



Ref. No. Priests/GR/53/2016

23 February 2016

Dear Fathers,

Greetings of peace and love!

### **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

In his message for the holy season of Lent, occurring within the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis says that it is a season to be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience the transforming miracle of divine mercy. The Pope further added: "Let us not waste this season of Lent— so favourable a time for conversion!" For the Church as a whole and for each one of us, says Pope Francis, this Jubilee Year of Mercy should be a year of the Lord's favour, a year of the remission of sins, a year of reconciliation, a year of manifold conversions and of sacramental and extra-sacramental penance. Let us then make this Lent and this whole year a time of authentic conversion, of liberation from sin, a renewed appreciation and more intense celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in its most profound meaning. Let us discover anew the merciful face of the Father.

Mercy expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 21), thus restoring his relationship with him. In Jesus crucified, God shows his desire to draw near to sinners, however far they may have strayed from him. This is what happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our commitment to conversion is brought to fulfilment in the sacrament of Reconciliation. In this Sacrament we meet the Lord, who wants to grant us forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. The Church sees confession as something so important that she requires that every Catholic to go at least once a year. The Church also encourages frequent confession in order to grow closer to Christ Jesus and His Body the Church. In this sacrament, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we seek forgiveness and repentance, as well as the strength to grow in the life of virtue and to witness to a joyful life of conversion. The Fathers of the Church refer to this sacrament as the "second plank of salvation," after Baptism.

The Father's inexpressible desire that sinners be reconciled to him derives from his infinite love for us. The parable of the Prodigal Son highlights the profound desire in God's heart that we sinners be reconciled with each other. In the parable we see the anguish in the Father's heart when he hears the elder son's angry resentment. Our Father is not pleased when his children are jealous and haughty, full of bitterness and anger, unconverted, not reconciled with a brother, selfish, hard of heart, or even enraged that God would forgive a sinner who had distanced himself from him.

Jesus taught us to pray every day for forgiveness, but only “as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Mt 6:12). We receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation worthily only when our sorrow for sin includes openness to our neighbour, a willingness to forgive. Before we come to the altar with the gift of our worship, Jesus insists, we must first be reconciled with anyone who “has anything against” us (Mt 5:23).

When we forgive someone who has hurt us, we are relieved of the gnawing resentment we feel inside us. Until we forgive, the rage in our heart goes on aggravating us, making us more and more bitter, and deepening our hostility and isolation. To forgive others does not mean that we have to ignore the fact that they are causing us injury, or are betraying us in some way. That would be foolish.

Forgiveness means a willingness to accept another back into our friendship whenever he or she wishes to use his or her freedom to be reunited with us. We must understand that some people cause us such painful suffering regularly that it will take a long time for us to forgive them. Until our forgiveness is complete and do it constantly whenever problems arise, we cannot be really happy. Jesus implied this when he required that we forgive “seventy times seven times,” that is, over and over (Mt 18:22).

Every day we hear God’s call to put aside painful memories, to be sympathetic, to end bitter hatreds or feuds, to seek to understand a hostile person. The Holy Father refers to one’s refusal to forgive as a “suicidal act,” which damages the “fabric of one’s relationship with others.” As a preacher once said, the one who benefits most from forgiveness is the one who forgives.

What are the fruits of Reconciliation? Among the many fruits that can be spoken of, we can highlight at least four of them that touch our relationship with God, with our brother priests and with the people to whom we are sent to serve.

Firstly, through Reconciliation, we receive the joy of the Father’s pardon, the unfathomable experience of his infinitely patient and merciful love. The cheerfulness with which we bear witness to the Gospel and which we spread around us has its firm foundation in the sacramental encounter with the Father.

Secondly, we are able to rebuild the fraternal communion among our brother priests and among our people. This is because those who approach the sacrament of Penance are reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded, by their sins; they are therefore disposed for forgiveness and for growth in brotherly love.

