



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb

Diocese of Thuckalay

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Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

We are in the month of October – the month of the holy rosary. The rosary is a devotion dear to all of us. We pray the rosary every day. Let us briefly reflect upon the beauty of this devotion and learn to appreciate the depth of meaning this prayer has for each one of us. In his *Introduction to a Devout Life*, St Francis de Sales counsels Philothea: “The rosary is a very useful way to pray, provided you know how to say it appropriately, and for that acquire one of the little books that teach the manner to recite it in.” St Francis is referring to certain widely diffused works providing visual images and textual meditations for the rosary mysteries. Such works followed the adage, *Rosarium magis est modus praedicandi quam orandi*, ‘The rosary is [even] more of a way of preaching than it is of praying’. These books were a miniature theology of the mysteries of the life of Jesus and the life of Mary, offered with a view to feeding minds and hearts. So they were not just accounts of how to meditate. But of course they did also set out to nourish prayer. Typically, they tell us that, in this prayer, we are to focus our imagination on the tableau – the icon – of each mystery, asking from God the grace to penetrate it and to understand it.

At the same time, though, since this is our own individual prayer, we also need to approach the mysteries under those aspects that suit us personally best. We cannot just rely on books; we must experiment for ourselves. This would be in line with the well known advice given by Abbot John Chapman of Downside, ‘Pray as you can, not as you can't.’ That is normally good counsel, but notice how successfully the doctrinal and theological objectivity of the rosary mysteries guard Chapman's advice from a false subjectivism that would undermine its value. Though, even here we must be careful to leave each person his or her due freedom. The French Dominican Jean de Menasce wrote: “It takes much love to want for others their truth, which is the Truth accommodated to their appetite and capacity.”

There is, then, a very personal aspect to the rosary, which the objectivity of the prayers by no means suppresses. As soon as one is struck, held, grasped, by some aspect of a mystery one should, surely, learn to rest in this aspect. This is how, in the rosary, the prayer of simple regard comes about. We are drawn into a simple looking that is accompanied by what the French call *complaisance*, a deep satisfaction in that very looking. This is the central act of contemplation, when the work of the understanding is not suspended in the sense of brought to a finish but is, rather, held in a moment of suspense, held there by admiration, by wonder.

As in all prayers, we also have the freedom to interpose our own affectionate impulses towards God as and when we feel carried forward toward him in so doing. Then, in due course, we return to the ‘play’ of the mysteries themselves, this play where we shall never be masters of the game because we will always, even in heaven, be beggars asking God for their fruits.

That leads us to speak about the significance of the vocal prayers in the rosary. In his doctrine of prayer, St Thomas maintains that when we pray there is a sense in which we never get beyond the prayer of petition. Asking God for things is always the proper business of a creature and above all a redeemed creature: a creature that is, as it were, created twice over – not only created but re-created – and thus depends in a twofold way on the

goodness of God. It is appropriate, accordingly, that each unit of the rosary begins with the Our Father which is the petitionary prayer par excellence.

Of course, St Thomas did not mean to set petitionary prayer over against contemplative prayer: his insight here is that we receive what we contemplate by way, precisely, of petition. In the Our Father we ask for the fundamental object of all Christian prayer, which is the Kingdom. By saying the Pater in the rosary we contemplate those mysteries in which the Kingdom is offered to us for the asking.

We can say in fact that the moment of the Our Father is the moment of the mystery contemplated. For St Maximus, the Confessor, “the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer summarise all that the Holy Trinity is and has done for us. They name God as the Father of the Son, in whom he is revealed by the Holy Spirit.” We can say, then, that these words bring before us the entire saving plan of God in all those crucial events in which the Holy Trinity disclosed itself to us, events that the rosary mysteries contain.

More particularly, as each decade opens, we should have Jesus Christ before our eyes, for all the mysteries are mysteries of the work of the One who said, ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father.’ He it is whom Origen of Alexandria called, ‘the Kingdom himself,’ the Kingdom in person.

By contrast with the Our Father, the Hail Marys, present the mysteries as something not only to contemplate but to participate in, as Mary did. It is true that contemplation is not to be contrasted with participation. And yet there is a difference.

When we are driving along in a car, the way we see things could be compared not unfairly to watching television. We may be contemplating – a landscape, say, or a townscape – but the fact that everything is framed by the car window – just as it is on television by the screen – renders our observation to a degree passive. If we make the same journey on a bicycle, we notice the difference immediately. Now the frame has gone, and we are in contact. On a bicycle, the sense of presence is overwhelming. And so in rosary we need to remove the frame. We are to make contemplation participation by inviting the Lord himself into our hearts, and there is already something of this as we move from the Our Father to the Hail Mary.

