



Bishop George Rajendran SDB
Diocese of Thuckalay

Mobile: +919443281100
Email: bpgeorgerajendran@gmail.com

BISHOP'S HOUSE
P.B. No. 12, Thuckalay P.O.
Kanyakumari District
Tamilnadu – 629175, India
Phone: +91-4651-250633
Diocese Email: thuckalaydiocese@yahoo.com

Ref. No. Priests/GR/73/2017

31 August 2017

Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from St Thomas Mount, Kakkannad, where all the Syro-Malabar Bishops have gathered for the 2nd Sitting of the 25th Synod!

We just celebrated the solemnity of Assumption and the feast of the Queenship of our blessed Mother. On 8 September, we shall mark the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During the month of September, in many of our Syro-Malabar parishes, we have the devotional practice of nine days of novena in preparation for the celebration of the birthday of Mother Mary. Hence, I thought it appropriate to remind you about the importance that we need to attach to devotion to our heavenly Mother. St John Paul writing about the devotion that the Priests need to cultivate to Our Blessed Mother says that today, perhaps more than at any other time, the Priest must ask Mary especially for the grace of knowing how to accept God's gift with grateful love, fully appreciating it as she did in the Magnificat - the grace of generosity in self-giving, in order to imitate her example as a generous Mother; the grace of purity and fidelity in the obligation of celibacy, following her example as the faithful Virgin; the grace of burning, merciful love, in the light of her witness as the Mother of Mercy.

St John Paul II always constantly encouraged the Priests to remember that in moments of difficulties, they can count on Mary's help. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests of Vatican II says: "The Priest looks to her as the perfect model of his life and ministry, because she is the one who was led by the Holy Spirit to dedicate herself totally to the mystery of man's redemption. Let Priests love and venerate, with filial devotion and veneration, this mother of the eternal high priest, Queen of Apostles and protector of their own ministry."

More recently Pope Benedict reminded the Priests of the crucial role that Our Lady play in their spiritual lives. He wrote: "Let us now go to the Cross. Before dying, Jesus sees his Mother beneath the Cross and he sees the beloved son. This beloved son is certainly a person, a very important individual, but he is more; he is an example, a prefiguration of all beloved disciples, of all the people called by the Lord to be the 'beloved disciple' and thus also particularly of Priests."

While hanging on the cross, Jesus tells Mary: "Woman, behold, your son!" (Jn 19:26). Through these words, he entrusts his Mother to the care of the son, of the disciple. But he also says to the disciple: "Behold, your mother!" (Jn 19:27). The Gospel tells us that from that hour St John, the beloved son, took his mother Mary "to his own home." This is what it says in the translation; but the Greek text is far deeper and far richer. We could translate it as he took Mary into his inner life, into his inner being or into the depths of his being.

To take Mary into one's inner life means to introduce her into the dynamism of one's own entire existence. It is not something external. It is taking her into all that constitute the horizon of one's own apostolate. Hence, there is a special relationship of motherhood that exists between Mary and Priests. It constitutes the primary source and the fundamental reason for her special love for each one

of them. In fact, Mary loves them with predilection for two reasons: because they are more like Jesus, the supreme love of her heart, and because, like her, they are committed to the mission of proclaiming, bearing witness to and giving Christ to the world. Through his identification with and sacramental conformation to Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, every Priest can and must feel that he really is a beloved son of this loftiest and humblest of Mothers.

The Second Vatican Council invites every Priest to look to Mary as the perfect model for their existence. It asks them to invoke her as mother of the supreme and eternal Priest, as Queen of Apostles, and as Protectress of their ministry. As Priests, then, we not only have a special relationship with Our Lady but also a requirement to foster veneration to the Mother of God among the people.

Some practical ways to foster veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary are:

- Celebrate Masses of our Lady on Saturday at all opportunities.
- Celebrate Feasts and Solemnities of our Lady proper with all due solemnity.
- Preach homilies on our Lady during these Masses and at other times
- After Mass stop at statue of our Lady and say or, better still, sing the *Salve Regina*.
- Promote praying the Rosary and other devotions every day.
- Attend to the shrine of Our Lady in the Church, seeing that the shrine is always vibrant with flowers and other beautiful and tasteful accoutrements.

Finally, if we get right our Marian devotion we will be less inclined to reduce Jesus to the level of the merely human. One witty Anglo-Catholic Priest once said: “If you’re not Marian, you’re Arian!” Let us make the prayer of St John Paul II that he gave us at the end of *Pastores dabo vobis* our own during these days of the Novena: “O Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ and Mother of priests, accept this title which we bestow on you to celebrate your motherhood and to contemplate with you the priesthood of your Son and of your sons, O holy Mother of God.

O Mother of Christ, to the Messiah-priest you gave a body of flesh through the anointing of the Holy Spirit for the salvation of the poor and the contrite of heart; guard priests in your heart and in the Church, O Mother of the Saviour.

O Mother of Faith, you accompanied to the Temple the Son of Man, the fulfilment of the promises given to the fathers; give to the Father for his glory the priests of your Son, O Ark of the Covenant.

