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

The opening words from the liturgy of Palm Sunday in the Latin Rite provide us with an excellent summary of the principal themes of Holy Week: "Christ entered in triumph into His own city to complete His work as our Messiah: to suffer, die and rise again . . . Let us remember with devotion this entry which began His saving work . . . and let us follow Him with a lively faith."

First, we are told that Christ entered his city to suffer, die and rise again. This draws our attention to the very core of Holy Week, the Paschal Mystery, in which Jesus suffered and died for our sins and then rose again in glory. These are the events that manifested God's special love for us, events that accomplished our salvation. These are the events that form the heart of the Christian Faith.

Our faith is certainly founded on the great deeds of the past, but those deeds also point us inevitably to the future. The victory of Christ lifts our hearts and minds beyond the limited horizon of the present moment with all of its difficulties and problems, to the future we anticipate as followers of Christ, an ever-so-peaceful future. Our present day troubled world needs that vision and hope in full measure.

The Palm Sunday introduction then invites us to remember with devotion Christ's entry into Jerusalem, words that apply just as well to the entire week. In other words, Palm Sunday sets the stage for the drama that would follow.

On Holy Thursday we gather with the Disciples around the Lord's Table to celebrate the Last Supper and to thank God for the holy gifts He gave us on that occasion - the Eucharist, his own body and blood which would be sacrificed on Calvary the next day; and the Ministerial Priesthood, in which He chooses and consecrates men to be good and holy shepherds, to share in His sacrificial ministry of God's People.

On Good Friday, we enter into the Passion of Christ who endured rejection, humiliation and intense physical pain for the forgiveness of our sins. We follow Jesus as He carries His cross and with Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, we stand at the foot of the cross to witness the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God. How can we not be moved if we recognize our responsibility for the death of Christ. The Prophet Isaiah rightly reminds us: "It was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured."

During the Easter Vigil, in the darkness of the night, we await at the tomb of the Lord for His promised Resurrection. We immerse ourselves in the symbols of the liturgy: procession with

lighted candles, proclamation of the word and the bread and wine - all of which point us to Christ and help us to understand and share in the reality of His death and resurrection.

On Easter Sunday we join with the Christian Church all over the world to proclaim and rejoice in the new life of Christ. It is the event that refreshes our spirits and gives new hope to a tattered, weary world. It is the event that speaks to us of living forever and thus makes our lives here and now more tolerable, even promising.

Let us remember with devotion all of these events of Holy Week. But not only do we “remember” these events as relics of the past but actually enter into them and share in their life-giving spirit once again. That’s the power and glory of Catholic liturgy.

Finally, we are urged to follow Jesus with a lively faith. During this week we not only celebrate the various liturgical celebrations but also follow Jesus with the commitment of our daily lives. At the end of his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict reflects on God’s revelation to the world. His words can help us to appreciate the significance of Holy Week as well: “It is part of the mystery of God that He acts so gently, that He only gradually builds up His history with the great history of mankind; that He continues to knock gently at the doors of our hearts and slowly opens our eyes if we open our doors to Him... And yet - is not this the truly divine way? Not to overwhelm with external power, but to give freedom, to offer and elicit love.”

I invite you, dear Fathers, to make the Holy Week not only memorable in the lives our people but also meaningful in your lives as well. May the celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus bring graces upon graces in your Priestly ministry!

NEWS AND EVENTS

Women’s Day Celebration: The International Women’s Day was celebrated on 8 March 2017. All the Parishes in the Eparchy observed the event on 5 March 2017 with offering of special prayers and organising various programmes. The Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS) organized a beautiful and thought provoking programme involving the Self Help Group (SHG) members of Six Zones. The theme of the celebration was “Be Bold for Change.” I sincerely congratulate and appreciate Rev. Fr Saji Elembasseril and all the staff for organising and animating the Women’s Day.

Padanthalumoodu Vincent de Paul Golden Jubilee: Sacred Heart Conference of Padanthalumoodu Parish celebrated its 50th year of service in the Vincent de Paul Society on 12 March 2017. I presided over the Holy Qurbana at 8.30am. A Public meeting was held in the Parish auditorium to celebrate the event and Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam chaired the meeting. I congratulate all the members of the Sacred Heart Church, Padanthalumoodu Vincent de Paul Society. I encourage them to continue doing good works to poor through this pious society.

Inter-Diocesan Meet at Kanjirapally: Inter-Diocesan Meeting of our Archeparchy was held at Kanjirapally on 14 March 2017. Along with seven of our Fathers who are Directors of the various Departments, I participated in this meeting. The meeting discussed the government's approach towards the Church with regards to land and finance. On the background of what happened in Manadavady Diocese, all the Bishops present highlighted the need for integrity and holiness of life among the Priests. I am grateful to all the Fathers for freeing yourselves to attend the meeting at Kanjirapally.

