



# Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

**Bishop George Rajendran sdb**  
**Diocese of Thuckalay**

Bishop's House, P B No: 12, Thuckalay PO,  
Kanya kumari Dt- 629 175, Tamil Nadu, India

**Ref. No. Priests/GR/94/2019**

31 May 2019

Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

Our Eparchy is going to celebrate the youth convention on 7-9 June 2019. It is for the first time that we are organising such an event for three days. The theme that has been chosen for the convention is 'ABEL: I am my Brother's Keeper?' Rev. Fr Santhosh, Youth Director, with the help of young leaders and fathers and sisters has been preparing for this event for the last six months. The young people have organised a number of programmes such as retreats, Taizé prayer, animation programmes, etc. at parish level, Forane level and Eparchial level. On 26 May 2019, the young people organised adoration service in all the parishes for the success of this mega event. Young leaders have personally visited all the Catholic families to invite them to attend the concluding day of the convention. They have also visited all our Fathers and invited them for the programme. Through WhatsApp messages, the young people are informed of the progress of the preparation for the convention. While congratulating Rev. Fr Santhosh and his team for all these initiatives, I want to reflect with you about the theme that the young people have chosen for their convention.

The theme is perhaps one of the more thought-provoking questions in the Bible. Cain had killed his brother because God had accepted Abel's offering, but not his own (Gen 4:3-8). When the Lord inquired concerning Abel, Cain's response was: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). This is a question we would do well to ask ourselves today. Are we our brother's keeper? Do we have a responsibility to watch out for and care for one another? When one turns to the New Testament, it becomes clear that the answer is in the affirmative. In fact, there are many passages in the New Testament which emphasize our responsibilities towards others.

We become our brothers'/sisters' keepers by "loving one another" as commanded by Jesus (Jn 13:34-35; 15:12,17), as taught by St Paul (Rom 13:8; 1Thes 4:9), as instructed by St Peter (1 Pt 1:22) and as stressed by St John (1 Jn 3:11-12, 23; 4:7,11-12; 2 Jn 5).

But how are we to express such love? The scriptures tell us:

- We are to "receive one another" (Rom 15:7)
- We are to "edify one another" (Rom 14:19)

- We are to “serve one another” (Ga 5:13)
- We are to “bear one another’s burdens” (Ga 6:1-2)
- We are to be “forgiving one another” (Ep 4:32)
- We are to be “submitting to one another” (Ep 5:21)
- We are to “exhort one another” (Heb 3:12-13)
- We are to “consider one another” (Heb 10:24-25)
- We are to be “hospitable to one another” (1Pt 4:8-10)

Thus the scriptures speak to us unequivocally that we are our brothers’ keepers. However, we need to evaluate our roles as our brothers’ keepers. In order find out whether we have truly become keepers of our brothers and sisters, we need to ask ourselves:

- Do we receive him/her into the family of God, or ignore him/her (Rom 15:7)?
- Does he/she properly assimilated in the family life of the congregation or remain on the fringe?
- Do we edify him/her or put stumbling blocks in his/her way (Rom 14:19)?
- As individuals, are we ‘body-builders,’ encouraging the members of the body?
- Do we submit to him/her or arrogantly rule over him/her (Ep 5:21)?
- Do we serve him/her in love or expect him/her to serve us (Ga 5:13)?
- Do we demonstrate hospitality to him/her (1Pt 4:8-10) by visiting him/her in his/her need?
- Are we aware of the problems that our brother/sister face?
- Are we willing to bear the burdens of others?
- Are we willing to forgive our brother/sister when he/she repents?

We can keep reflecting upon this theme by asking similar questions. However, unfortunately, our human history is filled with stories of resentment and violence ending in the killing of countless innocent people. We read about family feuds, slavery, genocide and discriminatory policies that dehumanize. We can forget that the Cain and Abel story is being lived out, right now, in today’s world. We live in this world and can be infected easily with its narcissistic attitudes. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, and the Lord will hold us accountable. As I reflect on this reading, three interconnected areas come to mind that kill our brothers and sisters.

The first is the spreading of misinformation about others; the second is not speaking up in defense of those unjustly attacked and the third is dismissing others because they are “different”. We can do this as a nation. We can do this as individuals. Pope Francis reminds us that we need to focus on building bridges not walls with others. There are situations that we may not be able to correct, but we can correct our attitudes. We may have differing opinions, and there are times when we may have to defend ourselves against attack but we always need to look for and work for the common good. This holds true for us as individuals and as a nation.