O Mother of the Church, in the midst of the disciples in the upper room you prayed to the Spirit for the new people and their shepherds; obtain for the Order of Presbyters a full measure of gifts, O Queen of the Apostles.

Mother of Jesus Christ, you were with him at the beginning of his life and mission, you sought the Master among the crowd, you stood beside him when he was lifted up from the earth consumed as the one eternal sacrifice, and you had John, your son, near at hand; accept from the beginning those who have been called, protect their growth, in their life ministry accompany your sons, O Mother of Priests. Amen.”

NEWS AND EVENTS

St John Maria Vianney Day Celebration: The feast of St John Maria Vianney, patron of all Priests, was celebrated as the Priests’ Day. The celebration was held at St Mary’s Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal on 4 August 2017 at 9.30am. It started with a Eucharistic adoration. A friendly volleyball match between the students of the Minor Seminary and the Priests followed. The

seminary students won the match. I congratulate both the teams for their active participation. After a small break, the Brothers of the Seminary put up a cultural programme to felicitate the Priests. The celebration concluded with a sumptuous lunch. During the lunch, all those who gathered for the programme congratulated Rev. Fr Sumesh for producing a beautiful and meaningful painting of the Last Supper of our Lord Jesus. It was placed in the Refectory of Minor Seminary, Mukkootukal. I thank all the Fathers and the Brothers of the Minor Seminary, especially Rev. Fr Justine Cheruvellil, Rector, who organized the programme in a meaningful way.

Blessing of Foundation Stone for New Churches: I, along with Fr. Antony Jose, Fr. Justin Suteesh, SABS Sisters and parishioners, blessed the foundation stone for the new Church at Soosaipuram on 13 August 2017 in a land adjacent to the Church at the end of my pastoral visit. The blessing of foundation stone for Kaisalavilai Church was held on 15 August 2017 in the presence of Rev. Fr Luka Kollampampil CMI, Rev. Fr Thomas CMI and the parishioners. I offer my prayerful wishes to the Parish Priests, Assistant Parish Priests and the parishioners of both the Parishes for the successful completion of the constructions.

Priests and Religious Sangamam at Nagercoil: The Priests and Religious Sangamam was held at St Alphonsa Shrine, Nagercoil on 14 August 2017. The celebration began at 9.30am with the Holy Qurbana. After the Holy Qurbana, we had a short public meeting in which the Priests and Sisters who marked the Golden and Silver jubilees were felicitated. The Golden Jubilarians are Rev. Sr Consilia Manthara SH and Rev. Sr Margret Kaviyil HC. Those who celebrated their Silver Jubilee of their first professions are: Rev. Fr Davis Karukappally CMI, Rev. Fr Thankachan Joseph Kollappallyil SDB, Rev. Sr Ruby Rose CMC, Rev. Sr Daise Maria CMC, Rev. Sr Jessy Therese CMC, Rev. Sr Anija CMC, Rev. Sr Alphonse Linet CMC, Rev. Sr Daisy Theresa SJSJ, Rev. Sr Ansa Joseph SJSJ and Rev. Sr Joseena FCC. St Alphonsa Shrine community planned and organised the event of the Eparchy in a meticulous way. I thank and appreciate Rev. Fr Thomas Powathupampil, Rev. Fr Ajin Jose, FCC Sisters and the parishioners of the St Alphonsa Shrine, Nagercoil for their hospitality and hard work.

Foundation Day of St Alphonsa College: The Foundation Day of St Alphonsa College was celebrated on 19 August. To mark this occasion, the College organised inter-school and inter-college sports and cultural competitions for students from 17-19 August 2017. This is also one of the ways to present our College and to familiarise our educational system to other students and institutions. I am grateful to the administrative team of the College for taking such an initiative.

Feast of St Euphrasia CMC: As part of the celebration of the feast of St Euphrasia CMC, which falls on 29 August, the Sisters belonging to the CMC congregation organized St Euphrasia Novena for the people of the parishes where they are working. This was meant to acquaint the people with the saintly life of St Euphrasia. I congratulate Rev. Sr Viji CMC and her Team for their initiative in spreading devotion to this Saint.

News from the Syro-Malankara Church *sui iuris*:

- **Erection of the New Eparchy of Parassala of Syro-Malankara Church:** A New Eparchy of Parassala was erected for the Syro-Malankara Church by bifurcating the southern part of the Archeparchy of Trivandrum, in the south of Kerala. The new Eparchy includes the presbyterial districts of Parassala, Kattakada, and a large part of Neyyatinkara. It has 30, 750 Syro-Malankara faithful with 95 parishes, 22 Priests and many Sisters. Rt. Rev Thomas Mar Eusebios Naickampampil was elected as the first Bishop of this new Eparchy.

- Rt Rev. Philipose Mar Stephanos Thottathil was elected as the Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Mary Queen of Peace in the United States and Canada.
- Rt Rev. George Kalayil was elected as the Bishop of Eparchy of Puthur.
- Rt Rev. John Kochuthundil was elected as the Curia Bishop and the Apostolic Visitor to Europe and Oceania assigning him the Titular See of Tuburbo Maggiore.

