

27 December 2014

Ref. No. Priests/GR/36/2014

Dear Fathers,

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

I believe that all of us in our parishes celebrated in a fitting manner the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I want to thank you for animating the people and for guiding the preparations for the celebrations. Many of you also had accompanied the youth for carol singing, in preparing the crib, decorations, and illuminations.

From 6th January we will be entering the Season of Epiphany (Denha). During this season we commemorate the Baptism of Jesus, Public Life, Divine and Human nature, his intimate relation with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, and his Self-Emptying Love. May this season help all of us priests and religious to re-dedicate our life to our mission and to Jesus.

In this circular I would like to share with you some news about events and activities that took place in our diocese in the Month of December 2014.

14th Bible convention

The 14th Bible convention of the Diocese was organized at Padanthalumoodu on 5th, 6th, and 7th December. Rev.Fr. Dominic Valanmanal the Director of the Marian Retreat Centre, Anakara animated the retreat on 5th and 7th. Bro. Christudas from the Yesuvai Kanbom Prayer Group, Marthandam animated on 6th. People's participation and involvement was very encouraging. They were in great appreciation for the animation and the God-experience they had. Through the intercessory prayers of Rev. Fr. Dominic several healings took place. It was a great time of blessing for several individuals and for the whole diocese.

Rev. Fr. Dominic recommends that at parish level people be given opportunities and moments for praise and worship. As you know that in our diocese there are three places, Pilankalai, Palapallam, and Palugal where these prayer moments are offered. Kindly refer to these places for extending the animation program.

We are also contemplating our own retreat centre in the diocese. Kindly keep this intention and pray so that God may show us the right place and time.

I take this opportunity to thank you dear fathers especially those of you who were present there at the retreat venue and also for bringing people to participate in the retreat.

Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil remembered

The first death anniversary of Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil was on 14th December. But we on a diocese-level came together on 12th December at KKSSS, Kalluvilai. The Bishop celebrated the holy mass along with the curia members, priests, religious, and the staff of KKSSS, and the parishioners of Kalluvilai. The family members of Rev. Fr. Thomas were present for the Holy Qurbana. After the mass a condolence meeting was held. Mr. Sukumaran, a former member of the staff of KKSSS recalled the remarkable contribution of Rev. Fr. Thomas to the growth and consolidation of KKSSS. The bishop also commended Rev. Fr. Thomas' role as the procurator of the diocese.

On 16th a special memorial mass was organized at his home town, Mankulam. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam was the main celebrant along with some fathers of our diocese. The parents and relatives of Rev. Fr. Thomas were present. His life and mission at Thuckalay Diocese was recalled during the mass and the gathering.

Pre-Christmas gathering

On the 18th all the fathers gathered to celebrate Christmas at Sangamam. After a half-hour of prayer service a family get-together was organized in the conference hall. Rev.Fr. Shojo, and Rev.Fr. Sebi were the main animators of the celebrations. The deacons and Bro. Abilash had prepared the venue beautifully and aptly with Crib and decorations. All involved themselves with sharing of mission experience, the Bishop teaching an African song of welcome for Child Jesus, Rev. Fr. Felix with group games and fun. Live crib was the climax of the program. Christmas gifts were distributed. The program ended with a sumptuous meal. We thank Rev. Fr. Jose, our VG for organizing the celebration and all the fathers for actively taking part in the celebrations.

Thuckalay-Pala friends meet

Some very ardent and enthusiastic families belonging to the Pala diocese took up to supporting our Thuckalay diocese through prayer and material resources. These friends of Thuckalay visited and reviewed some months back the situation of the diocese. They eventually came forward and formed a group called 'Friends of Thuckalay.' On 15th December our Bishop, and Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam visited their families and animated them as a group, and encouraged them. Though these friends themselves may not be very well-off financially yet they organize collection of funds, with 'secret-collection,' and *hundials*. They have adopted the Athencode parish and continue to support it.

We thank the friends of Thuckalay for having come forward to support and pray for our Diocese.