Thirdly, the Sacrament of Reconciliation purifies our apostolic intentions. By self-detachment, the penitent Priest is ready for a better service of God’s glory in a more authentic service of the people entrusted to his care. The gift of reconciliation impels him along the road of a more living and loving apostolate.

In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis highlights a fourth fruit of reconciliation, namely, an eagerness to engage in spiritual and corporal works of mercy. God’s mercy transforms human hearts and enables us to become merciful in turn. It inspires us to “love our neighbour and to devote ourselves to what the Church’s tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.” These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. Pope Francis expressed

his hope that “we reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy during this year in order to reawaken our consciences and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy (MV 15).

To conclude my brief reflection on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, let me quote Pope Francis once again. In one of his recent weekly catechesis on the Year of Mercy, the Holy Father invited the people to turn to God with all their hearts, trusting in his mercy and grace. He reminded them of how, in the Book of Exodus, God defines himself as the God of mercy. He tells Moses that he is “the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6). The Hebrew word for mercy evokes the tender and visceral love of a mother for her child. The God of mercy is also gracious, ever ready to understand and forgive. He is slow to anger, prepared to wait patiently, like a wise farmer, for the seeds of repentance to grow in our hearts. He waits for us, ever ready to forgive our sins and to welcome us back to a right relationship with him.

Let us make this Jubilee Year of Mercy and this Lent, within the Jubilee, into a personal journey to the Father, a journey of authentic conversion and renewed appreciation and more intense celebration of the Sacrament of Penance in its most profound meaning. Once we are convinced of the importance of this Sacrament and frequent it as often as possible, we are, then, in a vantage point to teach and help our people to appreciate and frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## **News and Events**

### **1. Workshop on *Laudato Si'***

A one dayworkshop on Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si'* was held at KKSSS, Kalluvilai on 13<sup>th</sup> February. The workshop focused on climate change and protection of environment, especially those matters of concern laid down by the Pope’s encyclical.

I congratulate and thank the resource persons, Rev. Fr. Dr. Tony Neelankavil, Dr. Mary Regina, and Dr. Jose Kallarackal from the Trichur Archdiocese. We were privileged to have these erudite scholars with practical vision to have presented us with the theme and for having animated the workshop sessions. I am grateful to Mar Raphael Thattil for having identified these resource persons and for having send them to us for our animation and enrichment. It was heartening to see many of our priests and priests of adjacent dioceses and religious sisters and lay people, and all taking active part in the workshop.

I thank in a special way Rev. Fr. Saji Elembasseril SDB and his team at KKSSS for organizing the event so well.

### **2. Priest conference and Requiem mass for Rev. Fr. Kodiyanthara**

On 9<sup>th</sup>February a requiem mass was celebrated for Rev. Fr. Philip Kodiyanthara our former VG on his 3<sup>rd</sup> Death Anniversary. During the homily I recalled and narrated some events from the life of Fr. Kodiyanthara, and spoke of his simple and holy life. There were also some religious sisters and lay people who joined the celebration. After

the mass we had the priests' conference and one of the main agenda discussed about was the Uraviam Prayer book.

### **3. Washing of the Feet ceremony**

On 21 January 2016 Congregation for Divine Worship issued a Decree regarding the Rite of Washing of Feet. The directive stated that women too should be included in the Washing of Feet ceremony during the liturgy of the *Pesaha* Thursday. Our Major Archbishop George Cardinal Alencherry clarified the practice of the directive with, His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and also got this opinion written from the Congregation on 28<sup>th</sup> January. The Congregation has clarified that "Both the Decree and the letter of the Holy Father, which prompted it, mention specifically and only 'the Roman rite' and 'the Roman Missal'. Thus, this change does not concern liturgical practices in the Eastern Churches." Then, as stated by the Congregation, our position as Orientals continues to remain the same and therefore Washing of Feet ceremony is to be observed as before and there is no change intended or expected.

### **4. Priesthood day and Recollection for Priests and Religious**

The paschal mystery forms the crux of our faith. St. Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Cor 15:17). The Holy Week is a time when we intensely relive our faith recalling the sufferings, death and resurrection of Our Lord.

