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Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

Through this circular, I want to bring to your notice, once again, the letter that our Major Archbishop wrote to recently regarding the beatification of Rev. Sr Rani Maria. It was read in all our parish churches recently. The significance that this event will have on the life of the Church in India will be immense as 4 November 2017 is going to be an important day in the annals of the history of Indian Church and of the Syro-Malabar Church. On that day, Rev. Sr Rani Maria will be proclaimed a blessed martyr for Christ at Indore. She was born on 29 January 1954 at Pulluvazhy, Ernakulam, Kerala as the second child of Vattalil Paily and Elizabeth. She joined the Ernakulam Province of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation on 3 June 1972. She made her final profession on 22 May 1980.

Sr Rani Maria spent the first 16 years of her ministry in the Syro-Malabar eparchies of Bijinor and Satna. The last two years of her life were spent in the diocese of Indore. It was in Indore that she was cruelly murdered on 25 February 1995. She became a martyr for Christ. When the tree of the Church took roots and grew in strength, she was watered with the blood of the martyrs. In fact, it is said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity. The Church also proclaims those who sacrifice their lives to uphold Christian values like truth, justice, love and fellowship as martyrs. It is in this sense that the Church is going to acknowledge Rev. Sr Rani Maria as a martyr. In that sense, she is the first woman of the blessed martyrs of India.

Sr Rani Maria put up a strong fight against the exploitation of the poor farm labourers by the rich landowners. She was inspired in this ministry by her strong faith in the Lord and by her valiant determination to stand up against the cruel and oppressive system that was prevalent in those areas and which trampled upon the rights of the poor.

One of the most shining events in this saga of Christian witness was the forgiveness that the parents and the sister of Rev. Sr Rani Maria extended to the murderer in spite of the unspeakable grief that had to bear in their hearts on account of the irreparable loss of their daughter or sister. They followed the footsteps of Gladis Stains who offered forgiveness to the criminals who burned alive her missionary husband Graham Stains and their two children. Their forgiveness will remain shining examples of heroic love, which will inspire many to practise it in their lives as well.

The history of the Catholic Church in India is blessed with heroic lives of saints, blessed ones and servants of God. Rev. Sr Rani Maria is the most recent flower that has blossomed in the spiritual garden of the Christian Church. She is one of those who fought against the forces of injustice and oppression through the sacrifice of their lives in the history of the Church: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn15:13). She is a religious, who practised in her life the love that Jesus proclaimed in a very heroic manner through the sacrifice of his life on the Cross. Her life, work and death are sources of strength to those missionaries who preach the Gospel in very hostile environments. We shall together thank the Lord for this new source of inspiration and encouragement given to the Church in India.

As our Major Archbishop reminded us the celebration in Kerala will be held on 11 November 2017 at the Cathedral Basilica in Ernakulam. The celebration at the home parish of St Thomas Church will

take place on 19 November 2017. These celebrations should inspire our young people to take a benign stand against oppressive systems, to work for the liberation of the poor and to uphold of Christian values. We shall pray for the speedy proclamation of the canonization of Rev. Sr Rani Maria. Let us implore her intercession as we carry out our various ministries.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Pastoral Council: The pastoral council meeting was held at Sangamam on 2 October 2017. Many of the Fathers and other council members attended the meeting. The theme of the council meeting was about providing higher education to our young people. Through the initiatives of the Education Department of the Eparchy, experts were arranged to present the theme very scientifically. The meeting suggested many possible ways to attract our young people to pursue higher education. Towards the end of the meeting, I released a book containing the Guidelines that the recently concluded Syro-Malabar Assembly approved for the Eparchies by giving the first copy to Rev. Mother Ceelia FCC, Provincial of San Joe Province, Thuckalay.

Consecration of Newly Built Church and Golden Jubilee Celebration of Kaliyal Church: The people Kaliyal parish together with their pastor have built a beautiful church. The completion of the construction of the church coincided with the golden jubilee of the establishment of the mission. The CMI Fathers have been working there since its inception. The consecration of St Mary's Church, Kaliyal was held on 8 October 2017 while the golden jubilee celebration was held on 15 October 2017. Many of the Fathers and Sisters participated in these momentous events. I blessed the church and consecrated the altar. We celebrated a solemn Holy Qurbana on the occasion. Rev. Fr Sebastian Chamathara CMI, Provincial, St Joseph Province, Thiruvananthapuram celebrated the Holy Qurbana on the day of the golden jubilee. On the day of golden jubilee, Rt Rev. Jeromedas, Bishop of Kuzhithurai, CMI Provincial and many distinguished guests were present. I also took part in the celebrations. The entire programme was well organized. I thank Rev. Fr Tinu Kottackaparampil CMI, parish priest, other priests who worked in the parish and all the parishioners for their hard work.

