



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

Ref. No. Priests/GR/114/2020

31 October 2020

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

On 3 October 2020, Pope Francis signed the third Encyclical of his pontificate on the tomb of Saint Francis of Assisi. It was officially published on Sunday, 4 October, on the feast day of St Francis of Assisi. The phrase *fratelli tutti* is taken from St Francis of Assisi's sixth admonition to the friars, all of whom were men. In Italian, *fratelli* means *brothers* or *brothers and sisters* since the masculine form of nouns is traditionally used when referring to males and females collectively. Pope Francis says that he was encouraged by a dialogue he had with Muslim leader, Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Al-Azhar Mosque, and by their joint statement that God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters. *Fratelli Tutti* calls for universal fraternity and friendship among all. It aims at promoting a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship. In the background of the encyclical is the Covid-19 pandemic which, Francis reveals, unexpectedly erupted as he was writing this letter. But the global health emergency has helped demonstrate that no one can face life in isolation and that the time has truly come to dream, then, as a single human family in which we are brothers and sisters all. In this circular letter, I want to present a brief summary of the encyclical, which I thought, would encourage you to read the document in its entirety and take home of its salient features.

In the first of eight chapters, which is entitled *Dark Clouds over a Closed World*, the document reflects on the many distortions of the contemporary era. They include the manipulation and deformation of concepts such as democracy, freedom, justice; the loss of the meaning of the social community and history; selfishness and indifference toward the common good; the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and the culture of waste; unemployment, racism, poverty; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, trafficking, women subjugated and then forced to abort, organ trafficking. It deals with global problems that call for global actions. The Pope also sounds the alarm against a culture of walls that favours the proliferation of organized crimes, fuelled by fear and loneliness.

In chapter 2 entitled *Strangers on the Road*, the encyclical brings in the inspiring example of a herald of hope: The Good Samaritan. In an unhealthy society that turns its back on suffering and that is illiterate in caring for the frail and vulnerable, we are all called – just like the Good Samaritan – to become neighbours to others, overcoming prejudices, personal interests, historic and cultural barriers. We are, in fact, co-responsible in creating a society that is able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering. Love builds bridges and we were made for love. The Pope exhorts the Christians to recognize Christ in the face of every excluded person.

The principle of the capacity to love according to a universal dimension is taken up in the third chapter, *Envisaging and engendering an open world*. Pope Francis urges us to go outside the self in order to find a fuller existence in another. We need to open ourselves up to the other according to the dynamism of charity which makes us tend toward universal fulfilment. The encyclical affirms that the spiritual stature of a person's life is

measured by love. It always takes first place and leads us to seek better for the life of the other. It is not selfishness. The sense of solidarity and of fraternity begin within the family, which are to be safeguarded and respected in their primary and vital mission of education.

The right to live with dignity cannot be denied to anyone. Since rights have no borders, no one can remain excluded, regardless of where they are born. In this perspective, the Pontiff calls us to consider an ethics of international relations, because every country also belongs to foreigners and the goods of the territory cannot be denied to those who are in need and come from another place. Thus, the natural right to private property will be secondary to the principal of the universal destination of created goods. The Encyclical also places specific emphasis on the issue of foreign debt. Although subject to the principle that it must be paid, nonetheless, this should not compromise the growth and subsistence of the poorest countries.

Chapter 4 is entitled *A Heart open to the Whole World* deals with the theme of migration. With their lives at stake, fleeing from war, persecution, natural catastrophes, unscrupulous trafficking, ripped from their communities of origin, migrants are to be welcomed, protected, supported and integrated. At the same time, unnecessary migration needs to be avoided. To this end, concrete opportunities to live with dignity in the countries of origin need to be created. But at the same time, we need to respect the right to seek a better life elsewhere. In receiving countries, the right balance will be between the protection of citizens' rights and the guarantee of welcome and assistance for migrants. The Pope points out several indispensable steps, especially in response to those who are fleeing grave humanitarian crises: to increase and simplify the granting of visas; to open humanitarian corridors; to assure lodging, security and essential services; to offer opportunities for employment and training; to favour family reunification; to protect minors; and, to guarantee religious freedom. What is needed, above all, is global governance, an international collaboration for migration which implements long-term planning, going beyond single emergencies, on behalf of the supportive development of all peoples.