The angelic salutation, the first part of the Hail Mary, proclaims how the Kingdom became interior in the one who was full of grace, reminding us how in Mary our race was divinely adopted, as human nature was united to the Logos. In the early patristic centuries contemplation was thought of as essentially a matter of being reminded. It was the ‘remembering of God’, God in his creative and redemptive activity. And for Scripture and the early Fathers, such remembering already includes an element of personal engagement. ‘I ponder all your works’, wrote the author of Psalm 118, the alphabetic psalm of the love of God, Pascal’s favourite; ‘I muse on what your hand has wrought’. ‘Think on these things’, St Paul advises the Philippians. And in St Luke’s Gospel the Mother of Christ herself ‘kept all these things and pondered them in her heart’.

But then the Holy Mary, the second part of the prayer, goes beyond engaged remembering, even the engaged remembering of how the Kingdom became interior in Mary. The Holy Mary speaks of the way Mary’s interior appropriation of the Kingdom is now to be transferred from her to ourselves. ‘Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.’ We are invited to have Christ not just before our eyes but in our hearts as we open ourselves to the plan of God for us, a plan which should have its fulfilment ‘at the hour of our death’. In the words of the Irish Poet W. B. Yeats, ‘Far-off, most sweet and inviolate Rose/ Enfold me in my hour of hours’. The rosary concludes of course with the *Salve Regina* which tells of how our estrangement from the rose-garden will be ended when Mary gives us a vision of her Son. This is the reality in which all our doctrine terminates, as the English mystic Mother Julian of Norwich saw: “And then we shall all come into our Lord, our self clearly knowing and God fulsomely having.” In the rosary there is a special educational method which makes dogma pass through the hands of Mary, and it is at the same time powerfully supernatural and yet easily practiced.

All in all, then, these prayers – the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Holy Mary, as prayed in the context of the mysteries – convey the Church’s sense that the Incarnation of the Son of God is the most wonderful thing that

has ever happened in history. In this way, they restore to our minds the joy which is at the foundation of the Christian life. That joy has its expression in the last of the vocal prayers, the doxology, with its pouring out of glory on the Father who holds out to us the Son and makes his work effective for us in the Holy Spirit. The overall mystery unfolds from the Father and returns to the Father again, and the entire Holy Trinity is involved throughout it.

Due to covid-19 protocols, this year, we cannot organise rosary processions with all the faithful at the Eparchial level. We shall also eschew the practice of chain rosary. However, with a limited number of faithful, we can organise rosary services at the parish level. We can request the members of the Marian Senai in the parish to take more initiatives in organising such services in the parishes. Let us also encourage all our people to pray the rosary in their homes faithfully every evening.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Directions for the celebration of Sacrament of Penance in the Emergency Situation of the Corona virus: His Eminence Mauro Cardinal Piacenza, Prefect of Major Penitentiary, has given some directions for the celebration of Sacrament of Reconciliation in the emergency situation of the Corona virus. I wish to share with you some of the salient features:

- In this present pandemic emergency, it belongs to the diocesan bishop to indicate to priests and penitents the cautious attentiveness that should be adopted in the individual celebration of sacramental reconciliation, such as, i) being in a ventilated place, ii) outside the confessional, iii) the adoption of a suitable distance, iv) the use of protective masks, v) subject to absolute attention to the safeguarding of the sacramental seal and the required discretion.
- Moreover, it is always up to the diocesan bishop to determine which cases are of grave necessity and require collective absolution within the territory of his own ecclesiastic circumscription and depending on the level of pandemic contagion: for example, the entrance to hospital wards where there are infected faithful who are in danger of death, using as much as possible and with the necessary precautions, means of vocal amplification so that the absolution may be heard.
- Where necessary, the need and possibility of forming groups of “extraordinary hospital chaplains” in agreement with health authorities should be evaluated, even on a voluntary basis and in respect of regulation for the protection from contagion, in order to guarantee the necessary spiritual assistance to the sick and the dying.
- Where individual faithful should be in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, loved above all else, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (one which the penitent is able to express in that moment) and accompanied by the *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to receive sacramental confession as soon as possible, obtains the forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. ccc, n. 1452)

Syro-Malabar Church suggests that we follow the particular law the Church **with regard to the dispensation from the marriage banns and the betrothal.**

- **Article 161 §1:** The local hierarch of either of the parties may grant dispensation from betrothal for just and sufficient reasons on written application of both the parties, endorsed by the respective parish priests. The parish priest of the party who has obtained the dispensation shall communicate the matter to the parish priest of the other party along with Form B.
- **Article 161**
§1: For just and sufficient reasons, the publication of banns can be dispensed.
§2: The Parish Priest is competent to dispense from one of the banns and the proto-presbyter from two. Dispensation from all the three banns is to be granted only by the local hierarch.

