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Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

Pope Francis, on the occasion of his Christmas message for the Roman Curia in 2014, spoke about some of the diseases that can cripple the effectiveness of ministry among pastors. He is of the opinion that in the life of a priest a constant examination of conscience would help him to be focused in his task. It had been the practice of the Desert Fathers who did it with the help of a prepared list, in order to prepare properly for the sacrament of Reconciliation. As Pope points out, a healing comes about through the awareness of one's sickness and their personal decision of patiently and perseveringly applying appropriate remedies. Pope Francis mentioned three sets of 5 diseases making fifteen probable diseases and temptations, which weaken the vital, personal, authentic and true relationship that a pastor should have with Christ. The ordering of the diseases is neither chronological nor sequential. In this letter, I am putting forward for your consideration seven of those diseases that Pope Francis mentioned.

The first disease is thinking that life of a priest is immortal, immune or indispensable: Those priests, who think in this way, turn to be lords and masters. They place themselves above others and not at their service. It is an effect of the pathology of power, from a superiority complex.

A priest may come from poor economic background or have poor intellectual capacities. In such a case the priest should have a balanced personality emerging from his spirituality that enables him to keep a humility and simplicity of life. He may be in whatever status of life in which he gets the calling of God. But some search for compensation in their status by thinking about themselves as priests in an exaggerated way and this happens to some of them. Sometimes it could be an outcome of a lot of money he has illegally accumulated in his priesthood and tries to show his power of money by lording over people.

It could also be a sheer act of immaturity of a priest who has not taken efforts to grow by having recourse to the Word of God and prayer to keep a correct profile of his life. He tends to forget that he is above all a servant to all parishioners. The example of the washing of the feet by Christ should touch and transform him.

Another disease is Martha Complex: There was a woman called Martha living with her brother Lazarus and her sister Mary. Jesus now and then used to stay in that family. The coming of Jesus to their family was to show that he was ready to listen to their burdens and problems of their lives and to impart the message of good news that would liberate them from several woes. He was there ready to hear in a sympathetic and patient way. Hence he gave them time by being present in their family. Mary understood this and sat down at his feet and poured out her problems especially those pertaining to her earlier life. She was expecting from Jesus the liberating words of God in order to

attain her peace of mind and heart as well as to be filled by the grace of God. Jesus appreciated her attitude and her values that she wanted to align herself along with the values of the Kingdom preached by Christ.

But her sister Martha had a different frame of mind. She wanted to give a big treat with several tasty dishes to Jesus. Hence she was too busy on that and even got tired in the course of the work. This made her feel that her sister Mary should have given a helping hand to her in this task and not sit idle with Jesus. This was a misjudgement of Martha on the whole situation. She pointed out to Christ that he should have asked her to help her work in the kitchen, meant to make Jesus happy.

Thus there were two sets of values at work: one set of values was to be busy for Jesus with worldly affairs like preparing a good meal and the second was to be busy with Jesus to reenergize oneself with the spiritual energy given by Christ. Likewise there are priests who busy themselves with several activities in the parish: some traditional works and some undertaken out of their goodwill for the welfare of the parishioners. In this process he is like Martha, busy and easily becomes a prey to fatigue that comes out like complaints by Martha. Jesus clarified that he came to them to have a meal with them but what is more important is that Jesus wanted to spend his personal time with them talking, dialoguing and offering the life-giving message of God. In his presence at home they should seek the right choice like Mary.

Every priest should realize that he has in his midst in the chapel/church the presence of the Blessed Sacrament where Jesus is personally making himself available to the priest at whatever time and as long as he requires it. When a priest does not have this value system and practice it he has, as Pope says, Martha-complex, an excessive business mind and fatigue, emerging out of several social and other engagements, a priest undertakes either for himself or for his parishioners. The lacuna in such lives is that the priest does not create a balance and budgeting of time between being busy for people and finding the needed time with Christ in the Eucharist.

We must take a serious note of two instances in the Gospel: (Mk 6:31-32) “Then he said to them ‘go off by yourselves to a remote place and have some rest’. For there were so many people coming and going that the apostles had no time to even eat. And they went away in the boat to a secluded area by themselves”. Secondly (Mt 11:28-30): “Come to me all who work hard and who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest. For my yoke is good and my burden is light”. The priest who says that his work is his prayer is a typical example of a priest with Martha-complex, personified.

