



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb

Diocese of Thuckalay

Bishop's House, P B No: 12, Thuckalay PO,
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Ref. No. Priests/GR/112/2020

31 August 2020

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

On 8 September, we celebrate the birthday of Mother Mary. According to St Louis de Montfort, because we have not sufficiently known Mary, we do not sufficiently know Jesus. Hence, it is pertinent that we use every occasion that we get in order to know and love Mother Mary. Often, we like Marian devotions where we can get something out of it, like the scapular (protection from eternal fire), the miraculous medal (miracles and favours), the rosary (peace in the world and in our families) or Our Lady of Lourdes (healing). However, the feast of the Nativity of Mary should hold a special place in our lives.

There is only one reason why we celebrate this feast. It is the birthday of the mother of Jesus and our heavenly mother. Again, to neglect our own mother's birthday is unthinkable. In conception, Mary was created and filled with spiritual gifts and blessings but she was shrouded by the mystery of the womb. She lived only in the society of God and the angels. When she was born, she was introduced into the society of man. Born to the light of the world, her mission to be the universal mediatrix and co-redemptrix officially began, much in the same way the birth of the Messiah had.

According to legends, Anne (Hebrew: Hannah) was born in Bethlehem in Judaea. She married Joachim, and, although they shared a wealthy and devout life at Nazareth, they eventually lamented their childlessness. Joachim, reproached at the Temple for his sterility, retreated into the countryside to pray, while Anne, grieved by his disappearance and by her barrenness, solemnly promised God that, if given a child, she would dedicate it to the Lord's service. Both received the vision of an angel, who announced that Anne would conceive and bear a most wondrous child. The couple rejoiced at the birth of their daughter, whom Anne named Mary. When the child was three years old, Joachim and Anne, in fulfilment of her divine promise, brought Mary to the Temple of Jerusalem, where they left her to be brought up.

We must keep in mind that true devotion to Mary is in imitation of the love and veneration Jesus has for his own mother. Without a doubt, Jesus celebrates her birthday in heaven. Since Jesus is the most perfect son, what person in the world could attribute anything less than loyal devotion and reverence to the most perfect of all mothers.

How can we meaningfully prepare for the birthday of Mother Mary and celebrate it with great solemnity? Fathers of the Church over the centuries and our own Syro-Malabar Church have recommended some ways we can honour Mother Mary.

Do Acts of Reparation: With so many of her birthdays neglected and so many of her children neglecting it, it should be obvious that we need to first apologize to her in the form of reparation. Imagine if we did not celebrate our own mother's birthday, we would never hear the end of it. Hence, let us encourage our people to make acts of reparation during these days.

Prepare with 8-day Fasting: The 8-day fast in preparation for the birthday of Mother Mary is an important practice in our Church tradition. In the context of Covid-19, our Major Archbishop has exhorted all the members of the Syro-Malabar Church to keep the 8-day Lent with great earnestness. In the early centuries, whenever plagues erupted among the people, the devout Christians always turned to Mother Mary for protection and healing. During these days of the pandemic, let us turn to Mother Mary for protection and healing.

Share Anecdotes about Our Lady: Just like in most good birthday celebrations, stories and anecdotes about the person are recounted. Why not do the same for Our Lady's celebration? Each family has anecdotes of miracles and favours granted them. Then, there are the other stories passed down by Catholic Tradition. Further, books like *The Glories of Mary* by St Alphonsus Ligouri contains a treasury of marvellous miracles performed by the Blessed Virgin Mary. We can profitably read this book or any other book on Our Lady that we have in our collection during these days of preparation for the feast. We can share some of these anecdotes with our people in order to reinforce their love for Mother Mary. Encourage our people in their families to do the same.

Light Candles in Every Family: Urge each of our families to light a candle during these eight days as we prepare for the feast. It is one thing to praise our own mothers in the privacy of our home but doing it in public is even more special. Why not for Our Lady? Getting together as many members of the family to light a votive candle is a public act of devotion to Mother Mary.

Do Pilgrimages to Local Shrines: Despite the pandemic that is raging all around us, we can encourage our people to visit the statue of Mother Mary in their nearest churches. We may not be able to travel to distant shrines of Mother Mary; but visiting nearby churches the people can rekindle their love for Mother Mary.