Sometimes, we can adopt the mentality to “take care of our own” or to “save myself and forget the others,” especially during our moments of trials. However, our own struggles can be an opportunity to have compassion and empathy for those who suffer with us and to truly understand what it means to be in solidarity with each other. As disciples of Christ, we are called to the latter. Yes, we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. Even though we are facing our own struggles, we are still in the position to help others who suffer from natural disasters, violence, hunger and poverty. As disciples of Christ, we have a responsibility to look out for the well-being of others around the globe both near

and far. We are called to seek justice for our brothers and sisters.

What do we mean by justice? Most of us are familiar with the church's long history of charity, which many of us do so well. Charity is the immediate direct service that we offer to those in need, such as donating money, serving a meal at a local soup kitchen, or handing out blankets at a local shelter. When we speak of doing justice, we are referring to the act of changing the social, economic, and political structures that cause the injustice, like poverty and hunger. Working for justice does not always have the immediate gratification that charity does because challenging and changing social systems is a lengthy process. At times, we may never even see the fruit of our labour.

The call to charity and justice can be found in scriptures, especially in the writings of the Hebrew prophets and in the words and actions of Jesus. Based on scripture and the Church's long history and practice of caring for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized, the Church has developed a body of teaching over the past century known as Catholic Social Teachings. This body of teaching is a guide for how we should live in society. They teach us to live in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world and to work for justice and the common good.

As the youth department of our Eparchy is organising the youth convention with the theme, 'ABEL: I am my Brother's Keeper' we as priests must be in the forefront living out these values and teaching our Catholics how to incorporate these values in their daily lives. If we do not become keepers of our brothers and sisters, then we have missed the entire teachings of Jesus Christ which revolve around love of God and love of one's neighbour. May this celebration become a launching pad in reiterating our resolve to become helpmates of one another!

## NEWS AND EVENTS

**Vocation Month:** We have observed the month of April as vocation month and conducted special prayers with lighted candles in every parish. We kept the month alive through prayers, and special animation programmes for parents, boys and girls. The month was solemnly concluded with an exhibition on vocation. During the concluding day of VBS, a vocation camp was organised for boys and girls. Fathers and Religious from different congregations also animated the camp. About 22 boys attended the camp and six were selected. Of these three boys have joined our Minor Seminary. I am grateful to Rev. Fr Joshy, Rector and Vocation Director of the Eparchy, for organising this vocation month with the help of Rev. Fr John Joseph, CML Director.

**Farewell to the FCC Sisters from Athencode:** The FCC Sisters who were working since 1982 at St Maria Goretti Church, Athencode have left the mission. The CHF Sisters have replaced them. The event took place on 5 May 2019. The parishioners together with the Parish Priest accorded the Sisters a grand farewell. I personally thank all the provincial superiors of Changanassery Province, especially Rev. Mother Maria FCC and Rev. Sr Celia FCC and the present provincial of Sanjoe Province, Thuckalay, Rev. Sr. Ancilin FCC for their predilection for Athencode mission. I remember with gratitude all the Sisters who worked hard for the growth of the mission even when resident priests were not there. Through their regular house visits and systematic catechesis, the Sisters were able to bring many people to the Catholic fold. In the name of the Eparchy and the faithful of Athencode Parish, I thank the Sisters and wish them God's blessings for a fruitful ministry in the extended mission territory of the Eparchy.

**New Ministry of the Holy Family Sisters at Athencode:** We have invited the Sisters of Holy Family Congregation to work in the Eparchy. Three Sisters were already working in the various institutions of our Eparchy. Now the Eparchy has asked them to help the parish priest of Athencode in the pastoral ministry and to establish a convent there. Holy Family Sisters began their mission on 5 May 2019. The Sisters at present will reside at Kamaraj Nagar and serve the parish. This arrangement will continue till they build their convent at Athencode.

**Blessing of Temporary Convent of Holy Family Sisters:** The Kamaraj Nagar building is offered to the Holy Family Sisters on a temporary basis and the house was blessed on 20 May 2019. As I informed in the previous circular letter the Sisters who are serving our Eparchy will also reside in this house and help our institutions as well as the Athencode Parish.