The third disease is mental and spiritual petrification: Certain priests are filled with zeal after their ordination. But as days go because of their acquisition of wrong values and keeping a distance with Jesus internally they fall a victim to greediness of money that makes them demand money for any service they do forgetting, that a priest is ordained and is maintained for day to day life by the Church. This accumulation of money and increase in greediness manifest themselves by cheating in proper accountability and transparency in financial transactions with regard to the money of the Church and of people. With the accumulation of money there is a temptation to fall a prey to alcoholic drinks and in getting interested in unwanted relationships leading up to sexual misconduct with the other sex. It also leads to group-complex of priests to join with those priests of their vested interest and do mischief in their priestly life.

In short, such a deviation and disease lead to a hardness of heart that abandons the grace of God and the duty to show mercy to the poor and other Christians. These are priests who lose their sentiments of Jesus and people.

The fourth disease is excessive planning and functionalism: This is not a very common disease but found easily with those who always desire high posts in the diocese or who actually have responsible positions. Planning and its diligent execution are important and essential. But, to make it an end by itself, will multiply group activities under any responsibility and have too many meetings to plan. Planning becomes so excessive that it takes away much of the time of execution. When they reach a level of saturation in planning people may abandon it and they become thus disgruntled with people. Instead of blaming such a situation and the attitude of people they should look into themselves whether they have such a disease and get healed from it.

The fifth disease is poor coordination among several activities: It develops when the communion between members is lost. The body, then, loses its harmonious functionality and its temperance. It becomes an orchestra of cacophony because the members do not collaborate and do not work with a spirit of communion or as a team.

The sixth disease is spiritual Alzheimer: It consists of losing the memory of our personal salvation history, our past history with the Lord and our first love of his call to priesthood. Pope Francis summarizes it saying “We see it in those who have lost the memory of their encounter with the Lord.”

This is one of the constant themes insisted by the Pope to priests. Priests are not selected because they are worthy of priesthood but they are selected by God and gradually by His Grace are formed them as His own priests if they cooperate with Jesus like the Apostles, except Judas. Each priest should realize his own history of sins and sometimes serious ones but forgiven by the mercy of God and entered into His embrace. He must also fully accept that if God’s grace does not continually enrich him by his daily encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist and in his personal prayer his life would be in shambles. When he loses his memory of his own history of salvation he fails to become an instrument of God to bring a personal transformation in the lives of his parishioners.

The ministry and the life of a priest remain faithful to God and to his ministry among people only if he remembers that as a priest how dependent he was and is in his relationship with Jesus and its deepening and enrichment through his prayer life. Every priest should look into himself to see whether the disease of spiritual Alzheimer is gradually setting into his life or has already set in. The physical Alzheimer disease does not have today much remedies but the disease of spiritual Alzheimer has very effective healing means at our disposal. Unless we know the way out we will not be able to take it.

The seventh disease is rivalry and vain glory that arises out of titles of honour: There are different titles of honour in every diocese: The Vicar General, the Procurator, the Chancellor, the Vicar Forane, Director of a Diocesan Centre, Coordinator of Commissions, etc. All these titles of honour are meant for services to priests and to several parishes. When a priest takes away the essential element of service and commitment he keeps holding on only to titles, given to him. It is like honey, taken away from the beehive, and it becomes an empty honeycomb. The honey gatherers will not go after it except to make some commercial use like making wax candle.

When title of honour loses its quality of service and commitment, they become mere titles. In such cases there could be a temptation that the title of honour is loved and esteemed greatly by the person who is given them. The title is loved for itself, as a sign of honour and the person tends to love himself and desires further honours to be given by others because of his title or position of power. Instead of commanding honour they may start demanding it and place oneself in a self-made hierarchy of honours. It tempts one to change his language of love and respect into one of asserting one’s power position and domineering tendencies. This sickness directly clashes with the values of

Christ who washed the feet of his disciples and admonished them against such temptations and disease. Jn 13:12- 15 “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I, then, Your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also must wash one another’s feet. I have given you an example that as I have done, you also may do. Truly I say to you, the servant is not greater than his master, nor is the messenger greater than he who sent him. Understand this, and blessed are you if you put it into practice.”

