



Ref. No. Priests/GR/58/2016

31 July 2016

Dear and Reverend Fathers,
Greetings from the Bishop's House!

Consecration and Jubilees

We in our diocese celebrate the Silver and Golden Jubilees of our dear fathers and sisters every year and it has now become an established tradition and a regular feature. It is in fact the celebration of the years of commitment and consecration as a religious or a priest in communities, while thanking God for the beautiful vocation he bestows on individuals. Soon we will all gather as a diocese to celebrate the Jubilees of our dear fathers and sisters on 15th of August on the Thanksgiving Day.

'Consecration' literally means setting apart. We religious and priests are a people who are set apart. One may ask why, what is the need to be set apart and for what? Definitely being a priest or a religious has its social implication and in our Indian context it gives almost an elite status. Is this the reason any of us became a religious or a priest?

On the contrary we priests and religious are called to be counter-witnesses to the elitism which we very often are misguided into.

Every priest or religious is called to be more Christ-like. We are living witnesses of the world-to-come. Then the life of a priest or a religious becomes more exacting, demanding, committing to a cause, focusing on the things of the world yet to come, being in the world and yet not of the world. It is committing ourselves to love – to the Love of God and the Love of our Neighbour.

Each of us dear Fathers, as a priest or a religious has committed ourselves to the love of the Lord, so that we will be more like him, the one who called us. We commit ourselves to loving our neighbor as we attempt to experience the God living in him. We do this by vowing to live like Christ in his poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The call to be a religious or a priest is from God. We respond. Our response in other words is cooperation with grace. The grace of God continues to work in and through us in the world and in the context we live and work.

We have often heard the dictum, "God does not call the qualified but qualifies those whom he calls." We are qualified by His grace. If at all we were able to achieve something, perform something, or be faithful to our religious and priestly calling it was only that 'amazing grace.'

Reasons to Celebrate Jubilees

1. What we do then is to rejoice and celebrate for what the grace has been able to achieve in and through us. We celebrate because we have been chosen and are privileged instruments of God's grace.

2. It is a moment when we stop and realize that God has been accompanying us all through. Jesus has been our closest friend. We had been playing the many roles of Martha, Mary or even that of Lazarus. Jesus yet is always happy to be with us and in our midst.
3. The celebration of a jubilee of a religious or priestly commitment is a humble acknowledgment of our calling and God's great trust and his entrustment of his important mission into our fragile hands.
4. It is a moment to look back and acknowledge our moments of failures and infidelities, yet celebrate God's infinite mercy which restores the sonship to the prodigal son. In fact it is the forgiving Father who calls for celebration of the prodigal son, or celebrates the redemption of the lost sheep or the lost coin.
5. Then the jubilee celebration is also a moment of renewal of our commitment to the Lord who calls us.
6. We celebrate not in isolation but in communities and as a diocese. We are not individual achievers, but a community which finds joy in celebrating the mission of the Lord and what the Lord has achieved in a member of the community.

The Jubilee Celebrations on August 15, 2016

We are proud and happy that this year our Vicar General Very Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam and Rev. Fr. Antony Chundelikatt are celebrating their Silver Jubilee of Ordination. Rev. Sr. Alice SABS, Rev. Sr. Graceline Jose SABS, Rev. Sr. Dorethy SH, Rev. Sr. Prescilla SD, Rev. Sr. Celine SDS, Rev. Sr. Sophia SDS, Rev. Sr. Josia SDS, and Rev. Sr. Vianney SDS are celebrating their Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession. The Silver Jubilerians are, Rev. Sr. Mary Latha FCC, Rev. Sr. Rosia FCC, Rev. Sr. Vandhana FCC, Rev. Sr. Jessina FCC, Rev. Sr. Annie Lins CMC, Rev. Sr. Philo Tom CMC, Rev. Sr. Alphonse Jose CMC, Rev. Sr. Salomy SJSM, Rev. Sr. Rosily Arackal DSH, Rev. Sr. Roselin SABS, Rev. Sr. Litty SABS, Rev. Sr. V. Ancy SABS, and Rev. Sr. Rose Martin SABS.

At our Diocese level we will show our love and appreciation for our beloved fathers and sisters as they celebrate their jubilees. We will come together for the Religious Sangamam on 15 August 2016 at Karode. We shall begin the day with Solemn Holy Qurbana thanking the Lord for the Jubilarians and for the gift of their vocation that today enriches our local church. After the Holy Qurbana we will have the recognition awards and appreciation of the Jubilee celebrants and of the religious working in our diocese. I invite everyone to come and participate and acknowledge the dedicated services of the all the religious and the priests.