Recite the Rosary: During these days, encourage our people to recite the rosary devotedly in their homes asking Mother Mary to intercede for the world and for the people suffering from the pandemic.

There is an ancient prayer in honour of Our Lady's Nativity that St Anselm composed. Let us fervently recite this prayer these days as we prepare for the Nativity of Mother Mary.

Vouchsafe that I may praise you, O sacred Virgin; give me strength against your enemies, and against the enemy of the whole human race. Give me strength humbly to pray to thee. Give me strength to praise you in prayer with all my powers, through the merits of your most sacred nativity, which for the entire Christian world was a birth of joy, the hope and solace of its life. When you were born, O most holy Virgin, then was the world made light.

Happy is your stock, holy your root, and blessed thy fruit, for you alone as a virgin, filled with the Holy Spirit, did merit to conceive your God, as a virgin to bear your God, as a virgin to bring him forth, and after his birth to remain a virgin.

Have mercy therefore upon me a sinner, and give me aid, O Lady, so that just as your nativity, glorious from the seed of Abraham, sprung from the tribe of Judah, illustrious from the stock of David, did announce joy to the entire world, so may it fill me with true joy and cleanse me from every sin.

Pray for me, O Virgin most prudent, that the gladsome joys of your most helpful nativity may put a cloak over all my sins.

O holy Mother of God, flowering as the lily, pray to your sweet Son for me, a wretched sinner.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Syro-Malabar Synod on Pastoral Care during COVID-19 and Post-COVID-19 Period: I wish to share some of the points discussed by the Synod regarding the engagements of the priests and their pastoral care of the faithful during Covid-19, which we can follow in our Eparchy.

- While taking all the precautionary measures, unnecessary fears about Corona virus is to be removed from all the priests, religious and faithful.
- Now that the Government of Tamil Nadu has permitted to open churches, we shall open all our churches and resume seriously and pastoral and spiritual ministry for our faithful.
- Let us follow faithfully the Covid-19 protocol while celebrating the liturgy in our churches
- Resume the sacrament of confession
- Make sure that all our faithful attend mass on Sundays. In order to give all our faithful opportunities to attend holy Qurbana on Sundays, increase the number of masses as required.
- Pastoral care and communion to the sick and persons above 65 years old and below 10 years old.
- In order to be available to our faithful, let us be present in our presbyteries every evening. Visit some of the families, attend their family prayers, give counselling if needed and end the visit with a blessing.
- Encourage every family to attend Holy Qurbana and to make visits to the Blessed Sacrament.
- It is the responsibility of the parish priests to nourish the faithful with the Word of God on Sundays.
- Gatherings of priests Forane/Eparchial level are to be encouraged and we shall organise regular recollections at Forane/Eparchy level.
- Priests are requested to spend considerable amount of time in praying for their faithful. They are encouraged to pray the Ramsa, the Leliya and the Rosary regularly
- The pastoral life will not be the same any more. The parish priests should have specific pastoral plans for the care of children, youth and senior people in the Eparchy.
- Priests should help the faithful to overcome lockdown mentality and counsel them to come to the Church
- Retreats for priests are to be organised in all the Eparchies, preferably, physically coming together of priests.
- Since people are getting accustomed with online activities, all the priests are encouraged to take initiatives to learn to handle multimedia and online social media.
- Our working style should change. Study the needs and requirements of our faithful and act accordingly.
- So far, our faithful made their home into a DOMESTIC CHURCH. Now, make them understand the importance of PARISH CHURCH as a place for community worship and reception of sacraments.
- Once in a week, organise Holy Qurbana for young people and encourage all youth to participate.
- The observance of *ettu nobu* is made obligatory in our Church and 4 September is a day of fast. Offer a Holy Qurbana on 4 September for the eradication of corona virus.

St John Maria Vianney: The feast of St John Maria Vianney was celebrated in a simple way on 4 August 2020 at St Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkootukal. On the same day, the new academic year in the Seminary was inaugurated. It also coincided with the concluding ceremony of Tamil Classes for the major seminarians. The Tamil teacher Mr Kamala Selvaraj was invited as chief guest and he was honoured during the meeting. Major seminarians published a magazine *Thenn Mozhi*, a collection of handwritten essays and poems in Tamil. The meeting was well-organized by the seminarians and staff of the Seminary. Fathers from the Manjalumoodu

Forane as well as the Curia members were present for the meeting. I thank sincerely Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, Rector, and all the staff and Brothers.

