there are 25 staff supervised by a manager work there. We hope that through this garment centre, we would be able to provide job opportunities to the people around. I am grateful to Fr Joseph Santhosh for taking the initiatives and Fr. Dency Mundunadackal for supporting the project on behalf of the diocese.
- ❖ **Prayers Requested** for our Fathers who underwent medical treatment recently for various sicknesses. Let us keep them in our prayers especially Fr Vinod Kanakail, Fr Geo Choozhikunnel and Fr Ajeesh Attiyil.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

13-14 September 2018	- Ongoing Formation for Junior Priests, Sangamam
14 September 2018	- Priests' Conference at 12.00 pm with Adoration, Sangamam
29 September 2018	- Priests and Religious Sangamam at Pilankalai
30-05 October 2018	- Priests' Annual Retreat at Sangamam

Ongoing Formation Course for Junior Priests will be held on 13 and 14 September 2018. It ends with the Priests' Conference.

Priests' Annual Retreat will be held at Sangamam. It begins in the evening **6 pm of 30 October** and ends with adoration and Priests' Conference on **5 October 2018**. Rev. Fr Anil Dev IMS from Varanasi will animate the retreat. You are requested to arrive on 30 September by 5.30 pm at Sangamam. The retreat is mandatory for all the Diocesan and MST priests. The religious priests are welcome to attend. Kindly bring your Mass Account Book.

CONCLUSION

During the month of August, we had come together as fellow workers of the Eparchy to celebrate the St John Maria Vianney Day. This celebration gave us an opportunity to recall our own Priesthood and to resolve to live it like St John Maria Vianney in administering the sacrament especially the sacrament of reconciliation. Let us make use of occasions such as Feasts of patron Saints of our parishes to boost the faith of our people. The Nativity of the Virgin Mary is a wonderful opportunity for it. Let us prepare our people well and celebrate it meaningfully. Kindly keep the mission of the Church and the needs of our Eparchy in your daily prayers.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

