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Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

The month of May is celebrated as the month of Our Blessed Mother. We celebrate three important feasts of Mary during this month. On 13 May, we keep the feast of Our Lady of Fatima. On 24 May, we celebrate the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians. On 31 May, we commemorate the Visitation of Our Blessed Lady to St Elizabeth. As we enter into this month, it is worthwhile to reflect upon the role that Our Lady plays in the lives of Priests.

It is said that St Pope John Paul II credited Mary's intercession for sparing his life when four bullets from a would-be assassin struck him while he was blessing pilgrims in St Peter's Square on 13 May 1981. A year to the day later, the Pope placed one of those bullets in Mary's crown at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal. This is an inspiring example of the real, practical and powerful grace of Mary's maternity toward Priests.

The renowned Mariologist Rev. Fr. Emile Neubert, in his celebrated book *Mary and Priestly Ministry*, speaks about Mary's spiritual maternity. According to him, it stems from her "cooperation in the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the distribution of grace." Let us note how Mary, in these three functions, becomes the mother of Priests:

- The *Incarnation* sets special grounds for Mary's motherhood of Priests. Mary provided the material cause of Christ's Priesthood. Mary then carried all her Son's future Priests in her womb along with Him. She did not know them individually at that time, but she wished for them what Jesus wished for them at that time, and loved them with the same special love her Son had for them.
- Our Mother Mary's special role in the *Redemption*: If Mary, in the Incarnation, conceived us spiritually, as it were, then in the mystery of the Redemption she gave us birth. At the foot of the cross, Christ confided Mary to John, who was a Priest, and it is to Priests, above all, that Christ gives His Mother because He has a greater love for them and they have a greater need of her.
- Our Mother Mary's special role in the *distribution of grace*: Mary has a special love for Priests: if maternity consists essentially in giving and in nurturing life, can any human maternity be understood apart from such a love? Mary loves all the faithful with incomparable love. But she loves Priests with an altogether unique love because she sees in the Priest a greater resemblance to the image of her Son than in any other Christian of equal holiness.

Thus, we can say that what Mary did for Jesus on earth she does for the Priests who continue the unbroken lineage of the Eternal High Priest. She loves, encourages, protects, feeds, embraces, cleans, delights, teaches and keeps him company. She who did not leave her Son at

the foot of the Cross remains with the Priest for his singular mission. Mary experienced her son's crucifixion mystically with her steadfast fiat. She knows how to lead the Priest to victory through the cross. Mary assists the Priest in the refinement of his will, in the purification of his heart, in the conformity of his mind to God. Mary aids the Priest in living chastely and growing in charity, wisdom, and fortitude for a martyrdom of love. She who experienced the mystical crucifixion of Jesus will help each Priest to do the same for the joy of the kingdom of God.

The Priest needs the love of Mary's feminine heart to bring him to the fulfillment of the masculine ideal: to protect humanity from all that is detrimental to salvation. Jesus, the New Adam, is the Redeemer and protector of the human family. The Priest is the protector of all that belongs to Christ: men, women, and children, heaven and earth. The Priest is at his best when, like Christ, he guards the dignity and vocation of every man, woman, and child.

God chose Mary to be a guardian of the Priest's dignity and vocation. The Mother gently moves the Priest to be transfigured into Christ. Through the maternal mediation of Mary, the Priest becomes the sacrifice that offers the perfect Sacrifice; the Priest becomes the love that offers Love.

I invite you, dear Fathers, to recognize the important role that Our Blessed Mother plays in the lives of Priests. We need to make ourselves worthy of receiving the protection and guidance of the heavenly mother through our commitment to our Priestly ministry. Let us not pass by this month of Mary without reflecting upon her motherly intervention in the lives of Priests. May we become worthy sons of our heavenly mother!