Bethsaida Building Blessing

You may be aware that Rev. Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil resides at Kumarakovil at his estate. There was a possibility of establishing a small centre that could be conducive for spiritual animation. It can serve as a Centre for prayer, recollection, and personal reflection for priests, religious and families.

Towards this goal Rev. Fr. Mathew has already built a residence with basic amenities and it can accommodate up to four people at present. The centre is now named Bethsaida and was blessed on 19th December. The place itself is very quiet, scenic, and has a prayerful ambience. I encourage priests, religious sisters, and families to go over there and profit from the place. Rev. Fr. Mathew is also available for family-counselling and guidance.

The diocese is grateful to Rev. Fr. Mathew and his brothers for building up such a centre within our reach.

Blessing of SABS Chapel, Soosaipuram

The SABS Regional House at Soosaipuram has now a new Chapel. It was blessed on 20th December by our Bishop in the presence of the Curia members, the provincial of SABS-Changanassery, the priest and religious of Soosaipuram and from other places. The Chapel is very artistically designed with remarkable liturgical precision and beauty. I congratulate Rev. Sr. Rose Kanassery, the Regional Superior for her meticulous planning and execution in building this Chapel.

RIP: Mr. E. K. Mathew

The father of Rev. Fr. Saji Elembasseril SDB, Mr. E. K. Mathew, passed away on 20th December due to illness. The funeral was held on 22nd morning at 10.30 in St. Joseph's Church, Alex Nagar, Payyavoor, Kannur. Our Bishop, the VG Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, and other fathers, sisters, and representatives from KKSSS and Kalluvilai Parish took part in the funeral. We continue to pray for the repose of the soul of Mr. Mathew and pray for Rev. Fr. Saji and the bereaving family that God may comfort them.

FCC's new presence at Thavana, Shenkottai

We are happy to invite the Sisters of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation to establish their religious community at Thavana, Shenkottai mission. Sisters from St. Thomas Province – Kanjirappally have come forward to collaborate with our mission diocese. They have already purchased a plot of land at Thavana. They will begin their initial mission work from a rented house. They will arrive on 15th January and will be given a formal welcome on 17th January in the presence of all the religious and priests of the Shenkottai mission. This is the fourth women-religious congregation to establish a community at Shenkottai mission. As we welcome the sisters to the diocese we thank wholeheartedly Rev. Sr. Julie, Provincial Superior and the province for making a bold decision to work in the mission station.

SJSM Convent Blessing

As we are aware, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Saint-Marc (SJSM) is already at Anayadi. Their convent building and the training centre are nearing completion. The buildings will be blessed and dedicated on 19th January at 10.30 am. I have requested the sisters to meet you personally and invite you for the blessing. Since they are a new congregation coming for the first time to our diocese, it will be appropriate for all of us fathers to be present for the blessing and welcome the sisters. Their apostolate will include parish ministry, nursery, and a dispensary. I would like to present to you a brief profile of their congregation.

The Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Saint-Marc has its origin in 1845 at Saint-Marc in the region of Alsace, France. Fr. Pierre Paul Blanck the founder of the Congregation felt the need of a religious congregation for persons who have more preference for prayer and solitude. The Charism of the Congregation is “Perpetual Adoration of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament,” lived out in the spirituality of the Eucharistic Adoration of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, taking care of the sick and the poor, and help in the education of children. The Founder placed the congregation under the patronage of St. Joseph.

We welcome the sisters whole-heartedly to the diocese of Thuckalay.

Vicar General’s Office at Bishop’s House

To make it convenient and functional, our Vicar General Rev. Fr. Muttathupadam will have his office at the Bishop’s House. From 1st January 2015, Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam will be available during the day time in the Bishop’s house from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Kindly arrange to meet him here. He will continue to be the Director of Sangamam. Kindly also inform the faithful regarding this new setup.

Pastoral Visits

The Pastoral Visits to the parishes are already mentioned in the Annual Calendar of the Diocese. Kindly take note of the dates and prepare accordingly.