The programme for the day will be as follows:

09.30 am	-	Holy Qurbana (Parish)
11.00 am	-	Coffee Break
12.00 noon	-	Felicitation Meeting (DNN)
01.00 pm	-	Lunch and Departure

Those who cannot reach Karode by private vehicles, kindly reach Arumanai and a vehicle will be arranged to take you to Karode. Kindly give your names to Rev. Fr. Shoji, Mukkootukal seminary and inform him about the time of your arrival at Arumanai.

NEWS AND EVENTS

1. Seminar on *Amoris Laetitia*

We had a one-day seminar on the Holy Father's Post-Synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* on Love in the Family, on 23rd July, at Sangamam. Rev. Fr. Roby Alencherry, professor at Good Shepherd Major Seminary, Kunnoth and Rev. Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil were our animators. The animators presented within the given time the wealth of thought hidden in the document and clarified our understanding on love in the family. I whole-heartedly thank the animators for exposing the riches of the document and for clarifying our doubts.

I congratulate Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumpuram, Rev. Fr. Ajeesh Attiyil and the Family Apostolate team that coordinated the Seminar day and made it a time of fruitful learning for the participants. I thank and congratulate all the sisters and fathers who had willingly participated and benefited from the seminar.

2. Rev. Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB

We are very happy to welcome Rev. Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB to our diocese. He arrived here on 20th July. He belongs to the Salesian Province of Delhi. He will render his service to the Diocese as the **Director of Resources Management**.

3. Dukhrana Celebrations

The Solemn Feast of St. Thomas was celebrated with due preparations on 3rd July. Kindly submit the collections made on the day to Very Rev. Fr. Dency Mundunadackal, the Finance Officer of our Diocese.

4. The Feast of Alphonsa

The Feast of Alphonsa was celebrated in the Diocese specially solemnized at the St. Alphonsa Shrine at Nagercoil and in the St. Alphonsa College. Novena Days were devoutly attended by our faithful as well as many Catholics from other rites. Holy Masses were also celebrated in Malankara and Latin rites during the novena days. I thank you dear fathers for organizing and bringing people for the annual *eilg;gazzk*; on 30th July.

5. CRI Unit of the Diocese of Thuckalay

I am very happy to announce to you that we have now constituted a unit of the Conference of Religious, India (CRI) of our Diocese. All the leaders of the religious communities met on 29th July 2016. They elected the CRI executive members. Rev. Sr. Celia FCC is elected the president. Rev. Fr. Rony Peedikayil MCBS is the vice-president. Rev. Sr. Rose Martin Thekkumcherikunnel SABS is the Secretary. Rev. Sr. Anu SH is the Joint Secretary. Rev. Sr. Mercy ASMI is the Treasurer. We congratulate the new elected office-bearers and wish everyone the best.

The local conference is meant to strengthen the identity and charism of each institute, deal with matters affecting consecrated life, besides help deal with common affairs, and coordinate and cooperate with the Bishop and the common mission of the

Diocese. The CRI unit of our Diocese will be part of the larger national level conference which is a juridical person and a registered society.

6. Bishop James Pazhayattil passes away

We mourn the death of Mar James Pazhayattil, the first bishop of the Irinjalakuda diocese. He died on 10 July 2016. He shepherded the diocese for 32 years from its beginning in 1978. A man of simple life he was also admired for his works of charity and for reaching out to the marginalized.

7. Episcopal Ordination of Mgr. Kurian Mathew Vayalumkal

Pope Francis had named Mgr. Kurian Vayalumkal as his new Ambassador (Apostolic Nuncio) to Papua New Guinea. The Episcopal ordination of Mar Kurian Mathew Vayalumkal, took place on 25th July. We congratulate and pray for the new Bishop.

8. Two New Bishops for Europe and Great Britain

Pope Francis has appointed two new bishops for the care of the Syro-Malabar Christians in Europe. Mgr. Joseph Srampickal of the Pala diocese has been appointed bishop of the newly-formed diocese in Britain. Mgr. Stephen Chirapanath of the Irinjalakuda diocese has been appointed Apostolic Visitor to the whole Europe. We congratulate the newly appointed Bishops and we support them with our prayers.

9. Canonization of Mother Theresa

The canonization of Blessed Mother Theresa will take place in Rome on 4th September. Even during her life as she ministered to the sick and the dying and cared for the destitute, she was called the living saint. We are happy and we thank God for this saint God gives to the church.

Fr. Tom Kunnumpuram will be attending the Canonization ceremony and he will be representing our diocese. Fr. Saji Elembasseril SDB, who will be visiting Europe and UK in those days to meet the benefactors and for making the mission appeal, also will attend the Canonization.

DIRECTIVES

1. Monthly Recollection and Priest Conference

As we had decided in our last priest conference the new time table for the Priest Conference days will be as follows:

09.30 am	-	Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
10.30 am	-	Recollection Talk
11.30 am	-	Reflection, Adoration and Confession
12.30 pm	-	Lunch
01.15 pm	-	Priest Conference
03.30 pm	-	Tea and Departure

This new time table will give ample time for all of us to pray and to make our monthly confession. The monthly recollection talk will be given by one of our priests from the diocese. Let us set aside some time for the Lord from our busy schedule.