## NEWS AND EVENTS

**Vacation Ministry of our Major Seminarians:** The Major Seminarians belonging to the Eparchy reached Thuckalay on 7 April 2017 for their vacation ministry. They are now involved in different ministries in our various parishes. During the Holy Week, they were assigned to different parishes to assist the Priests. They also underwent a three-day work camp at Sangamam. Some of them were also involved in the preparations for the Priestly Ordinations of Deacons Vinu D. Joseph and John Joseph in St. Michael Church, Kattathurai and St. Joseph's Church, Karode. Many of them are now engaged in collecting statistics of the faithful indifferent Parishes. They will also assist the Priests in organising the VBS for the catechism children in our various Parishes. I am happy that our Seminarians prepared the lyrics and music for the VBS hymns. I appreciate and congratulate all the Brothers for putting all their talents into good use for the benefit of the Eparchy. Once more, let me wish them fruitful summer vacation ministry!

**Minor and Major Orders:** Bro. Thomas Jebanesh Lazar from St. Joseph Church, Soosaipuram was ordained Deacon on 12 April 2017 at Loreto Matha Church, Pilankarai. Bro. Anto Prabin CMI belonging to Plankalai Parish was ordained deacon on 29 March 2017

at Dharmaram college, Bangalore. Bro. Subin Scaria Puthenpurackal from Thuruthi Parish, Changanassery was ordained Deacon on 28 April 2017 at Pontifical College *Mater Ecclesiae*, Rome. Bro. Shijo Jose Aikkarakunnel was ordained *Haupetiakna* (Sub-diaconate) on 29 April 2017 at *Urbanio*, Rome. Bro. Abilash Xavier Raj will be ordained *Haupetiakna* (Sub-diaconate) on 17 May 2017 at *Collegio Ecclesiastico Internazionale Sedes Sapientiae*, Rome. Bro. Robin Joseph from St George Church, Munchirai was ordained *Karoyusa* on 10 April 2017 at Sangamam, Thuckalay. I congratulate all of them and invoke blessings of God upon them for their preparation towards the Priestly Ordination.

**Religious final Professions:** We have three sisters: Sr. Neha Anns CMC, Sr. Libia Rose CMC on 8 April 2017 and Sr. Ann Maria FCC on 27 April 2017 who made their final professions in their own respective congregations. We would like to congratulate the sisters for committing themselves perpetually to the Lord.

**Recollection for Priests and Religious:** On the Holy Week Tuesday, 11 April 2017 a full day recollection for Priests and Religious was held at Sangamam. Most of the Priests and Sisters participated in it. Rev. Fr. K. Irenimus from the Diocese of Kottar gave an hour-long reflection on Holy Eucharist. After the talk, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and the participants had time for making their confessions. The programme culminated with the Holy Qurbana, which was a moment to thank the Lord for the gift of Priesthood. I thank each and every one who was present on that day. I also express my gratitude to the Fathers who organised this programme.

**New Priests:** This year our Eparchy is blessed with two new Priests. They are Rev. Fr. Vinu D. Joseph and Rev. Fr. John Joseph. Fr. Vinu D. Joseph was ordained Priest on 19 April 2017 at St. Michael Church, Kattathurai. Fr. John Joseph was ordained priest on 20 April 2017 at St. Joseph's Church, Karode. Both the ordination ceremonies were well planned and systematically executed. I thank the respective Parish Priests, Sisters and Faithful for successful execution of the programme. Special words of thanks, appreciation and congratulation go to Rev. Fr. Seby Manimalakandathil and Rev. Fr. Vinod Kanakalil for their dedicated efforts in organising the events well.

**Episcopal Ordination:** Rev. Fr. (Dr) Tom Tharayil was ordained Bishop and assumed office as the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archeparchy of Changanassery on 23 April 2017. Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop of Changanassery, was the chief consecrator. Along with our Vicar General, I was present for the programme. The newly ordained Bishop is assigned to take care of the spiritual needs of the faithful in the Foranes of Thiruvananthapuram and Ampoori.

**Farewell to Rev. Fr. John Bosco SJ:** From June 2016 to April 2017, Rev. Fr. John Bosco SJ served our Eparchy as the Principal of St. Alphonsa Arts and Science College, Soosaipuram.

The appointment was for one year and he carried out his responsibility to the best of his ability. As an expression of our gratitude, we organised a farewell gathering for him on 21 April 2017. Together with the administrative body, the staff and the students of the College, I thanked him profusely for his valuable services to the College.

