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Dear and Reverend Fathers,

We are in the season of Easter. All of us were busy with the celebration of the Holy Week. On Easter Sunday, we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. The attendance in our churches during these days was more than all other Sundays of the year. Songs of resurrection were ringing out from our churches. The congregations gathered in their finest clothes to worship during those days.

And yet, for some of us Holy Week could have been a difficult day. There are reasons why these days can be a struggle for many of us. Some of these issues can be listed out.

- **The days are often overwhelmingly busy.** From early morning preparation to events throughout the day, Priests are on the go throughout the day. Some churches add special services for these special days. For some Priests, the days are so full that they have little time to focus on their own personal worship.
- **The pressure to 'do well' is increased.** The crowd is bigger, but many are giving the church only this one opportunity to grab their attention. No church leader wants to mess up on Holy Week. Consequently, every small issue - each off note, every stumbled-over word, and every unintended delay - gets magnified.
- **Finding a unique approach to the Easter story is not easy.** The story itself is enough, of course, but some Priests sense a need to present the story in a fresh and enlightening way. The task of finding that new approach when everyone else is preaching on the same topic can be stressful.
- **Priests see members they have not seen since last Easter.** On one hand, that's good news. Priests are typically glad to see members return, hoping they will recommit themselves to faithfulness this year. On the other hand, Priests often end these days wondering why they cannot reach those same folks the rest of the year.
- **Priests see 'lostness' come in the door . . . and leave unchanged.** Yes, Priests trust the Word of God will do its work. Yes, they know that planting a seed is a first step toward others being converted. It is still agonizing, though, when they see non-believers walk in the door and out the door on Easter with no obvious response to the gospel.
- **Priests get a glimpse of what the church could be . . . but typically isn't.** Parking lot attendants are ready, and they even arrive early. People are well dressed and easily identified. The best musicians and singers are enlisted. The sermons and liturgies are well rehearsed. The church gives its best for these days - but then returns to mediocrity the following week. That is frustrating.
- **Priests often judge their own sermons more critically on Easter days.** Many of us review our sermons after each service. We think through how we might have re-worded that point, changed that illustration, or clarified that application. That critique is sometimes more intense on Holy Week, as no Priest wants to have missed the opportunity to proclaim the gospel clearly and boldly.
- **Priests brag about Easter attendance.** It happens. Priests excited about Easter attendance often make sure others know about their successes during the weeks following the Holy Week.

Unhealthy, even ungodly, competition develops. Nobody wants to play the game, but few people want to lose the game, either.

- **Attendance expectations may not be met.** We always have Holy Week attendance goal in our minds. Even when we fight hard to stop worrying about numbers, our minds still go there. Too often we became discouraged because the actual attendance did not meet our goals.
- **Monday morning letdown can follow Easter.** For weeks, Priests' energies are devoted to preparing for the Holy Week. Teams get ready so that the church operates as a well-oiled machine on these days. Everyone is focused, committed - and a bit relieved when it is all over. Monday morning means a return to the routine.
- **Some Priests have no resurrection joy themselves.** For some, ministry is hard. They serve one church while seeking the next one. In their personal lives, they may be struggling. They must proclaim the hope of resurrection when their own hope is dying. Holy Week then becomes a chore to endure rather than days to celebrate.

As we have celebrated the Holy Week, it is important that we ask ourselves, how we spent these days of grace? Have we made these days meaningful for our people through our well-prepared animations? We are as Humans; we may have made some mistakes. This is not the time for discouragement. Ask our parishioners to pray for us so that we can avoid repeating similar mistakes in the future. In the meantime, spent these days of Easter in the company of the resurrected Lord and bring our people to his feet so that all of us can benefit much from the celebration of the paschal mysteries of Christ.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Report of the first official meeting of Madurai Mission: The first official meeting for the establishment of a Syrian Parish at Madurai was held on 1 March 2018 at Deepaham Religious Centre, Madurai. I chaired the meeting. Others who were present for the meeting include Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General, Rev. Fr. Joy Kolengadan CMI, Provincial of Preshitha Province, Coimbatore, Rev. Fr Nimish Chundenkuzhiyil, Priest-in-charge, Chavara Eucharistic Community, Mr. Jomichan, President, Parish Council, Mrs Rincy Jose, Vice President, Parish Council, Mr Antos, Secretary, Parish Council, Mrs Jacquiline, Joint Secretary, Parish Council, Mr Shaji Augustine, Member, Mr Shajimon, Member, Mr David, Member and Mr Lixon, Member.

