



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/109/2020

31 May 2020

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

It is almost three months, since the major parts of the world is in a state of full or partial lockdown due to the corona virus pandemic, and in our Eparchy we all are being confined to our parishes or institutions. But this situation should not become an occasion for pastoral inactivity and absence of creative ministry. We need to be very innovative and daring when it was a question of responding to the signs of the times and the needs of our people. I am aware that all of you have gone out (and are going out) of your way to help the needy people by distributing food, face masks, awareness programmes on the prevention of the spread of Covid-19, and other forms of charitable works. You are also spending much of your time in catechising the various sections of our people using innovative methods. While they are all praiseworthy and necessary initiatives, we should not stop with them. This is a God-given opportunity for us to be pastorally resourceful. Let us be alert to the needs of our people.

We are in the month of June. During this month, the Church focuses with loving reverence on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As all of us are aware that this devotion stems in part to Church approved private revelations our Lord gave St Margaret Marie Alacoque, a French Nun in the 17th century, in which he made known to her his desire for us to show love and devotion to his Sacred Heart.

St Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that while one might find the courage to sacrifice his life for a good person, Christ died for us while we were still sinners (Rom 5: 7-8). Keep in mind as well that he would have made that same sacrifice *just for you alone!*

Speaking of sinners, in line with our focus on Jesus' Sacred Heart, our Lord once told Sr Josefa Menendez, a Spanish nun in the 1920's, that, as he put it: "My heart cannot contain the ardour with which it longs to impart itself, and deliver Itself over, and remain always with sinners [all of us!]. How I long for them to open their hearts to me, to enclose me in them, and that the fire that consumes Mine should fortify and enkindle theirs!"

Jesus told his apostles during the Discourse at the Last Supper to "love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34 and 15:12). His love is not lukewarm or indifferent. He reproaches the Church at Laodicea for its tepidity (Rev. 3:16).

As his life was ebbing away on the cross, Jesus said "I thirst" (John 19:28), a cry that theologians over the centuries have interpreted to signify more than just a physical thirst but a profoundly *spiritual* one for souls, including *yours and mine* in what St Alphonsus Liguori called "his ardent desire to save all humankind!"

All of us are born with a God-given soul, one that Jesus values and loves no matter what our circumstances are in this life! It is also prime real estate in the battle between Christ and Satan. Despite what atheists and some materialistic free thinkers might claim, there is indeed an afterlife, and each of us will either spend it the unspeakable joy of heaven or misery in hell, depending on how we've responded to God's graces in this life.

Admittedly, many of us are in the throes of various spiritual and emotional trials, especially these days as we are in a state of lock down due to corona virus! Mother Teresa herself felt both a dryness and emptiness in serving God at various times throughout her life. That is by no means uncommon, both for priests and the laity alike. Our prayers do not get answered. Trouble seems to be brewing all around us. There are pressures at work, or with the family or such, that are just too much to bear!

God allows us to undergo trials to strengthen our souls or cleanse them of sinful habits or inclinations. Yet, as hard as may be to believe, God is very much there with us through these struggles and wishes us to help him bring whatever good we can out of bad situations, as well as out of evil.

We are living in increasingly difficult and perilous times, both for our faith and for the world in general, and there is probably a link between those two! It certainly feels these days as if we are living in the times our Lord predicted when men's hearts would grow cold (Mt. 24:12). However, that could have been said during any number of brutal epochs in human history.

Yet always remember Satan does not have the last word. He did not at Calvary and he won't now or ever. We need to stay close to Jesus in prayer and in partaking of his sacraments, even when, perhaps especially when, it seems he's nowhere to be found.

Each of us must try to help our Lord be a light that the darkness cannot and will not overcome! As St Margaret Mary herself once wrote: "The adorable Heart of Jesus wills to establish its reign of love in every heart, so as to overthrow that [reign] of Satan...In spite of all opposition, this divine Heart will eventually triumph. Satan with all his adherents will be confounded. Happy will they be who have been the means of establishing his [our Lord's] empire."

Let us engender a tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in our own lives during this month and take initiatives to promote this devotion among our people through the various pious practices that our Church tradition stipulates.

INFORMATION

Visit to Priests during Lockdown: Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil and I made informal visits to all the parishes and convents of the Eparchy and met all our Fathers and Sisters during lockdown - 3, from 2 to 14 May 2020. We could not visit the mission territories. Both of us were happy to learn that all of you are keeping good health, and are actively involved in the spiritual and humanitarian ministry among the people. I am grateful to you, dear Fathers, for the warm welcome that extended to us and for sharing your mission experiences with us during these challenging times.

VPV in Homes: I congratulate all of you all for having organized well the VPV for our catechism children with the help of Diocesan Narcheithi Nilayam from 25 April to 10 May 2020. I saw the many photos and videos which were prepared by children. I could see the talents, creativity and innovations of our children in their dramas, tableaux, etc. based on biblical themes. The wholehearted involvement of parents was also seen. The parents encouraged their children by giving them sufficient practice, helping

them with artistic arrangements, giving them make-ups, etc. I congratulate and thank you, dear Fathers, Sisters, Sunday School Headmasters and teachers, for your kind cooperation. We are all grateful to Rev. Fr Prince Maliyil, Director of Catechism Department, for the commendable job in preparing the tasks through meticulous planning with the team of priests and teachers for the smooth conduct of the VPV-COVID WITH JESUS programme for the children.

Thank you Rev. Fr Saji Elambasseril SDB: The Eparchy of Thuckalay is very grateful to Fr Saji for the selfless services that he rendered as the Director and Secretary of Kanya Kumari Social Service Society. He joined in 2013 and since then he has undertaken social work for the welfare of the poor, the neglected and the downtrodden in the Eparchy.