All the more for us Priests and Religious who share the death of Christ in our bodies and spirit, this Holy Week becomes transformational, transforming firstly not just the world but ourselves and reorienting ourselves to this reality of redemption. The *Pesaha* Thursday is an important day when Jesus instituted the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders.

We shall observe the priesthood day on the preceding Tuesday, i.e., on **22 March 2016**. We, all the members of the presbyterium and all the religious sisters of our diocese, shall gather on this day to thank the Lord for the gift of our Priesthood and Religious life. It will be a day of recollection with prayer and fasting. **Rev. Fr. Mani Puthiyidam**, the Vicar General of Changanassery Archdiocese will preach the recollection. I request all the Priests and Religious Sisters to join this recollection.

**Date:** 22 March 2016

**Venue:** Sangamam

#### **Programme**

- 09.30 a.m. - Arrival/ reflection
- 10.00 a.m. - Recollection talk
- 11.00 a.m. - Benediction, Confessions
- 12.30 p.m. - Break/Coffee
- 01.30 p.m. - Concelebrated Holy Qurbana
- 03.00 p.m. - Departure

## **5. Lenten liturgical celebrations**

I am glad that every one of our parishes is organizing the Lenten liturgical celebrations in a special way. It is in fact very important to plan well and organize. Kindly do let every parishioner know the detailed program of the Holy Week announcing to them sufficiently in advance. *If need be print a notice and distribute the timetable and the order of events.*

Let us make sure that we enter into the celebration with due preparation and prayer. Let everyone get the correct information. Study the rubrics well and let us gift our faithful with a beautifully lived out liturgy with least confusion. Distribute the parts of the liturgical celebration well in advance and call for practice when necessary. Train the altar boys and leaders of the liturgy.

## **6. Episcopal ordination**

We congratulate Mar Jose Pulickal of having been raised to episcopacy and on becoming the first Auxiliary Bishop of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally. Till recently he was the Syncellus of the Eparchy with special responsibility for Clergy Welfare. Mar Jose Pulickal was ordained Bishop on 4<sup>th</sup> February at Kanjirapally. We thank God for the gift of one more shepherd to our Catholic church.

## **7. Year of Mercy adoration for 24 hours**

The Holy Father has given us the instruction to observe “24 Hours for the Lord” with penitential service on Friday 4 March 2016 as part of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. But for our convenience we will observe it in each of our parishes on **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March**. It will be a day of celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and of 24 hours adoration. We will begin the day with Holy Qurbana at 7am followed by adoration by different groups. Confessions can be made simultaneously during adoration and priests can be available for the same. The “24 Hours for the Lord,” will end on 19<sup>th</sup> morning with Holy Qurbana.

To this end I ask the fathers to kindly plan well and execute the programme for the day. You can ask the help of various departments and pious associations in the organization. For adoration at night, Religious communities, youth group members and Vincent de Paul members can take turn. Above all please instruct our faithful regarding the request of the Holy Father and they can profit well from this Year of Mercy.

## **8. Orientation Program**

We serve the Lord in holy joy (Ps 100:2). Martha did it. But Jesus expects us primarily to sit and listen to him before we act. Take a break. Mary did it. Jesus appreciated that sitting down and listening.

We priests and religious too are involved doing lot of things for the Lord. It is time that we too sat and listened, reflected and discussed things. An opportunity in the form of an Orientation Programme is given to us in our diocese and this year we have arranged a session to discuss about our pastoral challenges and difficulties we face and the plausible practical approaches.

The Orientation Programme will begin on 14<sup>th</sup> March at 9.30am and will last the whole day till 11pm and again on 15<sup>th</sup> morning at 6am we will conclude the programme with Holy Qurbana.

The sessions will be more practical in nature. We will take up to discuss the recent issues in the church and in the political arena and so on. The sessions will be very interactive as well and opportunities will be given for clearing doubts on various pastoral issues.