The title of the fifth chapter is *A Better Kind of Politics*. The type of politics that the Pope speaks of represents one of the most valuable forms of charity because it is placed at the service of the common good and recognizes the importance of people. They are understood as an open category, available for discussion and dialogue. This type of populism counters the kind of populism that ignores the legitimacy of the notion of people, by attracting consensuses in order to exploit them for its own service and fomenting selfishness in order to increase its own popularity. But a better politics is also one that protects work, an essential dimension of social life. The best strategy against poverty does not simply aim at containing or rendering indigents inoffensive, but to promote them in the perspective of solidarity and subsidiarity. The task of politics is to find a solution to all that attacks fundamental human rights, such as social exclusion; the marketing of organs, tissues, weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave labour; terrorism and organized crime. The Pope makes an emphatic appeal to definitively eliminate human trafficking, a source of shame for humanity, and hunger, which is criminal because food is an inalienable right.

The politics that we need is a politics centred on human dignity and not subjected to finance because the marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem. The havoc wreaked by financial speculation has demonstrated this. Hence, popular movements have taken on particular relevance. As true torrents of moral energy, they must be engaged in society with greater coordination. In this way, it will be possible to go beyond a policy 'with' and 'of' the poor.

Another hope present in the encyclical is with regard to the reform of the UN. In the face of the predominance of the economic dimension, a task of the UN will be to give substance to the concept of a family of nations working for the common good, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights. Through tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, the UN must promote the force of law rather than the law of force.

In the sixth chapter entitled *Dialogue and friendship in society*, the encyclical speaks about the concept of life as the art of encounter with everyone including with the world's peripheries and with original peoples, because each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. The Pope also speaks about

the miracle of kindness. It is an attitude to be recovered because it is a star shining in the midst of darkness and frees us from the cruelty, the anxiety and the frantic flurry of activity that prevail in the contemporary era.

The value and promotion of peace is reflected in the seventh chapter, *Paths of Renewed Encounter*. Here, the Pope underlines that peace is connected to truth, justice and mercy. Far from the desire for vengeance, it is proactive and aims at forming a society based on service to others and on the pursuit of reconciliation and mutual development. Thus, peace is an art that involves and regards everyone and in which each one must do his or her part in a never-ending task. Forgiveness is linked to peace. We must love everyone without exception. But loving an oppressor means helping him/her to change and not allowing him/her to continue oppressing his/her neighbour. Forgiveness does not mean impunity, but rather, justice and remembrance, because to forgive does not mean to forget, but to renounce the destructive power of evil and the desire for revenge. The Pope tells us not to forget the horrors like the Shoah, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, persecutions and ethnic massacres. They must be remembered always, anew, so as not to become anaesthetized and to keep the flame of collective conscience alive. It is just as important to remember the good.

Part of the seventh chapter, then, focuses on war as a constant threat. It represents the negation of all rights, a failure of politics and of humanity, and a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Moreover, due to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons that strike many innocent civilians, today we can no longer think, as in the past, of the possibility of a just war. We must vehemently reaffirm: Never again war! The total elimination of nuclear arms is a moral and humanitarian imperative. With the money invested in weapons, we need to establish a global fund for the elimination of hunger.

Francis expresses a clear position with regard to the death penalty. It is inadmissible and must be abolished worldwide. Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity and God himself pledges to guarantee this. There must be emphasis on the necessity to respect the sacredness of life. Unfortunately, today in some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed, such as the unborn, the poor, the disabled and the elderly.

In the eighth and final chapter, the Pontiff focuses on *Religions at the service of fraternity in our world* and emphasizes that terrorism is not due to religion but due to erroneous interpretations of religious texts, as well as policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice and oppression. A journey of peace among religions is possible and that it is, therefore, necessary to guarantee religious freedom, a fundamental human right for all believers.

The encyclical reflects, in particular, on the role of the Church. She does not restrict her mission to the private sphere. While not engaging in politics she does not, however, renounce the political dimension of life itself, attention to the common good and concern for integral human development, according to evangelical principals.

I exhort all of you to read the encyclical and help our people to understand some of the important aspects of this wonderful document that Pope Francis has bequeathed to each one of us.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Priests' Annual Retreat: Annual Retreat of our Fathers was held from 4-9 October 2020. The retreat started on 4 October at 7.00 pm with evening prayer. Fr Biji Thomas SDB, from the Salesian Province of Kolkata, guided the retreat. He is a gifted preacher. 41 Fathers participated in the retreat. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathupampil, Protosyncellus, along with Fr Ajin Jose, Director of Sangamam, organized the retreat well. Immediately after the retreat, Priest's Conference was held at 1.30pm. The priests who were absent for the retreat and religious priests participated in the Priests' Conference.

Award Function of Youth Apostolate: The department of Youth Apostolate conducted a number of online programmes and competitions among the youth. Many young people participated and received good grades in these competitions. Those who won the first three places were awarded prizes on 2 October 2020. In this meeting

the ten newly elected youths for the pastoral counsel were felicitated. I appreciate Fr Joseph Santhosh for his dedicative effort for giving online faith formation to the youth in the Eparchy.