The Meeting started at 2.30pm with a prayer led by the Vicar General. I welcomed the group and officially announced that the Parish will be established on 15 April 2018. Rev. Fr Aneesh, new Director of Deepaham, is appointed as the Vicar of the newly created Parish. I have also made the Chavara Eucharistic Community a Mission Station of the Eparchy of Thuckalay. The details of the programme to be held on 15 April 2018 were discussed during the meeting. The Holy Mass will start at 4.00pm. There will be a general meeting soon after the mass. I was given the responsibility to preside over both programmes. After the meeting, the catechism children will stage a variety show. It will be followed by dinner. Mrs Rincy Jose will arrange the stage programme while Mr Lixon will oversee the invitations. Archbishop of Madurai will be a special guest for the event.

The transfer of Rev. Fr Nimish, who initiated the process, was a concern that the meeting raised. The Chavara Community will definitely miss him. However, Rev. Fr. Aneesh will efficiently carry forward the mission. The Meeting concluded with a prayer. The members dispersed after tea.

Mission Volunteers: A Meeting for the mission volunteers was held on 3 March 2018 at Padanthalumoodu. The Meeting started at 2.30pm. Along with me, Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan and Rev. Fr Jiji Koipuram, Mission Coordinator, were also present.

The eight voluntary missionaries present at the meeting were Mr Mariyadas, Mr G. Jebadhas, Mr Jayan, Mr A. Robert Paul, Mr N. Robert Nelson, Mr C. Dhamothran, Mr R. Jayaraj, Mr T. Ramesh Kumar and Mrs P. Snehalatha. They expressed their missionary enthusiasm and wanted moments for preparation before entering into the mission work. Rev. Fr Jiji Koipuram, Mission Coordinator, will arrange a Bible course for them with the help of Rev. Fr Mijo Puthenpurayil. I sincerely thank and wish well the mission coordinator Rev. Fr Jiji Koipuram and all the missionary volunteers.

Orientation Programme for Priests: The orientation programme for all the Priests was held on 12-13 March 2018 at Sangamam. The resource person was Mar Tomy Tharayil, Auxiliary Bishop of Changanassery. Nearly 40 Priests participated in the meeting. They were also present at the priestly *Koinonia*, conducted on 12 March. I congratulate the Fathers who organized this special evening.

St Alphonsa College: St Alphonsa Arts and Science College secured good results this year. Of the 145 students appeared for their degree examinations, 135 graduated with good marks. The total pass percentage can be over 90%. On 16 March 2018, we had the first graduation ceremony at the College. Dr Krishna Baskar, Vice-Chancellor of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, was the chief guest. He distributed the certificates to the students. The quality of the students, who were admitted at the beginning of the College, was poor. However, the hard work of both students and the staff produced such good results. I congratulate and thank Rev. Fr Antony Jose and his team of staff both present and the past for the success. The college also celebrated its Annual Day on 17 March 2018. Dr Santhosh Babhu, Registrar of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, was the chief guest and delivered an inspiring speech.

Day of Prayer and Blessing of Myron: 28 March 2018, the day before the Maundy Thursday, was observed as the Day of Prayer with abstinence. During the Holy Qurbana the Myron was also blessed. All the Priests and Sisters joined in the prayer, adoration, confession and Myron Blessing. I thank each and every one for the time that you spent in preparing for Easter.

A Word of Thanks: I extend my sincere thanks to all the Priests and Sisters who participated in the Eparchial level initiatives. On 15 March 2018, the Eparchy conducted a prayer day for the intention of Mar George Cardinal Alencherry. All the Priests and Sisters participated in the adoration. It was organised according to Forane wise. I thank all the Vicars of Forane churches, Sisters and Rev. Fr Mijo for organizing the prayer day. The problems related to land deal in the Archdiocese of Ernakulum are slowly being resolved.

INFORMATION

- ❖ **Finance Council:** The Eparchy has constituted a new Eparchial Finance Council. The members of the Finance Council are Bishop George Rajendran sdb, Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan, Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal, Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, Rev. Fr Mathew Thekkekkutt and Mr Augustine Tharappel.
- ❖ **The formal inauguration of the Madurai Mission** will be held on 15 April 2018. Before beginning this great event of the diocese, we decided to hold a dawn to dusk prayer and adoration on 14 April 2018 at the Bishop's House Chapel. I request you dear fathers to come to the Bishop's House and spare some time to pray for the new mission. You are free to come any time between 6 am to 6 pm.