Resource persons include Rev. Fr. Joseph Pamplani, theologian and the secretary for the Synodal Commission for Doctrine and great speaker from the Thalassery diocese, Rev. Fr. George Chiramelil, Judicial vicar, Archeparchial Curia, Kakkanad, Rev. Fr. Biji Koipuram, CANA, Changanassery, and Rev. Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil, and Advocate Justeenar.

Also this will be a Living-Together programme: it will time for fun, songs, family gathering and I believe the highlight of the day will be *thattukada* organized by our reverend fathers.

Kindly come prepared to stay over night

It is expected that *all attend this Orientation Program without any exception*; only one priest may be given exemption: a priest from a school where the public exams are being conducted. All the religious priests are encouraged to attend since it involves the pastoral setting of Thuckalay diocese.

## **9. Priestly ordinations and First Holy Qurbana**

This year our Diocese is blessed with four new Priests. Deacon Anil and Deacon Samuel will be ordained on 1<sup>st</sup> April at Killiyoor parish; and Deacon Justin and Deacon Ajin Jose on 2<sup>nd</sup> April at Mukkootukal parish.

May I request as many of you as possible to take part in the Ordinations.

Kindly announce this event and invite some of the faithful in our Parishes to attend the Ordinations. Our faithful from Soosaipuram and Manjalamoodu Foranes can be specially encouraged to participate.

The new Priests will celebrate their First Holy Qurbana for our Diocese on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at Sangamam.

We shall have Priest conference on that day.

## **10. Ordination to Diaconate**

Br. Vinu Joseph will be ordained Deacon on 23 March 2016 at Munchirai Parish Church at 5.30 p.m. I invite all the Fathers and Sisters to take part in the Mass together with some representatives from your respective Parishes. Kindly inform Rev. Fr. Robin Koorumullil regarding the number of people who will take part in the Programme.

## **11. Minor Orders and Vestition**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 at the Minor Seminary Bro. Jebanesh Singh will receive his Minor Order *Hevpadyakanusa* and Br. Toji Sebastian will receive Cassock. Bro. Shijo

will receive his *Karoyusa* on 16<sup>th</sup> April and Bro. Subin his Sub-Diaconate on 18<sup>th</sup> April. We congratulate them as they move towards their priesthood and let us accompany these candidates with our fervent prayers.

## **12. Vocation**

It is very important to nurture local vocations. Kindly make diligent efforts to promote local vocations. Identify and prepare candidates from your parish and please inform Rev. Fr. Felix SDB the vocation promoter about the availability of the candidates.

We still need many more hands in our mission. Even as we look to our faithful of our diocese for local vocations, we also invite candidates from other dioceses who are ready to help in the mission work of our diocese. I have asked Rev. Fr. Abin and Rev. Fr. Shoji to go to Kerala for vocation promotion. Please pray that the Lord of the harvest provides us with enough number of labourers.

## **13. Bible Magic show**

Efforts are on by Rev. Fr. Augustine Thalodil to raise funds for the construction of Manjalumoodu church. He is organizing a Bible Magic show at Padanthalumoodu parish on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 6.00pm. Rev. Fr. Michael Ousepachan of Palai diocese will be the main performer.

Volunteers will be coming to all the parishes for the sale of tickets for the magic show. Kindly give your maximum support for the construction of the church.

## **14. Other Pieces of News**

1. CBCI meeting will be held from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March. Kindly accompany the Bishops and their team with your valuable prayers.
2. Class 10 and 12 students will face their public exams soon this coming month. Also our college students will have their exams these coming days. Do keep our beloved students in your prayers and wish the students well as they go for their exams.
3. From March 15<sup>th</sup> onwards the major seminarians will be in the diocese for pastoral ministry; we welcome them back to the diocese and wish them a fruitful experience.
4. I have asked Rev. Fr. Justin Cheruvelil to go to Saud Arabia for Mission appeal. We wish him all the best.
5. The Fourth year minor seminary brothers had a week long exposure program at Bethsaida, Kumarakoil under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil and Dn. Anil Raj. The seminarians expressed that they had an exciting experience of prayer, nature meditation, classes, work, and cooking. I thank Rev. Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil and Dn. Anil for animating them.
6. I am sending a notice regarding the protest rally in order to change the place of proposed Harbor at Colachal. The faithful of Kottar diocese will be affected by this. Kindly distribute the notice to the people for the purpose of information.
7. All the parish priests and those in charge of missions kindly submit the filled-in Parish data form by 7<sup>th</sup> March with out fail. Kindly treat this seriously.