Orientation Programme for Priests: Two days of Orientation programme for Priests was held at Sangamam on 20-21 March 2017. Rev. Fr. Gnanadas from the Diocese of Ooty animated the sessions. He is a well-known person in the field of psychology and counselling. He spoke on the theme: "Towards a Holistic Approach to Personal Life and Priestly Mission." He discussed various topics with great competence. I sincerely thank Fr. Gnanadas for coming over to Thuckalay to animate our Priests. The course ended on 21 March 2017 with the Priests' Conference.

Arul Thoodu – The Voice of the Church: We are using different means to expand our mission work in the Diocese. Mass Media is one of the important ways through which we can reach out to the people. We are already publishing three magazines that deal with different themes ranging from theology, patristic teachings and social teachings of the Church. We have now begun a newspaper entitled *Arul Thoodu*. Its articles confine to the teachings of the Catholic Church as given by the Pope and the Bishops. Rev. Fr. Joseph Santhosh is the organiser and editor of the newspaper. He has put in all the skills available in order to bring out a popular edition of the newspaper. While I congratulate Fr. Joseph Santhosh and his team for this great initiative, I invite those Fathers who are interested in this type of ministry to contribute their mite towards the success of this venture.

Thavakala Padalkal: A CD entitled *Thavakala Padalkal* was launched on 26 March 2017. It contains the Holy Week hymns and it is meant to help the people to learn and sing well in the Holy week liturgy in our Parishes. It was the initiative of Rev. Fr. Thomas (Jiji). I congratulate and thank him and his team for their interest in the field of sacred music.

Convention with Magic Show: In our eparchy, from 26 to 30 March 2017, a Bible Convention with magic show was organised in all the Forane Parishes. Mr. James Mukkudam was the preacher cum magician. He explained the Word of God using magic that attracted many people including children. I congratulate Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumpuram and Rev. Fr. Mijo Puthenpurackal for taking the initiative to organise this programme efficiently in our eparchy. My Special thanks go to all the Forane Directors and all the other Fathers for their presence along with the faithful for the Convention.

INFORMATION

One-Day Recollection for all Priests and Religious: On Holy Thursday we commemorate the institution of Priesthood in the Church. We are privileged to be ministers of Word and

Sacraments. In order to remember and thank God for the gifts of Priesthood and Religious Life, a one-day recollection will be held on Tuesday, 11 February 2017, at Sangamam. It starts at 9.30 am and ends at 3 pm with the Tea.

09.30 am - Arrival

10.00am -Talk

11.00 am -Adoration and Confession

01.00 pm - Holy Qurbana

03.00pm - Tea and Departure

All the Priests and Religious are requested to take part in this recollection without fail. Since it is also the commemoration of Priesthood, I request all the Fathers to join me in the concelebrated Holy Qurbana.

Training Programme for Parish Council Members: This year, we have decided to conduct a training programme for all the Parish Council Members at the Forane Level. A similar programme will be held for the *Kaikars* and Accountants at the Diocesan level. I request all the Fathers to announce the venue, date and time of the training programme in your respective Parishes and to encourage all the members to participate.

DATE	FORANE	TIME	IN CHARGE
23-04-2017	Manjalumoodu	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr. Sathianesan
30-04-2017	Soosaipuram	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr Christudas
14-05-2017	Sangamam (Meeting of Kaikars and Accountants, Qurbana included)	8 am to 4 pm	Bishop, Fr. Sathianesan and Fr. Dency
21-05-2017	Thuckalay-Plankalai	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr. Dency
28-05-2017	Nithravilai	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr. Sathianesan
04-06-2017	Padanthalumoodu	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr. Dency
18-06-2017	Arukani	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr. Christudas
09-07-2017	Shenkottai Mission	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr. Sathianesan

Rest in Peace (RIP): Mr. Johnson (Sunny) Edakkootathil, father of Rev. Bro. Amento passed away on the morning of 30 March 2017. Bro. Amento is doing his 1st year of Philosophy at Ujjain. The funeral was held on Saturday, 1 April 2017, at Thannikandam, Idukki. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam along with our minor seminary community and major seminary brothers attended the funeral. We express our heartfelt condolences to Bro. Amento and promise our prayers to the bereaved family.

Prayers requested: Let us continue to pray for:

- The father of Rev. Fr. Johnsilal, who is at home undergoing treatment.
- The father of Rev. Fr. Lijo, who was in the Lissy Hospital for few weeks, now returned home.
- Rev. Mother Mariamma FCC, who is undergoing physiotherapy at FCC provincial House at Plankalai
- Rev. Sr. Christella SABS, who is undergoing treatment at Holy Cross Hospital

Annual Report of Departments: I request all the Directors of various Departments and Pious Associations to submit their annual reports of activities with detailed account on 25 April 2017 during the Meeting at Padanthalumoodu at 2.30 pm.