I sincerely appreciate the new vitality that Fr Saji brought into the activities and programmes of the Society. I have witnessed over the years, his commitment for the social ministry of the Eparchy. We thank him especially for projects like AIDACT, Educare and Palliative Care. I am sure, these projects will continue to speak for long years of his noble service to KKSSS. I also take this opportunity to thank the Salesians of Don Bosco, Bangalore Province, particularly the Provincial, who had kindly lent him to the Eparchy. Fr Saji was given farewells both at the Bishop's House as well as at KKSSS.

Commencement of Online Catechism Classes: Even though the complete lock down is relaxed to some extent, the schools and places of worship still remain closed. Our Major Archbishop organised a meeting via video conferencing of Syro-Malabar Catechetical Directors on 28 May 2020 in order to discuss about the possibility of beginning the catechism classes online in all the Eparchies. The meeting decided to go ahead with the proposal. Most of the Syro-Malabar Eparchies will begin the inauguration of the academic year in the first week of June. Based on this information, I called for a meeting via video conferencing of all the Forane Vicars and Forane Catechism Directors on 29 May 2020. Rev. Fr Prince Maliyil, Director of Catechetical Department, shared the inputs that he received from the Syro-Malabar Catechetical Department, Kakkanad. Incorporating all the suggestions that the members gave, Fr Prince has prepared the following schedule with my approval for Sunday catechism classes in our Eparchy:

- ◆ The second semester Sunday school examinations (STD I to IX) will be held on 7 June 2020.
- ◆ The final examinations for STD X will be conducted on 5 July 2020, and for STD XI & XII on 12 July 2020 in their own respective Sunday schools.
- ◆ The Scholarship examination and Sunday School Annual Day for this year are cancelled.
- ◆ All the Catechism Headmasters are requested to prepare the promotion list soon after the examinations.
- ◆ There will be a Webinar (online Seminar) for Sunday school teachers on 9 June 2020 via Google Meet or Zoom in two batches.
- ◆ A meeting of the HMs and Promoters with the Bishop and Vicar General is scheduled on 10 June 2020 through Google Meet or Zoom.
- ◆ Our Bishop Mar George Rajendran will inaugurate the New Catechetical Year on 14 June 2020 at 10.00 am with the Holy Qurbana.
- ◆ The regular Sunday school classes will begin from 21 June 2020 through pre-recorded lessons for all the classes.
- ◆ More information regarding the procedure of the classes will be notified later.

I am sure, with great commitment, you will make the online faith formation programme a successful one for our children. The team of priests and laity headed by Fr Prince is working on the lessons.

Vestition: On 15 May 2020, Br Albin Jose, Br Amento, Br Lintomon and Br Sanjo received the clerical habit during the Holy Qurbana at Sangamam. We congratulate and wish them God's blessings.

Minor Orders: Due to lock down our brothers from Kerala are staying at home. This year our seven Major seminarians, who are doing theology in various colleges, received the minor orders:

- ◆ Br Prince received *Karoyusa* order on 20 May 2020 at Idukki. Mar John Nellikunnel, Bishop of Idukki, was the main celebrant.
- ◆ Br Ajin C, Br Shijin and Br Mahesh received the minor orders, *Karoyusa* and *Heupadiaknusa*, on 23 May 2020 in Minor Seminary.
- ◆ Br George Kutti received the minor order, *Karoyusa*, on 23 May 2020 in Rome.
- ◆ Br Josemon and Br Liju received the minor orders, *Karoyusa* and *Heupadiaknusa*, on 30 May 2020 at Kanjirapally. Mar Jose Pulikal, Bishop of Kanjirapally, was the main celebrant.

We congratulate all the brothers.

Priestly Ordinations: Due to the lock down caused by Covid -19, we have postponed the ordinations of Deacon Robin Jose and Deacon Toji Sebastian. The new date for the priestly ordination of Deacon Robin Jose is on 11 June, 2020 at Sangamam and Deacon Toji Sebastian will be also on the same day at Njarakkad, Kerala. Bishop Mar George Madathikandathil, Bishop of Kothamangalam, has consented to ordain Dn. Toji Sebastian. The number of persons who can participate in the ordination ceremony will depend on the guidelines that the respective States issue. We wish our Deacons God's blessing as they are preparing for this great event in their lives.

Home Visits of Rev. Fathers: I am sure that during these days of pandemic you are in touch with your family members and are praying for them. It will be a good gesture on your part to visit your parents and dear ones once the inter-State travel restrictions are relaxed and quarantine is suspended. Before you plan your home trips, kindly inform Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, our VG, in order to make alternative arrangements for the celebration of the Sacraments in your respective parishes during your absence.

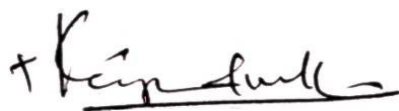
Transfer: Rev. Fr Saji Elambasseril SDB is relieved from KKSSS as its director and Fr Abin Poovathummoottil is appointed as new director of KKSSS with effect from 27 May 2020. We wish Fr Abin God's blessing.

CONCLUSION

We have concluded the Easter season as well as the month of May amidst lock down due to the corona virus. Our people have missed all the normal liturgical celebrations associated with these two great events. However, I am sure, with your creative initiatives and, above all, with your prayerful support, you have enthused our people to come closer to Jesus and Mary. Let us continue to pray for an immediate solution to the problems that the Covid-19 has brought about in the world.

May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