**New Principal for St. Alphonsa College:** Mr Isaiah Zacharias MA, M.Ed., Ph.D. is appointed as the new Principal of the College. He was introduced to the Presbyterium on 24 April 2017. On the same day, he formally took charge as the Principal of St Alphonsa College Soosaipuram. We welcome Mr. Isaiah and wish him God's blessings for this new assignment.

**Palliative Care:** I visited the bedridden sick persons in their own houses on 24 April 2017 with the help of Rev. Fr. Saji Elambasseril and the KKSSS Palliative team. I was happy to see the committed service of the Palliative team. The team takes great care of these patients. They are given bath, medicine and food on a regular basis. The team also takes care of the personal hygiene of the patients. The Eparchy is carrying out this ministry through KKSSS. I thank and congratulate Fr Saji and his team.

## INFORMATION

**Tamil Intensive Course for Priests and Sisters:** To know the smell of the sheep we need to speak the language of the sheep. To this end, for the Priests and Sisters of the Eparchy who are struggling with the language, we are organising a week long Tamil Intensive Course at Sangamam from 21-27 May 2017. The course is organized as a one-week package with night stay at Sangamam. Rev. Fr. Santhosh is in-charge of the Course. Qualified teachers will take the classes. I request all the Sisters from various Congregations to make use of this opportunity. I also earnestly entreat those Fathers who need more proficiency in Tamil Language to attend this course so that they can be effective in carrying out the pastoral ministry.

**Regency Brothers:** This year we have three brothers, namely, Bro. Josemon Paul Purayidathikunnel, Bro. Mahesh Manoharan and Br Ajin John Devadas for regency. Bro. Josemon is appointed at Mangalumoodu, Bro. Mahesh is appointed at KKSSS, Kalluvilai and Bro Ajin John is appointed at Pudur, Shenkottai. They will begin their ministry from 1 May 2017. I wish them all the best and pray that the good Lord may strengthen them in their pastoral ministry!

**New CMC Provincial House:** We rejoice with the CMC Sisters of Thuckalay Vice-Province for having built a new Provincial House at Thuckalay. The new house is situated in a 48-cent land and has all the necessary facilities needed for Sisters of the province, namely, living rooms, offices and a well-built chapel. Rev. Sr. Viji CMC, Provincial, planned and executed it. The formal blessing and inauguration of the Provincial House will be held on 18 May 2017 at 10.30 am. This is an important function for the CMC Sisters, who are very dear to all of us

in the Eparchy. I invite all of you to attend the blessing and inaugural ceremony. I am sure the Sisters will invite you personally as well. I congratulate the Provincial and all the CMC Sisters.

**Training Programme for Parish Council Members:** The meeting-cum-training programmes for the Parish Council Members for the two Foranes have been completed. I was informed that many members participated in those sessions. The rest of the Foranes will hold similar meetings in the coming days. A training programme will be also held for all the *Kaikars* and Accountants at the Eparchial level. The details of these meetings are given below. I request all the Fathers to encourage all the members to participate in the meetings.

DATE	EPARCHY/FORANE	TIME	IN CHARGE
14-05-2017	Sangamam (Meeting of Kaikars & Accountants. Qurbana included)	9.30am to 4pm	Bishop, Fr Sathianesan and Fr Dency
21-05-2017	Thuckalay-Plankalai	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr Sathianesan
28-05-2017	Nithravilai	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr Sathianesan
04-06-2017	Padanthalumoodu	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr Dency
18-06-2017	Arukani	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr Dency
09-07-2017	Shenkottai Mission	2 pm to 5 pm	Fr Sathianesan

**Rest in Peace (RIP):** Rev. Sr. Bennet CMC, who worked in our Eparchy for 17 years in different convents, namely, Kaliyal, Netta, Muzhucode, Pilankarai and Puliyarai, passed away on 20 April 2017. The funeral service was held on 21 April 2017 at St. Thomas Church Nalukodi, Kerala. Along with CMC Sisters, Rev. Fr. Thomas Sathianesan attended the funeral. I express our heartfelt condolences and prayers to the bereaved family of Sr. Bennet and the CMC Congregation.