Blessing of the Foundation Stone for the CHF Convent: The Sisters of CHF Congregation who are residing at Kamaraj Nagar and involved in the pastoral work at Athencode Parish started the construction work of their convent at Athencode. I blessed and laid the foundation stone on 3 October 2020 in the presence of Provincial Superior of CHF Congregation, CHF Sisters, Curia members, Priests and Sisters and parishioners from Athencode. I wish them God's blessings for the completion of the construction.

Blessing of Rented House at Thirunelveli Mission: Fr Ginoy Thottiyil was staying at Thirunelveli in the Edathuva House of Mr Maria Robin for two years. Now he has shifted his residence to a rented house near the bypass road and celebrates Holy Qurbana there. I blessed the house on 12 October 2020. Fr Ginoy has started to celebrate Holy Qurbana there for the St George Mission Community from 18 October 2020. I wish Fr Ginoy God's blessings and fruitful ministry in the town of Thirunelveli.

JMJ Land and Blessing of Rented House at Nanguneri: Fr Tobin Alapurackal has taken a rented house in Nanguneri near the JMJ land for his residence. I blessed the house on 12 October 2020 on my way to Trichy to attend the TNBC meeting. He has started his mission work by visiting the people living around. He will be also concentrating and planning for the developmental works in the JMJ farm land in consultation with JMJ Developmental Committee. The members of this Committee include Bishop, Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Fr Johnsilal Arackaparambil, Fr Tobin Alapurackal, Fr James Kanakalil, Fr Ginoy Thottiyil and Mr Augustine Tharappel. I wish Fr Tobin and the Committee members all success and God's blessings for the future ministry in the new mission.

TNBC at Trichy: Tamil Nadu Bishops' Conference was held on 13 October 2020 at Trichy. Though it was a half yearly meeting due to COVID-19 the meeting days was reduced to a day only, in which the Oriental Bishops had the meeting for half a day. All the bishops were very much concerned about present Covid pandemic scenario in the state and were urged to be close to the suffering people in the dioceses.

Parish Visits: I have taken special efforts to visit the priests who have been appointed parish priests this year. I have completed my visits to Annikarai, Thadikkarakonam, Padanthalumoodu, Arukani, Nithravilai, Soosaipuram, Paraicode, Vayalinkarai, Anayadi and Muzhucode.

Padanthalumoodu Church turns 60 Years: Sacred Heart Church, Padanthalumoodu, has completed 60 years of mission work on 23 October 2020. Sixty years ago, on this day, the mission work at Padanthalumoodu was started in a humble shed with first baptism of 21 people and now this community has grown. There are 167 families with 576 Catholic faithful. I celebrated the thanksgiving Holy Qurbana and remembered all the priests, sisters and lay people who were involved in the pastoral mission here. I used the opportunity to thank all the Fathers, especially Fr Dency Mundunadackal and Fr Abilash Xavier, SDS and OMMI Sisters, and parishioners who work for the Kingdom of God.

A New DEO from our Eparchy: Ms Sherly Vimal, D/O Mr Raby from Varuthattu Parish, passed in first rank in the examination conducted for District Education Officers. As you know, Mr Raby is a retired Headmaster from Mankarai School and he is now the president of Vincent De Paul Society. The parents have given their children good faith formation. Ms Sherly Vimal was also nominated for the Pastoral Council but unfortunately she could not continue as the member of the Pastoral Council of the Eparchy. While congratulating her, I wish God's blessings and prayers upon Ms Sherly Vimal for her future ministry. I also congratulate Mr Raby and his family for motivating their children. It is a proud moment for our Eparchy to have someone occupying higher position in

the field of Education. We need to share this joyful news with people and encourage our children to pursue higher education.

Uravium: on 28 October 2020 the *Uravium* department organised a Zoom video conference meeting for all the parish level *Uravium* animators. The animator sister from all our parishes joined the meeting. I am glad that up to now the formation and training of Diocese, Forane and Parish level animators have been completed. The parish *Uravium* laity leaders meeting and training program will be held in the coming days by the department. Rev. Fr Ajin Jose, the Director, Fr Thomas Jebanesh, the Assitt. Director and Sr. Joythis FCC, the secretary, will be visiting the parishes to meet parish priests and *Uravium* leaders soon. In the meetings we highlighted our silver Jubilee action plan which will be studied in all the *Uraviums*. Therefore, I am asking all fathers who have not started the *Uravium* to begin the meeting in these days and finally by January 2021 we need to begin the study of Jubilee action plan.

