

22 February 2014

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Affectionate greetings from the Bishop's House!

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*

I am sure you are aware of the recently published Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) of our Holy Father.

With a mix of conversational style and formal papal magisterial language, Pope Francis in his Exhortation sets forth a vision for giving the entire Church, at every level, a missionary thrust; he anticipates some objections and confusion, but asks everyone to give it a try.

The Pope calls for renewal and rethinking the way every person and every institution – from the Pope and the Roman Curia down to the parish and its parishioners – live their faith and focus their energies. He recognises the Church must be realistic about the challenges individuals and the world pose to belief today, but – as a Jesuit – he encourages an Ignatian reading of the situation, looking for the people, places and trends where God is present. The practice should lead to greater consolation, joy and courage in sharing the Gospel.

Pope Francis sees the Christian life as being based on knowing and experiencing God's love, mercy and salvation offered to all through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Evangelisation programmes and catechesis must be designed to help people return to that basic knowledge and experience and help them understand Church teaching in light of God having revealing himself as loving and merciful.

The Holy Father apologetically spends a long section of the document talking about the importance of homilies as the one opportunity that the priests have to encourage Catholics to live the faith. He provides detailed suggestions on reading the Biblical texts for the Mass, writing the homily and delivering it. The Pope recognises that some Church teachings and positions on modern issues are confusing to many people, especially outside the Church. He re-affirms the Church teaching that women cannot be priests since Jesus chose only men as his apostles, but he also says women must be involved more in the Church in decision making. He also insists that the defence of the life of the unborn flows from the conviction that every life is sacred, and is a position that will not change.

Pope Francis says that the heart of the Christian moral message is love for one another, which must motivate Christians to share the Gospel, help the poor and work for social justice. He warns of 'spiritual worldliness' which leads apparently good Catholics to be concerned almost exclusively with power or appearances or judging others rather than recognizing their own sin and reaching out to others with the same mercy God offers them.

The Pope highlights Mary not only as a model of faith and fidelity, but as a strong woman and mother who shared many of the joys and sorrows facing people today and, therefore, understands the challenges they face.

POPE FRANCIS URGES CARDINALS TO REFLECT DEEPLY ON FAMILY LIFE

Pope Francis met briefly with cardinals who had gathered for a meeting to reflect on the theme of the family, urging them to consider carefully both the Church's theology and pastoral practice.

"Our reflections must keep before us the beauty of the family and marriage, the greatness of this human reality which is so simple and yet so rich, consisting of joys and hopes, of struggles and sufferings, as is the whole of life," he said on 20 February.

"We will seek to deepen the theology of the family and discern the pastoral practices which our present situation requires."

After extending the prelates "a warm greeting" and thanking "the Lord who has given us these days of meeting and working together," Pope Francis issued a caution against "falling into 'casuistry,'" or case-based reasoning in ethics.

The pontiff noted that such a narrow method would "inevitably diminish the quality of our work" considering "the family, the fundamental cell of society. From the beginning the Creator blessed man and woman so that they might be fruitful and multiply, and so the family is then an image of the Triune God in the world."

Observing the current situation in which "today, the family is looked down upon and mistreated," the Pope called upon the cardinals to recognize and proclaim a more positive vision of the family.

"We are called to acknowledge how beautiful, true and good it is to start a family, to be a family today; and how indispensable the family is for the life of the world and for the future of humanity."

"We are called to make known God's magnificent plan for the family and to help spouses joyfully experience this plan in their lives, as we accompany them amidst so many difficulties," he encouraged.

The Prelates will also be addressed by the dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, and be given an introduction to the theme of the family by Cardinal Walter Kasper.

The extraordinary synod of cardinals on Feb. 20 and 21 comes on the heels of a series of meetings of various cardinal groups gathered earlier this week to discuss Vatican city-state governance and economic issues. On 22 February, Pope Francis will create nineteen new Cardinals, sixteen of voting age.

The soon-to-be cardinals are taking part in the extraordinary synod, whose theme of reflection on the family anticipates the ordinary synod to be held in October of 2014, with the same theme.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

MONTHS' MIND OF REV FR THOMAS THEKKEYIL

The Priests and the people of the Diocese remembered Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkeyil who left for his eternal abode on December 14, 2014. The memorial Holy Qurbana was held on 13 January 2014 at KKSSS, Kaluvilai, where Fr. Thomas worked seven long years. It was an occasion for us to remember and thank God for the blessings and graces He showered on the Diocese through the instrumentality of Rev. Fr Thomas. The parents and dear ones of Rev. Fr Thomas were also present for the Holy Eucharist.

PONGAL CELEBRATIONS WITH THUCKALAY FRIENDS

The Pongal celebration with Thuckalay friends was a unique event in the Diocese. It is our attempt to keep alive the ministry of inter-religious dialogue with our non-Christian friends. The programme began on 15 January 2014. Nearly 50 participants belonging to Hindu and Muslim communities as well as the representatives from our Diocese attended the programme. Speeches delivered during occasion highlighted the importance of unity and brotherliness in the society. I wish to thank Rev. Fr Christudas for coordinating this function.

