

31 March 2015

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

A Very Happy Easter and Blessings of the Risen Lord!

Jesus is risen from the dead! This is the truth we celebrate during Easter because, we believe in it. We are actually celebrating the crux of our faith. As St. Paul teaches us, “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Cor 15:14).

We are celebrating the resurrection of Christ. It is a miracle. But it is not simply a miracle that is alien to our existence, something that probably happened to someone two thousand years ago.

Christ – Our Hope of Rising from the Dead

We are personally bound to the Risen Christ. As Pope Francis says, “our faith in the resurrection is bound to the person of Jesus Christ, who himself said “I am the resurrection and the life.”¹ This personal bonding with Christ basically should be the reason why we celebrate Easter. We usually celebrate something that personally give us joy and fulfilment of our own existence and that which gives us sense of purpose.

The noted writer Hilaire Belloc tells us, “We wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfilment.” We spoke of Lenten Journey, and differentiated it from wandering in the wilderness. What Christ achieves for us in resurrection is the attainment of the journey of Lent, and the end of our journey of life. *If life becomes a mere wandering, its destiny is merely death.* Life then will give us no joy. Life becomes a hopeless endeavour. It has no purpose, and never can one ever think of a life of love.

If Christ is risen, we too who have died with him will rise. St. Paul affirms, “we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom 6:4).

Christ – the One who suffers in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria or India

Today we are witnesses to Christians, our brothers and sisters, who are being persecuted for their faith in Christ. We see the imprint of early Christian martyrs in them. Pope Francis calls them saints.

The early Christians celebrated their new life in Christ. Their celebrating life included joyful proclamation and witness. They proclaimed which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked at and which their hands had touched (cf. 1Jn 1:1).

Saul, before he became Paul could not bear to see ‘untrue’ things being proclaimed. He had not seen, nor touched, nor experienced the Truth of Jesus Christ. But Christ touched him. Christ made him new. Once Paul was converted, his whole desire was “to know Christ—[...], to know the power of his resurrection and

¹Pope Francis’ catechesis at the Wednesday General Audience, 4th December 2013.

participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philip 3:10). Christ experience made him declare, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Experience of resurrection makes one, not just part of the body of Christ, but of Christ living in oneself. The early Christians experienced it; St. Paul experienced it. Those who suffer with Christ and those who suffer for Christ experience it. Today, there are those in different countries who undergo the experience of suffering and crucifixion, as did the early Christians, and as did Paul.

Today we are witnesses to numerous Christians who daringly lay down their lives having been gripped by the Risen Christ. We have heard of the massacre and torture of Christians in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, India, and in other places. That day Christ asked Saul, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me (Acts 9:4). Today too, Christ continues to experience the suffering, death, and crucifixion, in the members of His Body. So, we can continue to believe without losing hope that Christ asks that same question to our persecutors. In turn those persecutors and those who witness this persecution will come to believe in Christ our saviour. God turns evil into good. God turns evil intentioned people into his apostles.

Tertullian was inspired to say, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Let no persecution make us discouraged or make us lose our faith. Resurrection gives us hope that no persecution, or suffering, or crucifixion can stand in the way of believing in Christ.

Let us as we celebrate this Easter, pray in a special way for our brothers and sisters, who are persecuted for their faith in Christ.

SOME NEWS

1. Orientation Program

An Orientation Program meant for all the priests of Marthandam and Thuckalay Dioceses was held at MIDS, Kazhuvanthittai on 16th and 17th March 2015. Rev. Fr. George Plathottam SDB, the CBCI Social Communication Secretary, animated the priests on the theme "Pastoral Perspectives on Communication". I personally would like to thank Rev. Fr. George Plathottam who availed himself for the animation of the priests of both our dioceses. I thank him for sharing with us useful information and for motivating us towards proper use of communication media as pastors. My personal note of thanks goes also to Mar Vincent Paulos, the Bishop of Marthandam Diocese, and to all the fathers of the diocese. They went out of their way to receive us and accommodate us so well, and arranged the venue, the food, and other facilities making our participation and stay a memorable one.

2. Sanctification Day and Welcome to Most. Rev. Jerome Dhas Varuvel SDB

The priests and religious of the diocese gathered together on 31st March at Sangamam to thank God for the gift of Priesthood and religious life. I take this

opportunity to thank from the core of my heart Most Rev. Jerome Dhas SDB, the Bishop of Kuzhithurai diocese who willingly agreed to preach the recollection. It is a very kind brotherly gesture on his part to have spared his time and come among us even as has just begun ministry of Shepherding the new diocese. We had a concelebrated Holy Qurbana and Mooron blessing. I believe coming together as brothers and sisters, making our recollection and fasting and praying was for us a moment of mutual edification. Thanks to all of you dear fathers and sisters who made it to be present for the felicitation, recollection and the Holy Qurbana.