## Conclusion

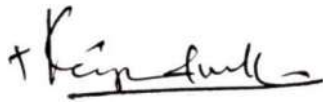
On 27<sup>th</sup> of March we will be celebrating Easter, the Resurrection of our Lord. The days before Easter as we know are days of the Great Fast. We are in fact preparing for this Great Feast through these days of fast, prayer, and our acts of charity. The way of the cross always precedes the glorious Easter. When we are preparing for the Great Day of the Lord, we are accompanying our Lord in his suffering, death, and eventually in his Resurrection. The Lord has considered us worthy to share his suffering, death, and thus his Resurrection.

On the Easter day we will have a new birth. We will rise again with Jesus. It is for this we die to sin; we die to the allurements of the world and Satan. The Easter Glory awaits us. It is then with St. Thomas our father in faith we proclaim, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (Jn 11:16). And if we die with him, we too will be "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).

A typical example of dying to sin is the prodigal son who returns to the father (Lk 15:11-32). It is a firm decision to leave everything behind that keeps him away from his loving father who awaits his return. The day when the prodigal son returns is the resurrection day for him: "this brother of yours was dead and is alive again" (Lk 15:32). Every event of reconciliation then becomes a moment of resurrection dying to our pride and selfishness. Let us make efforts to be reconciled to the Lord and with our neighbor. Come let us all return to the Lord!

Wish you all a very Blessed Experience of Resurrection. Happy Easter!

Yours in the Risen Christ,



**+George Rajendran SDB**  
Bishop of Thuckalay





## BISHOP'S ENGAGEMENTS

March 2016

DATE	DAY	TIME	EVENTS
1-9			Bangalore: CBCI meeting
10	Thu	7.00pm	Marappady: St. Joseph Feast day celebration
11	Fri	10.00am 6.30 pm	KKSSS: GB meeting Christurajapuram: SMSM Convent Holy Qurbana
12	Sat	2.30pm 6.00pm	Padanthalumoodu: Tamil medium staff Farewell meeting Trivandrum: CMI Provincial house chapel blessing
13	Sun	3.00pm	Soosaipuram: College Development committee meeting
14	Mon		Sangamam: Orientation Programme for priests
15	Tue		Sangamam: Orientation Programme for priests
16	Wed	6.30 pm	Bishop's House Anayadi: SJSM convent Holy Qurbana
17	Thu	1.00pm	Nambikkai Alayam: Annual Day
18	Fri		24 Hours Adoration: all the parishes
19	Sat	7.00am	Champakulam: Holy Qurbana
20	Sun	7.00pm	Plankalai: Palm Sunday  Blessing foundation stone
21	Mon	7.00pm	Minor seminary: Minor orders & Vestitions
22	Tue		Sangamam: Full day recollection for priests and religious
23	Wed	9.30am	Munchirai: Diaconate ordination
24	Thu	5.00 pm	Marappady: Holy Thursday Qurbana
25	Fri	9.00 am	Nithravilai: Good Friday Liturgy  Way of the cross
26	Sat		Bishop's House
27	Sun	3.00 am	Easter Vigil: Anamugam
28	Mon	7.00 pm	Muzhucode: Holy Qurbana CMC
29	Tue	6.00 pm	Mezhacode: Holy Qurbana FCC prayer House
30	Wed		Bishop's House
31	Thu	1.00p	Thekkekara: Feast Qurbana

Fr. K. J. Antony SDB  
*Diocese Secretary*