The above-mentioned diseases of Pope Francis are the fruit of his reflection arising from his long years of ministry as priest, as Bishop and as Cardinal. Like a good steward, he has drawn, from the stock of his experiences these reflections to enrich the lives of priests. It shows the deep authentic faith life of Pope as well as his love and concern for his priests. Let us give a thought to them and make a serious reflection on our own life as priests.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Catechism Department: The Eparchial level Catechism Annual Day celebration was held on 9 July 2017 at Kalluvilai. Rev. Fr. Thomas Sathianesan, the Eparchial Chancellor, was the chief guest and Rev. Fr. Dency Mundunadackal and Rev. Fr. Justin Cheruvilil were invited as the guests of honour for the celebration. The catechism children who had won first prizes in the Eparchial level competitions performed a number of items showcasing the talents and gifts that God has showered upon them. The people who served for 25 years as catechism teachers were gratefully remembered and honoured during the programme. I express my sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr Alex Puthettu, Director of catechism, Rev. Fr Ritto Thoompunkal, Assistant Director, promoters, head masters, teachers and the helpers who serve the Eparchy by imparting faith to our young boys and girls. Let us continue to pray for the growth of our catechetical apostolate.

Feast of St Alphonsa at Nagercoil: St. Alphonsa is the first Saint from the Syro-Malabar Church. We are blessed to have a Shrine in her honour at Nagercoil. It is the pilgrim Centre in our Eparchy. The feast day celebrations were well organized for 10 days and thousands of people participated in the celebrations. People in large numbers including many of Fathers participated in the *Nadaipayanam*, which was held on 29 July. They walked many miles praying the Rosary to reach the Shrine. 30 July was the Eparchial Pilgrimage Day. Thousands of faithful from our parishes thronged the St Alphonsa Shrine and took part in the Holy Qurbana, over which I presided. It was gratifying to see the people taking part in the procession at the end of the mass carrying the statues and relics of the saints. I was happy that many Fathers came with their faithful and took part in the programme. I know, many of you visited the shrine on other days as well. I thank you, dear Fathers, for making this feast truly memorable and spiritual. I also sincerely thank Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, Rev. Fr. Ajin Jose and the parishioners for their hard work in organizing the celebrations in a best way possible.

Blessing of the Additional Floor at Sangamam: The newly constructed second floor and the renovated chapel at Sangamam were blessed on 18 July 2017. Now we are able to accommodate nearly sixty people in Sangamam. I sincerely congratulate and thank Rev. Fr. Johnsila Arackaparambil and Rev. Fr. Dency Mundunadackal who worked hard for the completion of the construction. I thank you, dear Fathers, for your prayers and participation during the blessing. Let us remember our benefactors who helped us to complete this work.

TNBC: The summer session of the Tamil Nadu Bishops Council (TNBC) was held from 9-11 July at Velankanni. On 9 July, there was TNPPC meeting. Some representative of the Pastoral council along with Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General, attended this meeting. The private meeting of

Tamil Nadu Bishops began on 10 July. All the Bishops except two were present for the meeting. Various issues related to the Tamil Nadu Church were discussed. We were asked to give more support to Matha TV and to the issues arising out of the Enayam Port. The Oriental Bishops ended the meeting on 11 July.

Shenkottai Mission: I visited the Shenkottai mission on 22 July and blessed the newly built Computer lab of Pulari School. Rev. Fr John Paul, Principal of the school, prepared a beautiful computer lab and painted five classrooms of the lower primary. At 6.00pm we started the recollection talk and it was followed by benediction in the Vanchinagar Church. The regular meeting of Fathers and Sisters of Shenkottai Mission was held at CMC house, Vanchinagar.

Rev. Fr. John Paul, Coordinator of the Mission, thanked everyone for their active presence in the Mission. He also announced some new initiatives. From the month of August, the Shenkottai Mission is going to begin Convention on second Saturday of every month for the faithful at Vanchinagar. He requested the prayerful support of every one for the success of this new venture. He invited all the Fathers and Sisters to join the faithful in giving them spiritual energy. With the support of Rev. Fr. Seby Manimalakandathil, the Shenkottai Mission is going to form a choir group. All those who present in the meeting welcomed these new initiatives. We are grateful to the Mission Coordinator, to all the Fathers and to all the Religious of Shenkottai Mission.

Muzhucode Parish Turns Gold: The inauguration of golden jubilee celebration of St. Thomas Church, Muzhukode was held on 2 July 2017. It coincided the parish day celebration. During the celebration of Holy Qurbana, the golden jubilee celebrations were inaugurated by lighting a specially prepared candle. The faithful remembered the pioneering Fathers who worked hard to initiate the mission. We congratulate the Parish Priest and the CMI Fathers for their dedicated ministry in the Eparchy.