Farewell to Fr Thomas Moolechalil: The Eparchy of Pala had sent Fr Thomas Moolechalil for the mission work in the extended region. For six months, he studied Tamil at St Joseph's Forane Church, Soosaipuram. Then, he went to Sivagangai District and stayed in a rented house studying the possibility of beginning mission works in the area. Since the Corona Virus spread and there was lock down in the State, he came to Thuckalay and resided at Sangamam for the last four months. On 13 August 2020, he left for Pala. We gave him a farewell at Bishop's House as a token of gratitude on 12 August 2020 with the members of Bishop's House. I thank him for his missionary enthusiasm. I wish him all the best for his future ministry.

Prayer for Tamil Nadu and Kerala: One-hour adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was held from 10 to 15 August 2020 to pray for the victims of the natural calamities like landslide at Munnar, flood, Corona virus and air craft accident in Kozhicode that affected Kerala and for the eradication of Corona virus in Tamil Nadu. The dioceses as whole spent these 6 days for affected people.

Transfers and Appointments: The transfers of our Fathers took effect on 17 August 2020. Since the transfers took place during the lock down, kindly meet all the respective members of your new parish and organize the church activities respecting the Covid-19 protocol.

Inauguration of PG Courses at St Alphonsa College: The course for the first year PG students commenced at St Alphonsa Arts and Science College Soosaipuram. The official inauguration was held on 20 August 2020 and I inaugurated the courses. All the teachers were present in the College and students participated through web media. Total number of admissions this year in the College is 282. Online classes are going on. I congratulate the entire College team.

Inter-departmental Meeting: A meeting of the Directors of *Kuzhanthai Iso Iyakkam, Cerupushpa Mission League, Catechism, Youth Apostolate and Family Apostolate* was held on 4 August 2020 at Bishop's House. All the Directors informed about their faith formation programmes and the new ventures that they are planning to launch for the faithful in the coming days. The various departments have prepared the animation programmes and they distributed them to our faithful. As priests, faith formation of our faithful is our prime responsibility. Therefore, Hence, kindly support the Directors and make arrangements to reach out to everyone in the Eparchy through social media with the help of the respective departments.

One-day Retreat and Conference for Priests: A one-day Retreat and Conference for priests was organized on two consecutive days, 26 and 27 August 2020 at Sangamam, so that all the priests could take part on any of the days. It started at 10.00 am with one-hour of talk given by Fr Biji Koipallay from Archeparchy of Changanassery. After the talk, the participants had time for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and for the sacrament of confession. At 1.30 pm, all the participants attended the meeting, which ended at 3.00 pm. I sincerely thank and appreciate you for your participation and co-operation. Dear Fathers, as I have shared with you the mind of the Synod during our meeting, our prime duty is to preach the Word of God and to carry out pastoral works for the people of God. Kindly spend your time for the celebration of the Holy Qurbana, administration of the sacraments especially confession, visit to the Blessed Sacraments and distribution of Holy Eucharist to the sick and to those who are above 60 years, of course, by taking all the precautionary measures.

A Proud Moment for Thuckalay: The Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church has instituted a number of honours, titles and awards to honour people who have made significant contributions for the growth and enrichment of Christian spirituality, ecclesial life, theology, history, pastoral care and missionary activity. The XXVII Synod of

Bishops, during its session held in January 2019, instituted the title *Prēshithathāram* for those missionaries who have made remarkable contributions to the missionary activities of Syro-Malabar Church. The XXVIII Synod of Bishops held in January 2020 has decided to confer the title *Prēshithathāram* on Mr T. Mariadhas for his outstanding contributions to the Church and to the society in the Eparchy of Thuckalay.