§3: If banns are published only once, the marriage cannot be celebrated on the same day without the permission of the local hierarch.

§4: In the case of dispensation from banns as per §§ 2&3, either of the parties shall submit a petition, stating the reasons, to the competent authority.

§5: If dispensation from banns is to be obtained, it shall be entered in the register for betrothal and in Form B. If dispensation is received, the matter shall be communicated to the concerned parish priest.

Blessing of Foundation Stone for the MMM Convent: The Sisters of MMM Congregation who are residing at Kuzhithurai bought a piece of land near Padanthalumoodu for a convent. Now, they have started the construction of the convent. I blessed the foundation stone and laid on 2 September 2020 in the presence of MMM Sisters, Curia members, Priests and Sisters from the Padanthalumoodu Forane. I wish them God's blessings for the completion of the construction.

Holy Qurbana for Covid-19: Syro-Malabar Church dedicated the *Ettu Nonbu* as days of prayer and penance to control the spread of Covid-19 in the world. The faithful were asked to attend Holy Qurbana and to observe a day of fasting on 4 September 2020 for the intentions of the Church. I thank all the Fathers, Sisters and faithful for observing it as a day of penance and for praying for lessening of the corona virus.

SABS Sisters at Thakkalivilai Parish: SABS Sisters took charge for the pastoral work in the Holy Family Church, Thakkalivilai on 7 September 2020. On the same day itself the FCC Sisters were also given farewell by the parishioners. The Provincial of FCC Congregation and the Regional Superior of SABS Congregation were present on the occasion.

Presentation of Silver Jubilee Action-plan: The action plan prepared for the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Eparchy was introduced to the Fathers, Sisters and the members of the Pastoral Council. The meetings were conducted on the following dates and places: on 9 September 2020 - Padanthalumoodu and Nithravilai Foranes (at Padanthalumoodu); on 10 September 2020 - Manjalumoodu, Kaliyal and Arukani Foranes (at Minor Seminary); on 11 September 2020 - Soosaipuram and Thuckalay-Pilankalai Foranes (at Soosaipuram); on 12 September 2020- Thenkasi, Madurai, Virudunagar and Thirunelveli Mission. For Sisters the meetings were conducted on 21 September 2020 - SABS, CHF, ASMI, SD (at SABS Regional House, Soosaipuram); on 23 September 2020 - SH, SDS, DSS (at Minor Seminary, Mukkootukal); on 24 September 2020 - CMC, FDSHJ, SMSM, OMMI, Vattakottai (at CMC Provincial House, Thuckalay); on 24 September 2020 - FCC, MMM, SJSJ, LSDP (at FCC Provincial House, Azhagiyamandapam). For the Pastoral Council lay members, the meeting was conducted on 19 September 2020 at the Family Apostolate office, Kalluvilai. I thank all the Fathers involved in preparing the action plan and for presenting it to the various stake-holders.

Junior Priests Meeting at Kalluvilai: A two-day get-together-cum-meeting was arranged for the junior priests at Kalluvilai on 17-18 September 2020. All the junior priests except the priests who are not in the Eparchy took part in the meeting. The resource person of the meeting on 17 September was Rev. Fr Rassal Raj, Chancellor of Kuzhithurai Diocese. The classes on 18 were taken by Mr Isaias, Fr Johnsilal Arackaparambil and Fr Thomas Sathianesan. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil organized the programme. I thank all the participants and the resource persons.

Pastoral Council: Second meeting of VI Pastoral Council was held on 19 September 2020 at Family Apostolate building at Kalluvilai. It started at 9.30am with a prayer. Fr Thomas Sathianesan, Director, welcomed all. I felicitated Mr Mariadhas who received the highest award, *Preshitha Tharam* of Syro-Malabar Church. He is the first person to receive the award for mission work in the Syro-Malabar Church. We are extremely happy that he brought honour to our Eparchy and for himself. I congratulate and wish him God's blessings and good health to

continue his mission work in the Eparchy. Mr John, Secretary of Pastoral Council, was also honoured for his *Nallasiriayar* Award received from the education department. Mr Edwinson felicitated Mr Mariadhas for his award. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, then, presented the Action Plan and explained the various points in detail. The members were divided into 7 groups for better participation in the Pastoral Council. Mr John thanked the participants. I concluded the meeting with a message and a blessing. I thank the director, secretary and Mr Reegon and Mrs Sasikala Vijayakumari.

Presbyteral Council: The meeting of the Presbyteral Council was held at Sangamam on 22 September 2020. The council at length discussed on the Spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical welfare of priests and came forward with some concrete plans and suggestions. One of the suggestions was to pray the *Ramza* together on every Monday through Zoom application. Other suggestions will be informed to you during the Priests' Conference to be held after the Retreat. Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, secretary, organized the meeting well.