- ❖ **Vocation camp:** The annual vocation camp for our diocese will be held from 27-29 April, 2018. Kindly encourage, prepare well and sent the worthy candidates to the Minor seminary for the camp. Rev. Fr. Joshy and his team will be animating the camp.
- ❖ **Priests' Allowance:** As we have decided, from the month of April 2018, the monthly allowance of Priests is raised to Rs 10,000.00. The mess fee for the Rev. Sisters is Rs 3000.00. Kindly keep in mind that the Priests' Allowance also includes the mess for the Rev. Sisters.
- ❖ **The Bishop Elect Mar John Nellikkunnel:** The Newly elected Bishop of Idukki, Mar John Nellikkunnel visited Bishop's House on 8 March 2018 and invited us for his Episcopal ordination, which will be held on 5 April 2018 at Vazhathoppu at 2.00 pm. I will be participating in the Episcopal ordination.
- ❖ **News about Seminarians:** Br Robin from Munchirai received Heupadiaknusa and two of our Regents, Br Mahesh and Josemon Paul, received their clerical dresses on 26 March 2018 at Sangamam. This year we have 8 regents and they will begin their regency in the month of April. All the Seminarians will be sent to the Parishes for Holy Week and VBS.
- ❖ **The catechism department** will organise a meeting of all the class 12 students who have written the board exam on 9 April at 10.00 am in our College campus. The students will be picked up and dropped from the respective parishes by the college bus. Kindly give the number of students who will participate in the meeting from your parish to Rev. Fr Alex Puthettu, Director.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Shoji Puthenpurackal is appointed as the Eparchial office Secretary at the bishop's House from 14 March, 2018. You can keep in touch with him for the general information and enquiries of the Eparchy and Bishop. His contact telephone number is **0091 8281809856**. We wish him all the best and God's blessing in his new appointment.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Sanil Panthichirakal is doing his M.Ed. studies via distance education.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Ritto Thoompunkal will be attending two weeks of formation course at Punnapra, Alleppy from 30 April to 20 May 2018.
- ❖ During the holidays the seminary staff will be visiting the families of our seminarians.
- ❖ Br Abilash will be completing his Theological studies and will return to the Eparchy by the end of June.
- ❖ The student Fathers in Rome have gone for Holy Week Ministry to various Parishes in Italy.
- ❖ Rev. Fr. Robin Koorumullil will come to our Eparchy in May this year for his annual home Holidays. We welcome him wholeheartedly and wish him happy time both at home and in our eparchy.
- ❖ Marappady Parish has built a new *Kurisady* and it will be blessed on 6 May by 4.00 pm
- ❖ The new *Kurusady* at Manjalumoodu Parish will be blessed on 1 May 2018.
- ❖ Muzhucode parish has renovated its church including the *Madbaha* and built a new adoration chapel. The blessing will be on 1 July 2018.
- ❖ The selection of candidates for the three-year theological studies is over. The inauguration of the course will be held on 12 May 2018 at 2.00 pm in Sangamam.
- ❖ The Education Commission of the Eparchy is seriously thinking of starting a certificate course for the teachers of our educational institutions at Sangamam from June this year onwards.
- ❖ The Eparchy will set up a Show room and storeroom for the Pulari enterprises at Padanthalumoodu to stock the materials.
- ❖ The Eparchy is beginning another garment unit, named "Devamatha Garments Export," a unit of Angel Garments, at Killiyoor. This initiative will give job opportunity to the people of Soosaipuram Forane.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

01 April 2018	- Easter
02 April 2018	- Priestly Ordination of Deacon Subin Scaria, Thuruthy
05 April 2018	- Episcopal Ordination of Bishop John Nellikkunnel, Idukki
06 April 2018	- Priestly Ordination of Deacon Dorathik, Kalluvilai
07 April 2018	- Priestly Ordination of Deacon Thomas Jebanesh, Soosaipuram
09 April 2018	- Meeting 12 th Students
13 April 2018	- Alphonsa College Pastoral visit
14 April 2018	- Full day prayer for Madurai Mission
15 April 2018	- Inauguration of Madurai Mission
24 April 2018	- Priests conference
27- 29 April 2018	- Vocation camp at the Minor seminary

CONCLUSION

On 8 April 2018, we celebrate the Divine Mercy Sunday. It is originally based on the devotion to the Divine Mercy that Saint Faustina Kowalska reported as part of her encounter with Jesus, and is associated with special promises from Jesus and indulgences that the Church has issued. I invite you, dear Fathers, to make this day special for our people. Kindly organize special devotional practices on this day and propagate devotional practices to the Divine Mercy like the recitation of the chaplet of Divine Mercy among the faithful. We are also beginning our Madurai Mission this month. It will be the first initiative that we will be taking after the territory of our Eparchy was extended. Let us ask the good Lord to bless this venture and to make us missionary-minded in all the ministries that we carry out.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