**EDUCARE Camp:** A Fifteen-day Educare camp for the students was held at Sangamam from 12-25 May 2019. The camp was meant to make the children capable of speaking English and to develop their talents. 217 children studying from fifth to eighth standards were invited. However, only 142 children participated in the camp and benefitted. I sincerely thank Rev. Fr Saji Elambasseril sdb, Rev. Fr Abilash Xavier, Rev. Sr Reeja CMC, Rev. Sr Merin ASMI, Brothers and others who worked for the success of the camp.

**Eparchial Curia:** I thank Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam and Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal who have been serving the Eparchy as Protosyncellus and Procurator respectively for the past years. As Protosyncellus, Fr Jose was my closest collaborator for the past six years. As Procurator, Rev. Fr Dency shouldered the financial transactions of the Eparchy for the past three years. They were like my two wings working in tandem for the welfare of the Eparchy. I wholeheartedly thank them for all their services and wish them grace-filled ministries in their new places of appointments.

I welcome Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil as the new Protosyncellus and Rev. Fr Johnsilal Arackaparambil as the new Procurator of the Eparchy. While welcoming them to the Eparchial Curia, I wish them God's blessings as they are setting out to serve the Eparchy.

**Blessing of the Renovated Altar of Bishop's House Chapel:** The renovation of the altar of the Bishop's House chapel was a dream for the past few years. It is now fulfilled through the initiative of Rev. Fr Thankachan Kollappallyil sdb. The beautifully renovated chapel was blessed on 24 May 2019 on the feast of Mary Help of the Christians at 6.00 pm. I want to thank Fr Thankachan sdb for his initiative and the hard work he put in to find out benefactors for the financial help. I also thank all the benefactors for their generous help. I thank also Rev. Fr Anil Raj, Parish priest, CMC Sisters and all those who take part in the liturgies at Bishop's House church for their cooperation.

**Transfers 2019:** I have effected some transfers this year. The transfers took effect on 24 May 2019 unless indicated otherwise. I am grateful to the Fathers who have served our people with great commitment for the past years and have moved to their new places of ministries. I wish them all God's blessings in their new parishes and in their new missions. May I remind you, dear Fathers, that our primary duty is evangelization and pastoral care of the people of God.

**Farewell to Rev. Fr Thankachan SDB:** Rev. Fr Thankachan will be relieved from his responsibility as Mission Procure of the Eparchy by 4 June 2019. Fr Thankachan SDB is going to

USA for pastoral ministry. As a Mission Procure of the Eparchy, he helped me and the Eparchy for three years to find out finances. He was also able to identify potential benefactors for the Eparchy. On behalf of whole the Eparchy I thank Fr Thankachan sdb for his hard work. He loved the Eparchy and was able to integrate himself with the priests and the religious. I wish him all the best in his future ministry and assure him of our prayers. We shall accord him a formal farewell on 5 June 2019 during the Priests' Conference. However, Fr Thankachan sdb will to leave the Eparchy only towards the end of July 2019.

**SABS - St Joseph Convent Marthandam:** The SABS Sisters have been engaged in pastoral ministry in the Marthandam mission since 2010. Recently, they purchased a plot of land with a house in Marthandam. It was blessed and inaugurated on 28 May 2019. Rev. Sr Mercy Nedumpuram SABS, Provincial of Changanassery province, Rev. Sr Ansit SABS, Regional Superior, Thuckalay region along with many Fathers and Sisters were present for the occasion. Rev. Sr Alice SABS, Rev. Sr Ancy SABS and Rev. Sr Elsit SABS are appointed to the new community. We congratulate the congregation for establishing a new community in the Eparchy and wish them God's blessings.

**Solemnity of Pentecost:** We are going to celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost on 9 June 2019. In consultation with the Director of our Retreat Centre, I am proposing some ways to animate our people in order to prepare them to celebrate this great event. You can choose from the following, whatever is convenient and possible for your respective Parishes.

- 10-day preparation from Ascension to Pentecost.
- Eucharistic adoration before Holy Qurbana atleast half an hour every day during the novena
- 7 June 2019, Friday conduct special adoration in the parishes focussing on the Holy Spirit
- Arrange Night vigil on 7 June 2019, Friday.
- For the night vigil prayer conducted in the Retreat Centre on 7 June 2019, you can send your parishioners.
- Have a Solemn Eucharistic celebration and homily on Holy Spirit on 9 June 2019.