Alphonsa College: After the completion of three years of academic programme, the College has begun PG courses in Commerce, English and Mathematics. We have full strength for M.Sc. and M.A. The first batch of 150 students completed their studies in the College. It is a historic moment for the College that it was able to produce successful students. This year we have admitted 240 students for UG courses. It is a very good number considering the fact that there is competition among the Colleges for admissions. I am happy to note that we have a good and competent administrative and academic team in the College. The presence of our Fathers as Lecturers makes great difference in the College. I am grateful to Fr. Toji and Fr. Dency who work as regular staff.

A unique programme was organized for the family members of staff of St. Alphonsa College on 19 July at the College premises. The staff members came with their spouses, parents and children to the College to spend an evening together. The programme was well arranged and it was a moment for all the teaching staff and the members of the administration to interact with one another. The gathering signified the richness of Alphonsian family. I thank Rev. Fr. Antony Jose and the Principal Mr. Isaiah for taking the initiative in organising such a programme.

Inter-Eparchial Meeting: The Inter-Eparchial Meeting was held on 13 July at Changanassery. Nearly fifty members along with Bishops from the four Dioceses were present. The curia members and Directors of departments from our Eparchy reached Changanassery before time and took part in the meeting. This time the main discussion was centred on the Education scenario in Kerala and the possible responses that the Church can offer. Many contributed their insight during the meeting. There was also a suggestion to activate Christian Students Movements (CSM) in all our Colleges. The meeting came to an end at 12.30 pm.

INFORMATION

- ❖ Rev. Br. Shijo completed his third year of theology at *Collegio Urbanianum*, Rome. He came to India on 30 July. He is doing his pastoral ministry at Holy Cross Church, Malaicode. He will return to Rome to pursue his Licentiate studies in Moral Theology on 18 September 2017. We wish him a successful ministry in the Eparchy.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Jose Vayalil is elected the Asstt. Director of Tamil Nadu Region of CML. Hearty congratulations and best wishes!
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Santhosh with other Youth Directors and Delegates left for Indonesia on 28 July to take part in the Asian Youth Day 2017 celebration. He will return on 9 August 2017.
- ❖ We had to postpone the Pastoral Council meeting scheduled for 15 July. It was because 15 July was a working day.
- ❖ Rev. Sr. Sibi CMC, Mother General of CMC Congregation, visited the Bishop's House on 29 July and was given a warm welcome. Along with her Council, she is making the canonical visitation of CMC Vice Province, Thuckalay. We welcome her and the team!
- ❖ The conclusion of the golden Jubilee celebration of St Mary's Church, Kaliyal will be held on 15 October. The blessing of new Church will be held on 7 October 2017.
- ❖ The Priest Conference scheduled for 8 August 2017 is cancelled.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil, Fr. Ginoy Thottiyil and Rev. Fr. Thomas Thuckalay are attending the Priests' Convention at Attapady. The Convention began on 30 July and it will end on 4 August 2017. Let us keep them in our prayers
- ❖ Rev Fr. Printo Kurias made his retreat at Kurusumala, Wagaman and returned on 29 July. He will not be joining our Annual Retreat, as he will be having classes on those days.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Mijo Puthenpurayil will complete his spiritual experience and retreat programme at Attapady in the month of August.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Jimmy will be coming to the Eparchy on 2 October and will return to Rome on 16 October. He is coming to India for further research in connection with his Doctoral studies. He will also undergo some medical treatment.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Abin Poovathummoottil has begun his M.S.W classes at Loyola, Chennai. His place of residence is at Syro-Malabar parish, Mugaperu, Chennai
- ❖ The OMMI Secular Institute celebrated 50 years of their presence in India on 30 June 2017 at Thellakam, Kottayam. Our Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry was the chief guest for the Golden Jubilee celebrations. We congratulate the OMMI Sisters!
- ❖ The construction of extension building at DNN is going on.
- ❖ Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal has reached home on 31 July after completing his doctoral studies in Rome. He will take up his responsibility in the diocese next month. We welcome him wholeheartedly.

Prayers Requested:

- ❖ Rev. Fr. Antony Madapurackal is back to the parish on 29 July. He is little better but he will have to go to the hospital for further treatment. Let's keep him in our prayers.
- ❖ On his way back from the Minor seminary, Rev. Fr. Geo Choozhikunnel met with an accident on 21 July and injured his right leg. He was undergoing treatment at Jubilee Mission Hospital, Trivandrum and on 1 August he returned to his parish.
- ❖ Deacon Subin Scaria, who is doing diaconate course at Mangalapuzha Seminary, Aluva injured his right knee while playing football. He is under medication and taking rest in the seminary.
- ❖ There are still many other Fathers and Sisters, who are not keeping well these days. Let's keep them in our prayers.