VANTHUPARUNGAL BIBLE CONVENTION

The *Vanduparungal* monthly retreat Centre at Palugal has completed 75 months of selfless service under the leadership of Rev. Fr Joseph Nedumpuram. In order to commemorate this great occasion the team organized a three-day retreat from 17 - 19 January 2014. It was animated by Rev Fr Dominic Valammanal of Anakkarai, Kanjirapalli Eparchy. Fr Dominic is a legendary preacher endowed with the gift of healing. A large number of faithful from our Diocese took part in the retreat. Some of the participants received the gift of healing. We thank Rev. Fr Joseph Nedumpuam and Rev. Fr Mathew Thekkekkutt and their team for organising this spiritual renewal in the Diocese.

PASTORAL COUNCIL

As planned earlier, the 4th Pastoral Council's 2nd sitting was held on 17 January 2014. More than 55 members were present for the meeting. We began the meeting with a reflection on the latest Apostolic Exhortation of our Holy father Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). The Church exists to give Christ to the world through evangelization. Basing this document and discerning the needs of the Diocese, the Pastoral Council dwelt on two important points: i) Evangelization and founding new Christian communities in the Diocese and ii) the Year of Family. There was a request from the members of the Pastoral Council on how to communicate the proceedings of the meeting to our faithful in the Parishes. Keeping in mind their request, I have already sent to you a short report of the Pastoral Council. Kindly publish this report in your Parish notice board. It will also be published in *Irai Arul*. I thank the Secretary and the Joint Secretary of the Pastoral Council for taking the initiatives to prepare the meeting well in advance. Special thanks go to all the committees for their involvement.

BL CHAVARA'S FEAST CELEBRATED

The Diocesan level celebration of the feast of Bl Kuriakose Chavara's was held on 18 January 2014. The venue was well prepared by the CMI Fathers at Little Flower Church, Plankalai. Most of the Fathers and many representatives from different Parishes took part in the celebrations. The concelebrated Holy Qurbana began at 4.00 PM. At the beginning of the Mass, Mr Mariadass

presented a brief life sketch of Blessed Chavara. During the celebration we remembered the commendable contributions made by Bl. Chavara to the Syro-Malabar Church. The CMI and CMC Congregations he founded are the living monuments today both in India as well as abroad. We take this opportunity to thank the CMI Fathers for sharing their Charism in our Diocese.

PASTORAL VISIT – THETTIYODE PARISH

I began the first pastoral visit in the Diocese in Thettiyoode Parish on 2 February 2014. Prior to the visit to the Parish, I visited all the families in the evenings and prayed with them. It was a follow up of the Home Mission programme that was conducted some time back in the Parish. Every one received me with great enthusiasm and joy. The Parish and families were well prepared for the Pastoral Visit. In fact everyone was looking forward to that day. On 2 February, the Pastoral Visit lasted the entire day beginning with Holy Qurbana. Later I met with the various Committees and Pious Organizations of the Parish. My hearty congratulations and thanks to Rev. Fr Prince for his meticulous planning, preparation and execution of the days' programmes. All the files and records required for the Parish were updated and kept ready for scrutiny. I am grateful to the Parishioners and FCC Sisters of Thettiyoode for their love and hospitality.

REV. FR PHILIP KODIANTHARA REMEMBERED

We have not yet come to terms with the fact that Rev. Fr Philip Kodianthara is no more with us. We feel that he still lives and acts in the Diocese. He is still present in the minds and heart of every one. The Holy Qurbana on the occasion of his first death anniversary was held on 4 February 2014 at Kayalpuram, the home Parish of Fr Philip. More than two hundred faithful including many Fathers and Sisters from the Diocese took part in the memorial Eucharist and prayed for the departed soul. On 9 February 2014, at the Diocesan level Holy Qurbana was held at Padanthalumoodu. Many people from different Parishes took part in the mass and prayed for Fr Kodianthara. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam was the main celebrant. For this occasion Mr. Vivo of Manchalumoodu Parish prepared a Video CD on Fr Philip titled "*Thucklaiyin Thomaiyaar.*" It was officially released on the occasion. A book titled "*Ezhimain Azhahu*" containing the life sketch of Rev. Fr Kodianthara, edited by Rev. Christudas was also released. I thank Mr. Vivo and his friends of Manchalumoodu Parish and Rev. Fr Christudas and all those who contributed for the book. I am sure all these kind gestures will keep the memory of Fr Philip alive in our midst.

CATHOLIC BISHOP'S CONFERENCE (CBCI) – PALAI

The 31st Plenary assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) was opened at Palai on 4 February with a concelebrated Eucharist presided over by Archbishop Salvatore Pennachio, Apostolic Nuncio to India, and concelebrated by CBCI President Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Vice Presidents Cardinal Baselios Cleemis and Archbishop George Valiamattam, Secretary General Archbishop Albert D'Souza, some 185 Archbishops, Bishops and Secretaries of CBCI Offices and Directors of National Centres of the CBCI.

The Priests of the Diocese of Palai together with the Religious and Lay Leaders joined the inaugural Eucharist and the opening session of the Assembly. The week-long assembly deliberated on the theme: Renewed Church for a Renewed Society in Response to the Call of the Vatican II. I shall present the final statement of the CBCI in our next Priests' Conference on 11 March 2014.