Golden Jubilee of St. George Church Munchirai: St. George Church, Munchirai turned 50 years of its mission work. I inaugurated the Golden Jubilee on 30 October 2020 with the Holy Qurbana and remembered much with gratitude all the missionary fathers and sisters and lay apostles who toiled for development of the mission. On this occasion I released a Song on St. George. The lyric of this song was written by Fr. Robin Jose. We congratulate Fr. Robin for this noble venture and best wishes to the Parish priest and faithful of Munchirai Parish.

Vestition of Sr Soumya Therese FCC: We have a new religious Sister from our Eparchy. Sr Soumya Therese FCC has made her first profession in the FCC Congregation and received the habit on 31 October 2020. Sr Soumya Therese FCC comes from St Joseph's Mission Church, Thadikkarakonam. She is the second religious Sister from the same family. Her elder sister is also a member of FCC congregation. God has blessed the family in a special way. I thank her family members especially her father for his willingness to give his children for God to work for people of God in His vineyard. I sincerely appreciate and thank the FCC Sisters for selecting children from our Eparchy and forming them to be good religious. Dear Fathers, I request you to inform our people about this special vocation and encourage the youngsters to enter the religious life and priesthood.

INFORMATION

- The meetings of Eparchial College of Consulters and Central Monitoring Committee of Eparchial Jubilee were held on 24 October 2020 at Sangamam.
- **Catechism:** As you have been told, the catechism online classes have been stopped by October 2020 and all are requested begin the normal catechism classes in the parishes. I am grateful to the Catechism and Communication departments for organising the online catechism classes during the lockdown period.
- **Diocesan Day:** Every year, we celebrate our Diocesan Day on 11 November in a grand manner at the Eparchial level. This year, due to the pandemic, we are planning to celebrate this event on Sunday, 8 November online so that people in our parishes can take part. We thought of giving opportunity for all the people to take part in the celebrations. Therefore, besides the normal Holy Qurbana you can organise a main thanksgiving Quarbana at 3.30pm in your parish and join at 5.00pm, for the Diocesan day felicitation meeting which will be go live and people can take part in it using the electronic media. Hence, I request you to telecast the programme for the people in the church. During this ceremony, Mr Mariyadas who received *Preshitha Tharam* and Ms Sherly Vimal who secured first rank in the DEO examinations will be felicitated. Also a spiritual book written by Fr Lijo will be released on that day. The program will take about an hour. Kindly inform our people to take part in the Diocesan Day Celebrations. It would be highly appreciated if you could arrange for sweets for the faithful at the end of the programme.

- **Priests and Religious Sangamam:** This year we did not come together for our Priests and Religious Sangamam. But it is very important to thank God for His call as priests and religious. However, we shall felicitate our golden and silver Jubilarians for their 50 and 25 years of religious life and pastoral service in our Eparchy on 14 November 2020 at Sangamam at 9.30am with Holy Qurbana and a brief felicitation ceremony. The participants are only the Jubilarians, their Major Superiors and local Superiors, Curia Members and Forane Vicars. I invite all the above-mentioned persons for the programme and request others to participate spiritually praying for the Jubilarians.

NEWS FROM THE CURIA

- **Rev. Fr Christudas and Rev. Fr Anil Raj** have returned to the Eparchy after two months of retreat at Marian Retreat Centre Anakkara on 7 October 2020.
- Since **Rev. Fr Mathew Kuzhinjalil**, a nominated member of Presbyteral Council and Eparchial College of Consulters, was absent for a long period of time from these councils, is relieved from these Councils with effect from 24 October 2020.
- **Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh** is nominated as a member of Presbyteral Council and Eparchial College of Consulters with effect from 24 October 2020.
- **Rev. Fr Linslal Mangalath** is absent from the Eparchy without proper permission from 4 October 2020. I have issued a warning letter to him on 16 October 2020 for his unauthorised absence from the Eparchy and requesting him to return to the Eparchy within fifteen days.
- Rev. Fr John Thekkel was discharged from the Holy Cross Hospital on 20 October 2020 and he is now staying at Sangamam, Thuckalay.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

08 November 2020	- Diocesan Day Celebration in the Parishes
11 November 2020	- Diocesan Day
14 November 2020	- Priests and Religious Sangamam at Sangamam
17 November 2020	- Priests' Conference at Sangamam

CONCLUSION

As we conclude the month of October, a month during which we honoured our Blessed Mother through the recitation of the Holy Rosary, let us ask her to intercede for all the intentions of our Eparchy. With the celebration of the 24th Diocesan Day coming near, let us now redouble our efforts at building up the kingdom of God with greater commitment and fervour.

May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