3. Vestition and Minor Orders

We congratulate Bro. Abhilash who had his Vestition on 30th March. We also congratulate Bro. Vinu and Bro. Jabanesh who received their minor orders on the same day. We wish them well as they proceed with their formation towards priesthood.

4. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam visits Seminaries

Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, our VG, made a visit of our seminarians studying at Ujjain and Satna between 4th & 12th March. The seminarians were very happy to receive Rev. Fr. Muttathupadam. He spent his time with them inquiring about their formation and well-being and health.

5. Successful Affiliation of St. Alphonsa College

We profusely thank God for answering our prayers and for guiding us in getting the affiliation of our St. Alphonsa College of Arts and Science with the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. It was a hard struggle and a legal battle. I personally and in the name of the Diocese thank Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparambil, Rev. Fr. Antony Jose, and Adv. Justinner, and many other friends and well-wishers of our diocese who left no stone unturned in the pursuit of the recognition and affiliation of our college. Though the permission for the college was received from the government in November 2014, the Syndicate issued the affiliation order only after having taken up the agenda in the meeting held on 24th March 2015. The students of the college will be able to write both their first and semester exams by 24th April 2015. The college has to deposit a 'fine' of 1 lakh rupees towards the conduct of first semester exams.

I thank you dear Fathers, and all sisters, and all friends who supported the process of affiliation with your unceasing prayers and fasting.

We thank the parents and all the students who stood by the college's efforts and for their trust in the administration of the college during the process of getting recognition and affiliation.

SOME INFORMATION

1. Ordinations to Priesthood

I am happy to tell you that soon in the first week of Easter, we will have 7 of our deacons ordained. Once again I give below the details of the Ordinations. I exhort you to participate with brotherly concern in as many ordinations of our deacons as possible.

- a. Dn. Abraham Puthenpurackal (Shoji) at Lourdes Matha Church, Pacha- Chekkidikadu, on 6-4-2015 at 9.15am.
- b. Dn. Thomas Attiyil (Ajeesh) at Lourdes Matha Church, Kulipura, on 6-4-2015 at 2.00pm.
- c. Dn. Jose Vayalil at St. George Church, Pooyamkutty, on 7-4-2015 at 9.15am.

- d. Dn.Joseph Kurias (Printo), at St.Mary's Church at Mankulam, on 8-4-2015 at 9.15am.
- e. Dn.James Kanakalil (Vinod), at St.Thomas' Church, Mavady, on 9-4-2015 at 9.15am.
- f. Dn.Thomas Poovathummottil (Abin) at St.Mary's Church, Manjapetty, on 9-4-2015 at 2.00pm.
- g. Dn. George Valliyamthadathil (Sumesh) at St.Mary's Church,Kanayankavayalon 11-4-2015 at 9.15am.

2. Ordination to Diaconate

We are grateful to the Lord for our brothers who will permanently commit themselves and enter into the ministerial order of Diaconate. Those admitted to diaconate for this year are, Bro. Anil Raj, Bro. Ajin Jose, Bro. Samuel, Bro. Rito Thoompunkal, and Bro. Justin Sudheesh. We congratulate these young men and pray for them.

The Diaconate Ordination will be held on Wednesday, April 1, at 5:30pm in Mankarai. I request you fathers especially all the fathers of the Soosaipuram Forane to participate in the Diaconate Ordination.

3. Holy Week

I believe you would have already planned well for the Holy Week. Kindly make sure that the Liturgy is well prepared and celebrated with care. Please instruct and guide those who will be playing different roles in the celebrations. Give sufficient practice well in advance if need be whether for the choir, the readers, or the acolytes. Well-conducted celebrations help to reap its due spiritual fruits.

4. New Priests Day and Recollection

We will felicitate our New Priests and all of them will celebrate mass together for us on May 12th at Malaicode, at 5.30pm. We will gather for Priest conference: Recollection and confession on the same day at Malaicode. The Recollection will begin at 2.00 pm and end with New priests mass at 5.30 pm

5. New Vice-Province for CMC sisters

Sisters belonging to the Congregation of Mother of Carmel (CMC) came to Kanyakumari and began their mission work in 1970. Their first house was at Kaliyal. Today their mission has expanded much and the Diocese of Thuckalay is grateful for their enriching presence. Their work forms a very significant part of the mission work of the Diocese.

The houses in this mission area were grouped into a region in 1998. Now the sisters have 11 houses and 52 members. They have three matriculation schools, one higher secondary school, and one HIV patients care centre. Their mission at Shenkottai has a dispensary. Recently they have also started a School for the Mentally-Retarded children at Shenkottai. The sisters' mission consists mainly in faith formation of the beneficiaries. Christine Programs are organized for children as retreat.

The Mission Region of the sisters is now being raised to the status of a Vice-Province. It only shows the commitment, fidelity, and involvement of all the sisters who have expanded God's mission through their charism. We congratulate the sisters and pray for them. The official function of the inauguration of the Vice-Province will be on 28th April.