Mission League Rally: On 15 October 2017, Mission League of the Eparchy organized a Rally from Kalluvilai to Kattathurai to celebrate the feast of St Theresa of the Child. More than 1500 children participated in the Rally. A number of Catholics from various parishes also participated in the Rally. All the Foranes prepared their own plots, which were attractively decorated. The children in their ornamental dresses waving flags added colour to the entire Rally. In order to exhibit their Faith, the children carried a number of catechetical materials such as flexes, placards, pictures and mission league mottos. Arukani Forane, Manjalumoodu Forane and the Soosaipuram Forane won the first, second and third prizes respectively. The Thuckalay-Pilankalai Forane won the prize for the best plot and the Shenkottai mission got a special prize for their active participation with largest number of children. I congratulate all the Fathers, Sisters, Animators and Coordinators of the Mission Leagues for making the necessary arrangements to bring the children for the Rally. I acknowledge the hard work of Rev. Fr Shojo Erupathanchilchira, Director, Rev. Fr Jose Vayalil, Assistant Director, Rev. Sr Anngace FCC, Secretary, Forane Directors and Animators in organising this event.

Priests' Annual Retreat: Priests' Annual Retreat was held at Sangamam from 16-19 October 2017 and it ended with the Priests' Conference on 20 October 2017. The Bishop-elect Rev. Fr Joseph Pamblani animated the Retreat. I thank him for sharing with us his spiritual insights. I wish him well in his Episcopal ministry. Forty-one Fathers participated in the annual retreat that the Eparchy organised. I thank you dear Fathers for leaving aside all your activities in order to make time to make your spiritual retreat. I also place on record my gratitude to all the Fathers who animated the various liturgical moments during the retreat.

Blessing of Holy Family Church, Thakkalivilai: The newly built church at Thakkalivilai was consecrated and blessed on 21 October 2017. The church is beautifully constructed. The people of the parish along with the parish priest Rev. Fr Linslal Mangalath worked very hard. The FCC Sisters at Thakkalivilai during the past years spent their energies to bring up the faith of the people. I thank the pastors, the parishioners and the FCC sisters for their dedication and hard work in constructing the Church.

Mission Sunday Cover Collection: As the Church by its very nature is missionary (AG 2), this year the Church marked the Mission Sunday on 22 October 2017. I thank all the Fathers for taking initiatives in celebrating this event. Kindly submit the offerings that the people made for the Missions to Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal, Procurator of the Eparchy, at the earliest, so that they can be sent to Rome for the mission work around the globe. I thank each and every Christian faithful of our Eparchy for their support and help for the mission work of the Eparchy as well of the universal Church.

Chain Rosary and Rosary Rally: Chain Rosary in the families was held on 22 October 2017 according to the uraviams. I have received many positive reports on how more people participated this year as compared to other years. Similarly, the Rosary Rally was held from Athencode to Padanthalumoodu on 29 October 2017. I congratulate and thank Rev. Fr. Mathew Mulangasseril, Rev. Fr. M. Christudas, Rev. Robins Kuzhikodiyil and the Mariain Senai members for organising this programme.

Eparchial Day and Conclusion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Major Archiepiscopal Church: We are planning to celebrate the anniversary of the establishment of our Eparchy on 11 November 2017 as Eparchial Day. Mar Thomas Tharayil, Auxiliary Bishop of Changanassery, will preside over the celebrations. He is visiting our Eparchy for the first time for an official programme after his Episcopal Ordination. Let us welcome Bishop Thomas Tharayil to our Eparchy wholeheartedly. Along with the Eparchial Day Celebrations, we are also marking the conclusion of the Silver Jubilee of the establishment of the Syro-Malabar Church as Major Archiepiscopal Church. The celebration begins with Holy Qurbana at 9.30am. During the felicitation ceremony, we shall honour the missionaries of the Eparchy with *Sevai Semmal* Awards. The programme ends with lunch at 1.00 pm. Dear Fathers, since the Holy Qurbana that we celebrate on that day is a thanksgiving Eucharist for all the blessings that we have received as an Eparchy during the past years, I invite you all to concelebrate it as a sign of our unity as members of the one presbyterium.