MINOR SEMINARY HOME DAY CELEBRATIONS

On 15 February 2014 the Minor Seminary celebrated the Home Day. **Mar Joseph Perumthottam** Archbishop of Changanassery and I were present for the celebration along with Curia members and Fathers from Manchalumoodu Forane. After the Mass, the meeting began at 11 am with the message of **Mar Joseph Perumthottam**. The parents of the first year brothers were the special guests for the day. During the function we released the Manuscript entitled *THEJUS 2013-14*. The cultural programme by Brothers made the day memorable. The entire programme concluded with an Agape meal. I am grateful to the Seminary community headed by Rev. Fr Tom Kunnumpuram, Rector for organizing the event in a beautiful manner.

YEAR OF THE FAMILY

We are celebrating the YEAR OF THE FAMILY this year. We had discussed this event in the Pastoral Council and formed a special Committee to look into the celebrations that we can organise in the Diocese for the year of the Family. Based on the recommendations of the Committee, we had the Forane level Priests' Conference on 11 February to discuss and to finalise the various celebrations in the Diocese. I am happy that all of you have studied and reflected well on this important event. We are going to inaugurate the Year of the Family in the Diocese on 23 February in all the Parishes by reciting the Holy Rosary at 8.00 pm in all the families. You have already read my Pastoral Letter of 16th February regarding this great event and I believe you have already explained to the people about the Year of the Family and the programmes we are intending to organize. Importance of family prayer and praying the rosary should be give priority in the FAMILY YEAR 2014. My humble suggestion is that you too join a family for the 8.00 pm rosary every day/occasionally, thus the whole diocese prays the Rosary by 8.00pm.

I exhort every one of you to give special attention to this great event in the Parish. May this year be a great opportunity for us to get more into the lives of our people and put God into them! As pastors, you know the condition of our families in parishes. Let this year be a year of renewal of the families and parishes. Kindly follow very carefully to implement all the proposals given by the Year of the Family Committee. The Fathers of *Arukani* and *Manchalumoodu* Foranes came together on 20th February for a Eucharistic vigil service in preparation for the Year of the Family.

FATHERS ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

We have kept the ongoing formation programmes for all the Fathers of the Diocese on the following days:

10th March - All the Fathers will arrive by 5.30 pm.

Vigil Service at 6.00 pm

11th March - Ongoing Formation Programme for all animated by Rev. Fr. Antony Narikulam
Priests' Conference

12th March - Ongoing Formation programme for Junior Priests (within 5 years of Ordination)

It is a great opportunity for us to update ourselves and plan for our pastoral ministry. I request everyone to attend these programmes without fail.

KKSSS- WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

On the occasion of the Inter-national women's day KKSSS has take a unique step to reach out to more than 8000 Self Help Group (SHG) members to commemorate this day. The celebration is planned in each centre of KKSSS with 2 hour program comprising of animation talk on Women

empowerment, safety etc., I request you to organise this event in your unit with help of SHG animator and leaders.

ST ALPHONSA ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE

In order to present our new initiate, the Arts and Science College to our faithful, I have written a short pastoral letter which is to be read on March 2, 2014. Selected college committee members will meet all the parish council members Forane wise on given date and time. I request you to organise this meeting.

TRANSFERS & APPOINTMENTS

Though all our transfers normally take place in May, due to unavoidable circumstances, I have made the following transfers with effect from 2 March 2014.

Sl. No	NAME	APPOINTMENT
1	Rev. Fr John Paul	Parish Priest, St. Mary's Church, Vanchinagar, Director PSS, Sengottai
2	Rev Fr Sajan Nettapungu	Parish Priest, St. Mathew Parish, Annikarai and Assistant Youth Director
3	Rev. Fr. Kurian Koipuram	Parish priest, Chenamcode and in charge, Kulasekaram
4	Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh	Doctoral Studies (Youth Pastoral), Salesian Pontifical University, Rome
5	Rev. Fr Christudas	Parish Priest, Jayamatha Forane Church, Nithravailai, Director- Karunai Illam, Correspondant of Tamil Medium Schools and Chancellor of the Diocese
6	Rev. Fr Geo Choozhikunnel	Parish Priest, Devamatha Church, Killiyoor
7	Rev. Fr Justin Cheruvilil	Parish Priest, Christ the King Parish, Palappalam and Assistant Director Liturgy

I wish to thank all the Fathers for taking these responsibilities in a spirit of faith and love

COMING EVENTS

1. 25 February - Inter-Diocesan Meet at Kanjirapally
2. 28 February - TCL Three-day Camp, Thuckalay & Soosaipuum Foranes
3. 8 March - Diocese Level CML Girls' Meeting
4. 10-12 March - Fathers On-going Formation and Priests' Conference
5. 15 March - Diocesan Level Altar Boys' Meeting
6. 30 March - Forane Directors Meeting at Padanthalumoodu

I wish you God's Choicest Blessings!

Yours in Christ,

+ George Rajendran sdb
Bishop of Thuckalay