## INFORMATION

- ❖ **Inauguration of Jubilee of the Eparchy:** As we have discussed and finalized, the preparation for the Silver Jubilee of the Eparchy which will be celebrated in 2021 will be inaugurated on 30 June 2019. Since a new Protosyncellus has taken charge on 24 May 2019, the General Convener of Jubilee Celebration will be Very Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil and Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam will be helping him as Co-Convener. I request the core committee of the Jubilee Celebrations to seriously plan the programme well in advance.
- ❖ **Minor Seminary:** Six first year Brothers who will join the Minor Seminary on 15 June 2019. We welcome our younger brothers to our Eparchy. Let us accompany them with our prayers. The second and third year Brothers will begin their Higher Secondary classes on 3 June 2019. This year we will have 12 Minor Seminarians and three residential staff.

From this year onwards, we shall send the fourth year Brothers for MOC (Mission Orientation Course) at Ujjain. This is a course meant for immediate preparation of candidates to Major seminary. All the Syro-Malabar Mission Eparchies of North India have decided to send all the fourth year Brothers to Ujjain as the Eparchy of Ujjain is in-charge of formation. From our Eparchy, we have four brothers going for MOC at Ujjain for their fourth year formation.

- ❖ **Palliative Care Hospice:** As you know the palliative care under KKSS is carrying out a commendable service in and around Kanyakumari. In order to give more care and attention to serious patients, we are opening a Hospice at Thittanganavilai under the care of ASMI Sisters. It is meant for the immediate care of patients. This Centre will be formally inaugurated and blessed on the first week of September 2019. I invite all the Fathers especially those working in the Nithravilai Forane. The exact date and timing will be intimated to you later.
- ❖ **New SH Mission Superior:** Rev. Sr Rosline Jose Parappallil SH is appointed as the new Mission Superior of SH Congregation in Thuckalay. She will be also the superior of Malaicode convent. The contact number of Sr Rosline Jose SH is 9446152783. I wish her God's blessings and fruitful mission in the Eparchy. A word of thanks goes to Rev. Sr Anu SH who was the former Mission Superior for her dedicated service.
- ❖ **Elevation of St Chavara CMC Vice-Province into a Province:** The General Chapter of CMC Congregation decided to elevate the St Chavara Vice-Province to the status of a Province. The formal declaration and the thanksgiving Qurbana was held on 27 May 2019 at Thuckalay CMC Convent. It is the 24<sup>th</sup> Province of the CMC Congregation. We are grateful to God for this blessing and congratulate the CMC Sisters for their missionary enthusiasm. During the past years, they have extended their ministries to far-flung areas of the mission territory. I thank Mother General of the CMC Congregation and General Council for this wise decision. Moreover, I thank Mother Alice Viji CMC, Provincial of St Chavara Province and her council team for their dedication. I wish them God's blessing for their future ministry.
- ❖ **Youth Convention:** A Youth Convention will be held from 7-9 June 2019. The Youth Director along with youth volunteers is working hard for the success of this mega event well in advance. I request dear Fathers and Sisters your valuable prayers and support. I am informing you well in advance so that you can take part in the Holy Qurbana and the cultural programme, which will be held on 9 June 2019 at 2.30 pm in Alphonsa College. Bishop Joseph Pandarasserry and Bishop Nazarene Soosai will be our special guests on that day.
- ❖ **RIP:** Rev. Fr Jomon Mangalamadam lost his beloved father on 8 May 2019. The burial was held on 9 May 2019 at Vazhathoppu Forane Church, Idukki. Rev. Fr John Paul also lost his beloved mother, Mrs Agnes Bai (83) on 15 May 2019 and the burial was held on 16 May 2019 at Kazhuvanthittai. We express our heartfelt condolences to Fr Jomon and Fr John Paul and offer our prayers to the grieved family members.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Jinu Jacob will be leaving for Rome on 26 June 2019 to pursue his doctoral studies at Salesian Pontifical University. Let us keep him in our prayers. We wish him happy journey.
- ❖ I am sending Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan for Mission appeal programme to Switzerland and Germany. He will leave on 13 June and will return on 5 August 2019. We wish him happy journey and pray for the success of the mission. During his absence Rev. Fr Sajan, Bishop's Secretary, will take care of the office.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Saji Elambasseril sdb will leave for the US for mission appeal at the end of June and will return in September 2019. Lets pray for the success of the mission.
- ❖ **Mission Expedition to the Extended Territories:** As you know, the SABS Sisters have taken up the palliative care mission in Tirunelveli. Officially the Sisters will begin the mission on 15 June 2019. Rev. Sr Amala Jose SABS, Rev. Sr Lizmaria SABS and Rev. Sr Vineetha SABS are appointed to the Thirunelveli Mission.
- The FCC Sisters have taken up the mission at Kayathar in Thoothukudi district. Rev. Sr Lysa FCC and Rev. Sr Lincy FCC will begin the mission on June 13, 2019.