Extension of the Territory of the Eparchy: On 9 October 2017, by his historic order, Pope Francis restored the "All India Jurisdiction" of the Syro Malabar Church. Two new Eparchies- Shamshabad and Hosur were created and the boundaries of the Eparchies of Thuckalay and Ramanadapuram were extended. We received a letter from the Congregation of the Oriental Churches informing us that the territory of our Eparchy has been extended. It now includes the civil districts of Kanyakumari, Madurai, Theni, Virudhanagar, Sivangagai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi of Tamilnadu State. The official announcement in our Eparchy will be held on 11 November 2017 during the Eparchial Day celebrations. While we thank the Lord for giving us a vast territory to look after, it also calls for hard work. We need to find personnel and resources to extend our ministries to these territories.

Blessing of DNN Additional Building: The additional structure that we made to accommodate more patients at DNN is completed and its blessing will be held along with the annual day celebrations on 30 November 2017. Rev. Fr Vinod Kanakalil initiated the construction work and

worked hard to raise the required funds for the building. We are grateful to him and to the benefactors for supporting financially for the construction work. I request everyone to come for the blessing and share our joy with the inmates of DNN.

Transfers and Appointments:

- **Rev. Fr Christudas** is appointed as the parish priest of St Maria Goretti Parish, Athencode. He took charge on 29 October 2017.
- **Rev. Fr Mathew Mulangasseril** is relieved from the St Maria Goretti Parish, Athencode as its vicar. He is now the fulltime Director of Sychar Resource Centre at Kozhipporvilai. He is also the Priest in-charge of St Thomas Church, Perumchilampu. He took charge on 29 October 2017.
- **Rev. Fr Johnsilal Arackaparambil** is relieved from the office of priest in-charge of St Thomas Church, Perumchilampu.

INFORMATION

- ❖ The Fathers of our Eparchy went to Ernakulam for a picnic-cum-pilgrimage on 25 October 2017. Our Major Archbishop George Cardinal Alencherry was very happy to welcome all the Fathers. I thank all the Fathers who took part in this Picnic. I sincerely thank Rev. Fr Linslal Mangalath, Rev. Fr Sanil Panthichirackal and Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal who took the initiative in arranging the programme.
- ❖ The Brothers from the Dharmaram Seminary, Bangalore came to our Eparchy on 21 October 2017 for mission experience and returned to their Seminary on 26 October 2017. They shared with me the wonderful mission experiences that they had in different parishes in which they stayed. I sincerely thank Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan, Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Rev. Fr Ajeesh Attiyil, Rev. Fr Jinu Thekkethalackal and Rev. Fr Saji Elampasseril sdb for arranging this programme and for providing opportunities for the Brothers to see the missionary activities of the Eparchy and to interact with people.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil returned to Rome on 24 October 2017 after his brief vacation during which he spent much of his time collecting data for his doctoral thesis.
- ❖ The Episcopal ordination of newly elected bishops of our Syro-Malabar Church will be held as follows: Rev. Dr Joseph Pamplani, Auxiliary Bishop of Thalassery will be held on 8 November 2017; Rev. Dr Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, Curia Bishop of Syro-Malabar Church will be held on 12 November 2017 at Kanjirapally; Rev. Dr Tony Neelankavil, Auxiliary Bishop of Trichur, will be held on 18 November 2017; Rev. Fr Sebastian Pozhiparambil, Bishop of Hosur will be held on 22 November 2017; and the installation of Mar Raphel Thattil as the Bishop of Shamshabath will be held on 7 January 2018.
- ❖ I will represent the Eparchy for the beatification of Rev. Sr Rani Maria FCC, which will be held on 4 November 2017. I shall leave for Indore on 2 November. I will also meet our Brothers studying at Ujjain.
- ❖ We have planned an Eparchial level thanksgiving celebration for the beatification of Rev. Sr Rani Maria on 25 November at 2.00pm at Thettiyode parish. Kindly join the celebration in person and also with representatives from all the Departments as mentioned in the circular letter.
- ❖ I have attached a letter that our District Collector wrote requesting us to create awareness among our people on dangers of *Dengu* during Sunday liturgy. Kindly do the needful.
- ❖ Please note: the pre-Christmas gathering for our presbyterium will be on **December 19**, by 5.00 pm at Sangamam. Kindly anticipate all your programs and be present.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

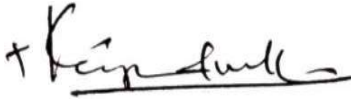
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| 04 November 2017 | - Beatification of Rev. Sr Rani Maria |
| 11 November 2017 | - Diocesan Day Celebration |
| 14 November 2017 | - Priests conference |
| 25 November 2017 | - Eparchial level celebration of the beatification of Rev. Sr Rani Maria at Thettiyode |
| 30 November 2017 | - Blessing of DNN New Block |

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 extension of the territory of our Eparchy, let us now redouble our efforts at building up the kingdom of God with greater commitment and fervour.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