Solemn Blessing and Inauguration of Sinai Retreat Centre: Let me remind you once again regarding the Blessing and Inauguration of our new Retreat Centre. I have invited our dear Major Archbishop Cardinal Mar George Alencherry for the blessing and inauguration and Bro. Maria Joseph Suleiman, from Muringoor Retreat Centre, for the classes. We have fixed the date for the blessing as 7 May 2017. As we have discussed at the Priests' Conference, all the Fathers are assigned to various committees in order to prepare and to execute the programmes smoothly. I request your maximum support for its success.

Diaconate Ordinations: Rev. Bro. Thomas Jebanesh Lazer, from the Parish of Soosaipuram, who is doing his 3rd Year Theology at Mary Matha Theological College, Thrissur will be ordained Deacon on 12 April 2017 at 5.30 pm at Pilankarai Parish. You are most welcome! Rev. Bro. Subin Scaria Puthenpurackal, from Thuruthi Parish, Changanassery, who is doing his 3rd year Theology at Pontifical College *Mater Ecclesiae*, Rome, will be ordained Deacon on 28 April at Rome. We congratulate these two of our Brothers and I request you to pray for them.

Orientation and Career Guidance Seminar: St. Alphonsa College is organizing a one-day Career Guidance Programme for all the class 12 students of our Parishes and Institutions on 8 April 2017. Kindly make it compulsory for our students to attend this seminar. Transport will be provided. The parents of the Students are also welcome to attend the Seminar.

Priestly Ordinations: Let us thank and praise God for his blessings. As you know, we have two Priestly ordinations this year. Deacon Vinu D. Joseph from St. Michael Church, Kattathurai will be ordained Priest on 19 April 2017 at 9.15 am. Deacon John Joseph from St. Joseph Church, Karode will be ordained Priest on 20 April 2017 at 9.30 am. I request all of you to be present for the Ordinations along with some representatives from your respective Parishes especially from Thuckalay-Plankalai and Manjalumoodu Foranes and to pray for our new Priests. The Parish Priests of Kattathurai and Karode Rev. Fr Seby Manimalakandathil and Rev. Fr. James (Vinod) Kanakalil respectively are working hard to host the Ordinations in their respective Parishes. We thank them and the Parishioners in advance for making all the arrangements for the celebrations.

Mission Appeal to Kuwait: As I had announced to you during the last Priests' Conference, Rev. Fr. Joseph Thankachan has gone to Kuwait for mission appeal and for animation programmes. Let's keep him in our prayers.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

05 April 2017	- <i>Inayam</i> Protest Rally
08 April 2017	- One-day Seminar for +2 Students at St. Alphonsa College Soosaipuram
10 April 2017	- Vestition and Minor Orders at Sangamam
11 April 2017	- One-day Recollection for Priests and Religious at Sangamam
12 April 2017	- Diaconate Ordination of Bro. Jebanesh at Pilankarai
16 April 2017	- Easter Sunday
19 April 2017	- Ordination of Dn. Vinu D. Joseph at Kattathurai at 9.15 am.
20 April 2017	- Ordination of Dn. John Joseph at Karode at 9.30 am.
23 April 2017	- Episcopal Ordination of Rev. Fr. (Dr) Tomy Tharayil at Changanassery
25 April 2017	- Interdepartmental Meeting at Padanthalumoodu at 2.30pm


CONCLUSION

Since Ash Monday, we have been making a Lenten journey of prayer, fasting and almsgiving in order to experience true repentance for our failings and to become worthy to celebrate the great mysteries of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The days of Lent have passed by and we are now on the threshold of the Holy Week.

The Holy Week is a week of God's blessings upon each one of us. Let us not miss the opportunities of receiving these graces. We need to celebrate this great week through our devout preparation of all the liturgies. On Psalm Sunday, I invite you to walk with Christ in his solemn entry into Jerusalem. On Holy Thursday, I encourage you become involved with the institution of the Holy Eucharist by celebrating the liturgy, which presents rich symbolisms like the washing of the feet. I urge you to accompany Jesus, on Good Friday, in his journey of self-emptying from the Garden of Gethsemane to Mount Calvary in order to wash away our sins. Finally, I appeal to you to enter into the empty tomb like Mary Magdalene and experience the risen Christ on Easter Sunday.

Let us prepare ourselves to meet the risen Lord with true faith and humility like the beloved disciple.

With my prayers and blessings,
Yours in Christ Jesus,


+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