- The Palai Eparchy has taken up Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai districts as their mission territories and has appointed Rev. Fr Thomas Moolechalil for this mission. He will arrive on 3 June 2019 to the Eparchy and initially spend time learning the language.
- The Changanassery Arch Eparchy has appointed Rev. Fr Peter Kizhakeyil to Virudunagar district. He will also look after Theni and Madurai districts as well.
- The Irinjalakuda Eparchy will look after Thoothukudi district. The Eparchy has not yet sent a priest.
- The FCC province of Idukki has expressed the desire to begin mission work at Cumbum area. The Sisters will commence the work in August 2019
- The SABS Sisters of Idukki province is studying the possibility of coming to Madurai for Mission work.
- The CMC Sisters of Thuckalay province has already begun the construction work for convent and old age home at Ampoor, Ambasamuthram.

### **CURIA-RELATED INFORMATION**

- ❖ Very Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, as the Protosyncellus, will look after matters concerning Priests and Sisters. He will also supervise all the Departments of the Eparchy. He will make arrangements for the major events of the Eparchy.
- ❖ The Protosyncellus is in-charge of the entire Mission work in the Extended Area of the Eparchy.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan, Chancellor, will be in-charge of documentation of the Eparchy, official communication regarding pastoral problems in parishes and convents. He will also deal with the application for permissions.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Johnsilal Arackaparambil, Finance Officer, will be in-charge of the medical treatment of the Fathers. The priests should contact him before, during and after the treatment in the hospital. Should any assistance be required during the treatment, the Finance Officer must be contacted. He is also in-charge of all the movable and immovable goods of the Eparchy.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Sajan Nettaponghu will continue as the Bishop's office secretary and will post the official information of the Eparchy in the WhatsApp Group.
- ❖ Mission In-charges: Rev. Fr Ginoy Thottiyil and Rev. Fr Alex Puthettu will be in-charge of the pastoral care in the districts of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudy. Rev. Fr Peter Kizhakkal will be in-charge of Madurai, Theni-Cumbum and Virudhunagar Missions. The Mission work in Shenkottai, Ambasamuthram and Ramanathapuram will be taken care by the Shenkottai Fathers. Rev. Fr Thomas Koipuram will coordinate them.
- ❖ Whenever the priests have to be away from their respective Centres on account of medication or for attending programmes for which the Eparchy officially deputes, the Protosyncellus will arrange for their substitutes for offering daily Holy Qurbana and administering other sacraments in those Centres. In all other instances of absences like home visits for any celebration, visiting friends, etc., the priests concerned must make the necessary arrangements for the celebration of daily Holy Qurbana and administering other sacraments in their respective Centres.
- ❖ All the priests are requested to submit the monthly account to the Finance Officer on or before 10<sup>th</sup> of every month.

### **FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 01 June 2019    | - KII Annual day celebrations  |
| 01 June 2019    | - Recollection for Tamil and English medium school teachers          |
| 05 June 2019    | - Silver Jubilee of the First Profession of Mar George Rajendran SDB |
| 07-09 June 2019 | - Youth Convention at Soosaipuram                                    |

16 June 2019	- Catechism Annual Day Celebration
18 June 2019	- Priests' Conference at Sangamam
23 June 2019	- CML Annual Day Celebration
25 June 2019	- Inter-Eparchial Meeting at Kanjirapally

**On 8-9 July 2019 – Ongoing Formation for Junior Priests at Sangamam**

**CONCLUSION**

As the missionary work in the extended territories of our Eparchy is slowly taking shape, let us become aware of the important role evangelization plays in the Church. It is not an optional add-on. It is at the very heart of what it means to be a Catholic. Yet, in spite of this clear mandate, we may still be tempted to respond to this call to evangelization by saying that “Catholics evangelize with how they live their lives, not by our words”. We may even quote the words attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel at all times; use words if necessary.” But this does not mean that we can choose between proclaiming and living the gospel, as if they both accomplish the same thing. Paul VI went on to explain in “Evangelization in the Modern World” the important interplay between word and witness in this way: “The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.” Let us be enthused by these words of the saintly Pope and re-commit ourselves to the task of spreading the message of Christ in season and out of season!

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



**+ George Rajendran SDB**  
Bishop of Thuckalay