Rest in Peace

Rev. Sr. Aleyamma SDS passed away on 27 July 2017 at RCC Hospital, Trivandrum. She was suffering from breast cancer. We express our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Rev. Sr. Lissy George SDS and the Sisters. Rev. Sr. Aleyamma served in the Bishop's House for nine years as receptionist. She received every visitor to the Bishop's House with an unfailing smile and maternal care. She was committed to the duties entrusted to her. Her service in Germany as a medical nurse had been highly appreciated. As a consecrated woman, she always lived a life of prayer, integrity, simplicity and commitment. Her life is a source of inspiration for all of us missionaries. Wherever she went, she spread the fragrance of joy and happiness.

The funeral was held on 28 July at 2.30 pm at SDS Convent, Manjalumoodu. There was a concelebrated requiem mass. Many Fathers, Sisters and faithful from Manjalumoodu parish were present for the funeral service. Let us continue to pray for the departed soul and bereaved community. Thank you, dear Fathers, for your prayerful presence at this moment of bereavement.

- ❖ Rev. Sr. Jancy FCC lost her father Mr. Scaria on 12 July 2017.
- ❖ Rev. Sr. Celi Anto FCC lost her Mother Mrs. Kunjamma on 16 July 2017.
- ❖ Rev. Sr. Johncy FCC lost her father Mr. Joseph on 22 July 2017.

New Assignments:

No.	Name	Assignment	w.e.f.	Place of Residence
1	Fr. Toji Parambilparambil	Full time staff at Alphonsa College. Student: NET/SET	19 July	St. George Church, Munchirai, Puthukkadai P.O. K.K. District - 629 171 Tamilnadu
2	Fr. Dency Mundunadackal	Parish priest of Loreto Matha Church, Pilankarai. He continues with other responsibilities	19 July	Loreto Matha Church, Pilankarai Colechal P.O. K.K. District - 629 251 Tamilnadu
3	Fr. Kurian Koipuram	Parish priest, Anamukham	08 July	Loreto Matha Church Anamukham, Arukani P.O. K.K. District - 629 101 Tamilnadu
4	Fr. Christudas M	Assistant Parish priest: St. Johannes d. T, Marienstr.3, 71229 - Leonberg, Germany. Ph. 0049-7152-9396124	25 July	Pfr. Christudas Poststr 40 71229 – Leonberg, Germany. Ph. 0049-7152-3376726
5	Fr. Sajan Nettaponghu	Asstt. Parish priest of St. Kentigern, Fallowefield and St. Edward, Rusholme,	21 August	Rusholme, Salford, Great Britan

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

- 04 August 2017 - Feast of St Maria Vianney. Priests Day Celebration will be held at St Mary's Minor Seminary Mukkoottukal. I request all the Fathers to reach the venue by 9.30 am
- 11 August 2017 - Inter-Department Meeting in the Bishop's House at 2.30pm.

14 August 2017 - Priests and Religious Sangamam at St Alphonsa Shrine Nagercoil. Kindly reach by 9.30am. The meeting will end with lunch.
21 Aug - 2 Sep 2017 - Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod at Kakkanad

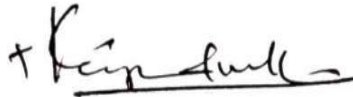
Priests' Annual Retreat will be held at Sangamam from 15-19 October 2017. Rev. Fr Joseph Pamblani will animate it.

CONCLUSION

The month of August offers us with a number of feasts not only for celebration but also for our edification. On 4 August we shall celebrate the feast of St John Mary Vianney. He is the patron of all Parish Priests as well as the Diocesan Priests. A poor boy from Dardilly, he was ordained a priest through compassion and was in-charge of an isolated parish. However, it was this man who became a teacher and model even for the Popes who sat on the Chair of Peter, who are inspired by him and hold him up for emulation to the entire Church. All these happened because of the strange logic of God who chooses the little ones to depose the mighty. While wishing you a happy feast to all of you, let us reflect on the priesthood of this humble little saint who changed a town and a world through his life of prayer and simplicity. On 15 August we celebrate the twin festivals of Assumption of our Blessed Mother Mary and the Independence of our beloved motherland. Assumption is an expression of our deep faith because we believe in the real, physical elevation of the sinless soul and incorrupt body of our Mother Mary into Heaven. 15 August also commemorates the independence that we obtained from the United Kingdom after years of struggle. On this day, let us pray for the wellbeing of our country and ask Mother Mary to intercede for us so that we become free from every form of bondage and be with her one day in heaven.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