In a meeting held on 28 August 2020 at Mount St Thomas, Major Archbishop conferred the title *Prēshithathāram* on Mr T Mariadhas. While serving as the Bishop of Thuckalay, our Major Archbishop had close acquaintances with him. It was a formal meeting attending by all the Major Archepiscopal curia members and staff of Mount St Thomas. Along with Mr Mariadhas, his family and Mr Edwinson, I attended the award ceremony. We feel happy and honoured that a son from our Eparchy has received this highest award of the Syro-Malabar Church for the Missionary endeavours. We shall have a fitting felicitation programme for Mr Mariadhas in our Eparchy on a convenient day.

INFORMATION

- **Priests Conference** was held for priests of the Eparchy on 6 August 2020 through Google Meet.
- **Pastoral ministry of SABS Sisters at Thakkalivilai:** The FCC Sisters have discontinued their pastoral ministry from Holy Family Church, Thakkalivilai and SABS Sisters have taken charge of the pastoral ministry with effect from 1 September 2020. The Sisters from the Regional House at Soosaipuram will render pastoral services. I wish them God's blessings for the future ministry.
- **Word of Gratitude to FCC Sisters:** I am grateful to the FCC Sisters for giving pastoral assistance at Holy Family Church Thakkalivilai during the past years. The Sisters working at Ozanam old age home at Sahayanagar will continue their work. I wish God's blessings and best wishes to FCC Sisters.
- **Major Seminarians:** Most of the Major Seminarians have returned to their respective Seminaries. Some are in quarantine while others have begun the classes and other formation programmes. I am grateful to Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal and other Fathers who looked after them well during their stay in our Eparchy.
- The Pulari communications will function from KKSSS campus at Kalluvilai and coordinate the media related works of the various departments and pious associations.
- Silver Jubilee action-plan study classes are arranged for all the Fathers and Sisters. Kindly note the respective dates and attend the same.

NEWS FROM THE CURIA

- **Fr M. Christudas** has taken a year of sabbatical from 25 February 2020. During this period, he is freed from the priestly ministry in the Eparchy. He will be making use of the year for his personal prayer and for attending motivational courses. At present, he is attending a retreat at Marian Retreat Centre, Annakkarai, Kumily.
- **Fr Anil Raj Dominic** is attending a three-month retreat at Marian Retreat Centre, Annakkarai, Kumily. He will take charge as Co-ordinator of Madurai Mission in the month of November.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

Forane-wise Study of Silver Jubilee Action-plan

- 09 September 2020 - Padanthalumoodu and Nithravilai Foranes (at Padanthalumoodu)
- 10 September 2020 - Manjalumoodu, Kaliyal and Arukani Foranes (at Minor Seminary)
- 11 September 2020 - Soosaipuram and Thuckalay-Pilankalai Foranes (at Soosaipuram)
- 12 September 2020 - Thenkasi, Madurai, Virudunagar and Thirunelveli Mission

Study of Silver Jubilee Action-plan for Sisters

- 21 September 2020 - SABS, CHF, ASMI, SD (at SABS Regional House Soosaipuram)
23 September 2020 - SH, SDS, DSS (at Minor Seminary Mukkootukal)
24 September 2020 - CMC, FDSHJ, SMSM, OMMI, Vattakottai (at CMC Provincial House Thuckalay)
24 September 2020 - FCC, MMM, SJSM, LSDP (at FCC Provincial House Azhahiyamandabam)
- 17-18 September 2020 - Junior Priests Meeting at Sangamam
19 September 2020 - Pastoral Council,
22 September 2020 - Presbyteral Council, Sangamam

Annual Retreat for Priests from 4 – 9 October 2020 at Sangamam

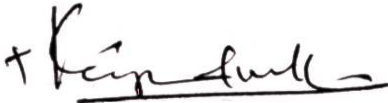
Preacher: Rev. Fr Biji SDB

CONCLUSION

During the month of August, we had come together, though not all, as fellow workers of the Eparchy to celebrate the feast of St John Maria Vianney. This celebration gave us an opportunity to recall our own priesthood and to resolve to live it like St John Maria Vianney by administering the sacraments especially the sacrament of reconciliation as he did. Let us make use of occasions such as feasts of patron Saints of our parishes to boost the faith of our people. In the coming month, as we are already reminded, we shall celebrate one of the important feasts of Blessed Virgin Mary, namely, the Nativity of Mother Mary. The celebration of this feast is a wonderful opportunity for us to grow in Marian piety. 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.

May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