2. Celebration of the Sacraments

In our last Priest Conference I shared with you regarding the celebration of Liturgy and the Sacraments with due preparations. Let me repeat the same for the information and benefit of those who did not attend the Priest Conference.

1. Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) should be administered together and should be celebrated meaningfully and well.
2. Adult candidates should be prepared well in advance by giving sufficient instruction.
3. For infant baptisms due instructions should be given to the parents regarding the meaning of the Sacraments, symbols used, the need to bring them up in true faith, etc.
4. Prior to the celebrations the candidates or the participants should be given practice in the Church. The procedure of the rites and ceremonies should be explained to them. Similarly instructions and explanations are to be given before the rite of marriage.
5. Clarity of roles and procedures should be maintained during the celebration of the sacraments. Undue confusions and disorganized conduct should be avoided. Foresee everything in time and celebrate the sacrament with due order and decorum.
6. As per our tradition we entrust the newly baptized into the care and protection of a heavenly intercessor and the candidate is usually given the name of a canonized saint. Kindly do encourage the parents of infants to give names of saints of the Catholic tradition.
7. Issue clear instructions with regard to photography. Decide before hand if photos are to be taken at the end of the ceremony with the bishop (group, family, individual etc), priests and so on. Keep someone in charge of organizing this without compromising the decorum of the church.
8. Instruct the faithful to keep the celebration of the sacrament to be spiritual and without much ostentation.

3. Rules on Use and Maintenance of Cemeteries

The Rules promulgated earlier with regard to the use and maintenance of cemeteries came into effect on 12th July. They are now being implemented.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. Religious Sangamam

On 15th August 2016 we will hold the Religious Sangamam at Karode. It will be a Thanksgiving Day and a day of celebration of the Jubilees of Priests and Religious. Every year the venue is changed so as to facilitate especially our sisters to get an idea of other places of our apostolate and mission.

2. The Syro-Malabar Assembly

The Syro-Malabar Assembly, for which we have been preparing ourselves at different levels these last months, will be held from 25th-28th August 2016 at Sahrdya College of Engineering and Technology, Kodakara. I will be participating in it in the capacity of member of the organizing committee, and as Episcopal member. Our Diocese will be represented by very Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam our Vicar General, Rev. Fr. Alex Puthettu, Rev. Sr. Celia FCC, Mr. Y. John, Vayalinkarai, Mr. Sounder Raj, Muzhucode, and Mrs. Sneha Latha, Munchirai.

You will well remember the themes of the Assembly: The Response of the Church to the Challenges of Today, Simplicity in Life, Witness in Family and Mission of the Migrants. We wish the participants a fruitful and graceful time at the Assembly. Let us support them with our prayers.

3. The Syro-Malabar Synod of Bishops

The Synod of Bishops will be held at Kakkanad from 22nd August to 3rd of September 2016. Kindly pray for the success of the Synod.

4. Priests Annual Retreat

This year we will have the Priests Annual Retreat in the month of October from 3rd October, 5.30pm to 7th October, noon. Kindly block these dates and keep yourself free so that you can attend to one of the most important moments of our spiritual life and renewal. We are privileged to have Mar Raphael Thattil as our Retreat Preacher.

5. New Pastoral Council

Kindly be informed that the new Pastoral Council will be constituted on 11th October.

6. Vianney Day Celebrations

On August 4th we will have our Vianney Day Celebrations at St. Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkootukal. It will be a day of brotherly sharing with time for prayer, games and entertainment. I believe you have already received the invitations for the day from the Seminary.

7. Interdepartmental Meet:

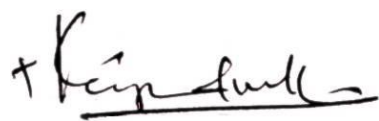
Interdepartmental Meet will be held on 11th August 2016 at 2.30pm in the Bishop's House.

Conclusion

We are pilgrims on this earth and no one has any permanent abode here. But our life in Christ assures of eternal life when we believe and live the loving commandments of Christ. Our Blessed Mother immaculately born was the first believer in Christ when the good news was announced to her. Soon we will celebrate her assumption that signifies the end of her sojourn on this earth and the beginning of the eternal life. Our Blessed Mother's life became the manifestation of the glory of God and the marvels He could work among the human beings. We are no less opportunities for God to manifest his glory when we surrender to him as did our Blessed Mother. She has shown us the example of living a committed 'Christ-life' that draws us into the eternal glory.

Wishing you a Happy Feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Mother and a Happy Feast of St. John Maria Vianney,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