**Annual Report of Departments:** I request all the Directors of various Departments and Pious Associations to submit their annual reports of activities with detailed account on or before 15 May 2017. Rev. Fr. Sathianesan, Eparchial Secretary, will contact you in person in this regard.

**Solemn Blessing and Inauguration of Sinai Retreat Centre:** Let me remind you once again about the blessing and inauguration of our new Retreat Centre to be held on 7 May 2017 at 9.30 am. Our dear Major Archbishop Cardinal Mar George Alencherry is coming for the blessing and inauguration of the Retreat Centre. Rev. Bro. Maria Joseph Suleiman, from Muringoor Retreat Centre, will take classes on that day. As we have discussed at the Priests' Conference, all the Fathers are assigned to various committees in order to prepare and to execute the programmes smoothly. I request your maximum support for its success.

Our Cardinal Mar George Alencherry expressed his desire to meet all the Fathers and Sisters working in the Eparchy. The meeting with the Sisters is arranged at 4.30pm and the Priests will meet the Cardinal at 5.30pm at Kalluvilai on 6 April 2017. All the Fathers and Sisters are requested to take part in the interaction with our Cardinal Mar George Alencherry. It is a golden opportunity for us to be around the Father and Head of our Church on 6 May 2017.

**Orientation and Career Guidance Seminar:** St. Alphonsa College organized a one-day Career Guidance Programme for class 12 students of our Parishes and Institutions on 8 April 2017. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam inaugurated the programme. Rev. Fr. Antony Jose arranged for the participants to visit the facilities that the College offers. I thank all the Fathers who supported and encouraged the students to come over to attend the Career Guidance Programme. Let us continue to work for augmenting admissions in the College.

**Mission Appeal in Kuwait:** Rev. Fr. Joseph Thankachan returned to the Eparchy safely from Kuwait after spending nearly one month of mission appeal and conducting animation programmes. I thank Fr. Thankachan for his efforts to raise funds for the Eparchy to carry forward the various developmental activities.

**Welcome to Rev. Fr. Josy Puthenpurackal:** Rev. Fr. Josy has come to India on 25 April 2017 for his annual holidays. He will be in the Eparchy for some time to meet every one of us. I welcome him whole-heartedly and wish him happy stay. He will return to Germany on 25 May 2017.

**Short-term Courses:** Rev. Fr. Joseph Santhosh and Fr. Thomas Koipuram attended two-week course on media and communication at Media village, Changanassery.

**Europe Visit:** I will be visiting Europe from 1 June to 2 July 2017 for mission appeal. I will take the opportunity to meet friends and to interact with our Fathers and Brothers studying there. I would be happy to visit any of your dear ones working in Europe provided you introduce me to them.

**Transfers 2017:** I have made some transfers this year and they will be communicated to the respective Fathers during these days. The list of transfers will be presented in our next Priests' Conference to be held on 9 May 2017.

### FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

06 May 2017	- Cardinal Mar George Alencherry Meets Fathers and Sisters
07 May 2017	- Blessing and Inauguration of Sinai Retreat Centre Kalluvilai
09 May 2017	- Priests' Conference
14 May 2017	- One-day Training Programme for <i>Kaikars</i> and Accountants at Sangamam

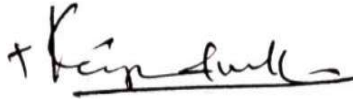
18 May 2017 - CMC Provincial House Blessing and Holy Qurbana at Thuckalay  
21-27 May 2017 - Tamil Intensive Course for Fathers and Sisters at Thuckalay

### CONCLUSION

Over the years, the Eparchy of Thuckalay has grown steadily. God is blessing us generously. Our College has a new Principal. It has initiated PG Courses. The strength of the students is gradually picking up. We have two new Priests this year. Our Retreat Centre is going to be inaugurated. Let us be grateful to God for all these blessings that He has lavished upon us. Let us also keep our children in our prayers as they anxiously wait for their results. Most of our Schools are preparing to begin another year of activities. Let us make every effort to give befitting welcome to the children as they enter the portals of our educational institutions to begin the new Scholastic year. And above all, the month of Mary that we are celebrating should help us to intensify our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



**+George Rajendran SDB**  
Bishop of Thuckalay