6. St. Alphonsa Convent Turns Silver

St. Alphonsa convent at Nagercoil will celebrate the Silver Jubilee of their house this year. They will hold their celebrations on April 27th. We congratulate and wish them God's blessings and assure them of our prayers.

7. Mukkoottukal Parish Turns Golden

On 24th April Mukkoottukal Parish will celebrate its Golden Jubilee. We fondly remember the founding fathers and the pioneers who toiled there. We congratulate the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Jacob Aiyamathra, and all the Parishioners as they prepare themselves to celebrate and thank God for the blessings bestowed upon them. I also thank Rev. Fr. Jacob for having taken initiative to renovate the Madbaha and build the new sacristy. The approach road to the seminary is also newly laid.

8. Other Programs

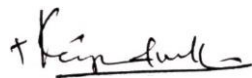
- a. On 21st April at 2.30pm we will have the Interdepartmental meet at the Bishop's House.
- b. Pastoral Council Agenda Committee meet will be held on 13th April at Padanthalummoodu at 5.00pm.
- c. Priests Conference will be held on 13th April, Monday.

In Conclusion

The celebration Easter tells the world that we are people filled with hope. Our hope is seen in the way we live our lives. A face which reflects the joy of the resurrection, our attitudes reflecting hope, our hearts filled with love, all these show that we are an Easter people. Resurrection begins when we die. Our resurrection does not need to wait for the day of our physical death. Christ calls us to die to ourselves. Resurrection then becomes a reality even in this life and can give us the foretaste of heaven.

Once again wish you all dear fathers a very Happy Easter!

Yours in the Risen Christ,



+ George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

BISHOP'S ENGAGEMENTS

April 2015

DAY DATE	TIME	EVENTS
Wednesday 01	5:30pm	Mankarai: Diaconate Ordination
Thursday 02	6.00pm	Thadikkarakkonam: Pesaha Thursday
Friday 03	8.00am 3.00pm	Thettiyode (Passion reading) Annikarai (Way of the Cross)
Saturday 04		Bishop's House: Great Saturday
Sunday 05	3.00am 12 pm	Bengiri: Easter Vigil Mass Lunch with German Students
Monday 06	9.15am 2.00pm	Pacha-Chekkidikadu: Dn. Shoji's Ordination Kulipura: Dn. Ajeesh's Ordination
Tuesday 07	9.15am	Pooyamkuty: Dn. Jose's Ordination
Wednesday 08	9.15am	Mankulam: Dn. Printo's Ordination
Thursday 09	9.15am 2.00pm 7.00pm	Mavady: Dn. Vinod's Ordination Manjapetty: Dn. Abin's Ordination Katapana: Thuckalay friends meeting
Friday 10		Idukki visit,, Night stay at Kanjirapally Bishop's House
Saturday 11	9.15am	Kanayankavayal: Dn. Sumesh's Ordination
Sunday 12	12noon 7.00pm	Thekkekara: Eucharistic Procession Changanacherry: Thuckalay friends meeting
Monday 13	9.30am 5.00pm	Priests Conference Pastoral Council Agenda Committee meeting
Tuesday 14		BISHOP'S BIRTHDAY
Tuesday 14		Thellagam: CMC Sisters' Golden Jubilee
Wednesday 15	6.00am 11 am 10 pm	CMC: Final Profession at Aluva Pala: Marriage Qurbana of Thuckalay friends>> Velankanni
Thursday 16, Friday 17		Velankanni
Saturday 18	9.30am 6.00pm	FCC Golden Jubilee Mass in the Convent
Sunday 19		Cheenivilai: Pastoral Visit
Monday 20	6.00pm	Thagazhi, Edathua: Silver jubilee of Profession Mass in the Convent
Tuesday 21	2.30pm 6.00pm	Interdepartmental Meeting Mass at CMC Thuckalay
Wednesday 22	9.30am 6.00pm	Curia Meeting Mass at FCC Plankalai
Thursday 23	11.00am	Sr. Magdalin's SABS Golden Jubilee Qurbana
Friday 24		St. GEORGE - Bishop's Patron, Feast
Friday 24	6.00pm	Mukkootukal: Parish Golden Jubilee>> Thirssur
Saturday 25	11 am	Thrissur: Marriage Qurbana >> Thuckalay
Sunday 26	8.00 am	Nithiravilai: Pastoral Visit
Monday 27	10.30am	Nagercoil: Jubilee of St. Alphonsa Convent
Tuesday 28	6.00pm	Bishop's House>> Chennai
Wednesday 29	10.00am	Chennai: SMSM Sisters' Silver Jubilee
Thursday 30	5.30 pm	Chennai >>Kottayam
Friday May 1	8.00am 3.00pm	Athirampuzha: SABS Mission animation Muttuchera: Kudumbayogam Qubana

Fr. K. J. Antony SDB
Diocese Secretary