INFORMATION

- The joint meeting of Eparchial College of Consulters and Eparchial Finance Council was held on 22 September 2020 at Sangamam. It started at 2.30pm and concluded at 5.00 pm.
- **Death Anniversary of Mother Mariamma FCC:** The first death anniversary of Mother Mariamma FCC was on 29 September. I celebrated the Holy Qurbana at San Joe Provincial House, Azhagiyamandapam on 26 September 2020.
- **Death Anniversary** of Rev. Fr Zacharias Kaithra is on 30 September 2020.
- **RIP: Sr. Kruba CMC, Sr. Blessy CMC, Sr. Mystica FCC, Sr. Seraphine FCC** lost their only brother on 6 September 2020. I visited the family and prayed for him and some of the father attended in the funeral on 7 September 2020 at Assaripallam. The Eparchy expresses heartfelt condolences and prayers to the sisters and family.
- **RIP: Sr. Pavana FCC and Sr. Josmie FCC** lost their younger sister on 28 September 2020. We express our heartfelt condolence and prayers to the sisters and their family. Rev. Fr Sathianesan and Fr. Jebanesh Thomas attended funeral at Thuruthi on 29 September.
- **Mission Sunday:** The World Mission Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday 18 October 2020. The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples has requested to celebrate the Mission Sunday in our parishes, though we are in pandemic situation due to Covid-19 and has asked to support the Congregation through Universal Solidarity Fund. Hence, dear Fathers, I remind you to celebrate the Mission Sunday in your respective parishes and take a collection during the Holy Qurbana and hand over the money to the procurator immediately. This year we are not asking children to visit the families and take collections.
- **Priest and Religious Sangamam:** This year we are not organizing the priests and religious Sangamam. But we are inviting the Jubilarians for a solemn Qurbana at Sangamam on 14 November 2020 at 9.00 am. The Jubilarians please note the date and try to be present on the day of celebration.
- **Annual Retreat for Fathers** will be held from 4-9 October 2020. The retreat will start on 4 September at 6.00 pm with evening prayer and will end on 9 September afternoon with the Priests' Conference. Fr Biji Thomas SDB, from the Salesian province of Kolkata, will be guiding us during the retreat. He is a gifted preacher. Dear Fathers, please come prepared for this residential retreat. Cancel the morning Holy Qurbanas in the parishes from 5-8 October. Please bring your personal Bible and a note pad/diary. Bring the Mass Account Book for verification. Fathers belonging to religious congregations are also welcome for the retreat but should have prior understanding with the VG. However, all the Fathers of Religious Congregations are to join for the lunch on 9 October and participate in the Priests' Conference at 1.30 pm

NEWS FROM THE CURIA

- **Rev. Fr Linslal Mangalath** is relieved from the offices as the parish priest of Christ the King Church Christurajapuram and correspondent of Jayamatha Matriculation School Christurajapuram and he is asked to stay at Sangamam until the next appointment with effect from 23 September 2020.
- **Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam** is appointed temporarily as the parish priest of Christ the King Church Christurajapuram and correspondent of Jayamatha Matriculation School Christurajapuram with effect from 23 September 2020.
- **Rev. Fr Robin Jose** is entrusted with the responsibility of assisting Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam for the pastoral ministry at Christ the King Church Christurajapuram with effect from 23 September 2020.
- **Rev. Fr Tobin Alapurackal** has gone to Tirunelveli and is doing preparatory works for the development of JMJ Trust land at Nanguneri. At present, he is staying with Fr Ginoy Thottiyil in the Edathua House.
- Curia has made arrangements to celebrate Holy Qurbana on weekdays to the Sisters at San Joe FCC Provincial House, Azhagiyamandapam and to the Sisters at St Chavara CMC Provincial House, Thuckalay with effect from 9 September 2020.
- Rev. Fr John Thekkel was admitted in the Holy Cross Hospital due to chest infection on 15 September 2020 and was discharged on 24 September.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

04 – 09 October 2020	- Annual Retreat of Priests at Sangamam
12-13 October	- TNBC at Trichy
22 October 2020	- Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr Plathottam

Annual Retreat for Priests from 4 – 9 October 2020 at Sangamam
Preacher: Rev. Fr Biji Thomas SDB.
It starts on Sunday at 6.00 pm with the evening prayer.

CONCLUSION

The month of October is the month of the mission, although our Syro-Malabar Church normally celebrates it in the beginning of every year. While praying for all the missionaries and financially supporting them through our collections, let us make ourselves worthy missionaries of Christ. As discussed in the beginning, it is also the month of the holy rosary. St John Paul II called the rosary his favourite prayer, in which we meditate with Mary upon the mysteries which she as a mother meditated in her heart. In this month of October, let us make good use of this beautiful prayer to come closer to Jesus and Mary.

May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