Syro-Malabar Synod: The 2nd Sitting of the 25th Synod of Syro-Malabar Bishops began on 21 August at 10am with a recollection talk that Bishop Antony Chirayath preached. Concelebrated Holy Qurbana followed it. There are 53 Eparchial Bishops, Auxiliary Bishops and retired Bishops attending the Synod. Many issues pertaining to the life and mission of the Church were discussed. Most Rev. Dr Philipose Mar Chrysostom, the Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Bishop of the Mar Thomas Syrian Church was given a fitting felicitation by the Bishops as he celebrates his 100th birthday this year. Various commissions presented their respective reports in the Synod. The Synod of Bishops gave due importance and needed attention in the area of formation of candidates to Priesthood. The Synod will conclude on 1 September 2017.

On-going Formation for Junior Priests: This year the on-going formation programme for Junior Priests (Batches 2013-2017) will be held on 12 and 13 September 2017. In my personal letter to each of the junior Priests I had mentioned the details of the programme. Rev. Fr Gnanadas from the Diocese of Ootty and Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh will animate the junior Priests. The participants are:

No	Name	Ordination	Remark
1.	Fr Lijo Thekkel	06-04-2013	
2.	Fr Sajan Nettarepponghu	06-04-2013	UK
3.	Fr Antony Madapurackal	06-04-2013	
4.	Fr Alex Puthettu	09-04-2013	
5.	Fr Linslal Mangalath	28-04-2014	
6.	Fr Seby Manimalakandathil	28-04-2014	
7.	Fr Jinu Thekkethalackal	13-09-2014	Rome
8.	Fr Shoji Puthenpurackal	06-04-2015	
9.	Fr Ajeesh Attiyil	06-04-2015	
10.	Fr Jose Vayalil	07-04-2015	
11.	Fr Printo Kurias	08-04-2015	Class+Exam
12.	Fr Abin Poovathummoottil	08-04-2015	Chennai
13.	Fr Vinod Kanakalil	09-04-2015	
14.	Fr Sumesh Valliyamthadathil	11-04-2015	
15.	Fr Ritto Thoompunkal	28-12-2015	
16.	Fr Anil Raj Dominic	01-04-2016	
17.	Fr Ajin Jose	02-04-2016	
18.	Fr Justin Suthesh	02-04-2016	
19.	Fr Vinu Joseph	19-04-2017	
20.	Fr John Joseph	20-04-2017	

I welcome you dear Fathers for the animation programme. The Junior Priests programme will end with Priests' Conference, which will be held on 13 September 2017. Therefore I request all the other Fathers to reach Sangamam by 12.00 noon.

Conclusion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration Major Archiepiscopal Church: We are marking the silver jubilee of the establishment of the Syro-Malabar Church as Major Archiepiscopal Church. The Eparchial level conclusion of its Silver Jubilee will be held on 11 November 2017 along with the Eparchial Day Celebration.

Transfer: Rev. Fr Ritto Thoompunkal is transferred to the Minor Seminary as Dean of Studies and procurator. He is also appointed as the parish priest of Bengiri parish and will take charge on 1 October 2017.

INFORMATION

- ❖ In the month of July, I visited our newly appointed Priests in the Parishes at Thettiode, Arukani, Anamugam, Christurajapuram, Mezhacode, Mukkootukal, Malaicode and Killiyoor.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Justin Cheruvelil is going to Rome on 27 September 2017 for his Doctoral study in Liturgy. He will study at St Anselm University and will stay at St John Damasceno College, Rome.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal has come back to the Eparchy from Rome after defending his Doctoral thesis successfully. He is appointed as the Rector of the St Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal. He will take charge as Rector on 5 September 2017.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Shoji Puthenpurackal will begin a course in German at Trivandrum from 11 September 2017.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Mijo Puthenpurayil has returned from Attapady after spending two months at the Retreat Centre.
- ❖ Let me remind you to continue to pray for the immediate release of Rev. Fr Tom Uzjunjalil and for our Major Archiepiscopal Church during the Karosusa prayers as it is marking the Silver Jubilee of its establishment.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Saji Elambaserry SDB will return to the Eparchy on 8 September 2017 from the USA after three months of mission preaching. We welcome him whole-heartedly!
- ❖ Rev. Fr Jinu Jacob will reach his home on 15 September 2017 from Rome. We warmly welcome him back!

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 12-13 September 2017 | - Orientation Programme for Junior Priests (Batches 2013-2017) |
| 13 September 2017 | - Priests' Conference at Sangamam at 12 noon with Onam Lunch |
| 24 September 2017 | - Special Sunday Collection for the St Vincent de Paul Society |

Priests' Annual Retreat will be held at Sangamam from 15-19 October 2017. Rev. Fr Joseph Pamblani will animate it.

CONCLUSION

During the month of August, we had come together as fellow workers of the Eparchy to celebrate the Jubilees and to thank God for the gift of one another. The event held at Nagercoil gave us an opportunity to recall our own Priesthood and Religious Life. Let us make use of occasions such as Feasts of patron Saints of our parishes to boost the faith of our faithful. 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