In order that I can spend more time with the people and to make the pastoral visit more convenient and effective, I recommend you to prepare in advance. Prior to the visit of the Bishop, the chancellor Rev. Fr. M. Christudas, will come to the designated parish to assess and verify the documents, cleanliness and maintenance of the church and the surroundings. The assessment form will be sent to you for information and the chancellor will fill the form and provide the report to me. The financial accounts are to be submitted to Rev. Fr. Mathew Mulangasseril regularly, and the same will be verified during the Chancellor’s visit. During the Pastoral visit kindly present all the documents and financial statements for my perusal.

Other news

1. Deacons went to their respective seminaries for their annual retreat and now they are back to the parishes.
2. We are happy that Permission for St. Alphonsa College was received on December 3rd. Do continue to support this venture through your prayers.
3. Blessing of Renovated Church at Anayadi on 15th January at 5.00pm: Anayadi Church is being given a facelift. The facade, the Madhbaha, and the flooring are being renovated.
4. The new presbytery of the Anayadi Church will also be blessed on 15th January.
5. The Liturgical Wall Calendar with the Mass readings (*panchangam*) are being printed and I hope to make them reach the parishes before 1st January. Kindly collect Rs. 20/- per wall calendar from the faithful and every family is expected to buy a copy each at least.
6. The Curia meetings will be held on all the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. If you have any application or permissions to be processed, kindly make them reach the office beforehand.
7. Rev. Sr. Mariamma FCC has undergone an operation on her right foot and is now recuperating. Prayers are requested for her speedy recovery.
8. Kindly plan all your parish/institution activities in such a way that you will not absent yourself from the diocese-level programmes in the diocese.
9. Kindly also commit yourself to planning your activities ahead of time so that they may be carried out effectively.
10. I have sent a personal appeal to all the faithful through post to the parishes where the home mission has been done. Kindly encourage the people to contribute to the diocese according to their capacity. A self-addressed envelope included in the cover can be used to pass it on to the Bishop's house.

Constuction works in the diocese

1. Christurajapuam church structure is completed and plastering works are in progress.
2. Mezhacode new church has come up to the basement level
3. The Alphonsa college building works have began; the plinth level structure has been completed
4. Pathukani parish is renovating its interior and Madhbaha.
5. At Karunai Illam, Nithiravilai, class rooms and rooms were renovated and a new roof over the quadrangle installed.
6. The work of the first floor of the Pulari school, Shenkottai, is now complete.

Some observations and recommendations

1. When arranging priests from other places as a substitute or to participate in your programmes, please arrange their conveyance, and provide TA for them.
2. It is also highly appreciated if some amount is given to the Bishop's Driver when the Bishop is on an official program in your parish or centre.
3. When sending parcels and covers to the Bishop's House, on the outside of the cover please provide the sender's name and address, purpose, and if hand-delivered, the name of the one through whom it is being sent. Please use SMS for mutual confirmation of the sending and receiving.
4. Hand-delivered material should be handed over in person to the receptionist. Anonymous delivery is not appreciated. Get delivery report or acknowledgment signature. Kindly facilitate follow-up of transactions.

Forthcoming Events

1. On 15th January, the Pastoral Council will be held.
2. The diocese-level conclusion of the family year will be held on 18th January at 1.30 pm in Kalluvilai. Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumpuram the director will give you the required instruction about the event. Kindly keep this day free for participation in this event.
3. On 25th January at 2.30pm, will be the Cherupushpam Mission League Rally. Details will be passed on to you by the Director.
4. The Fathers Picnic is arranged to be on 27th January 2015. The venue and the arrangements will be intimated to you later.
5. The inauguration of the Year of Consecrated Life will be on 1st February.

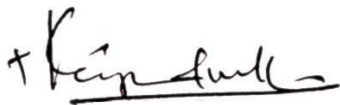
In conclusion, I thank you for your collaboration in the diocese activities, and for the many things we were able to achieve as a presbyterium, as parish communities and as individuals in the past year. Your contribution built up what we are today.

I request your cooperation in the year ahead. Through you dear fathers, our diocese is going to be blessed. Let us continue to share our love through our brotherliness, availability, and generosity.

May God Bless You All,

Remembering you in my prayers,

Yours in Christ,



+ George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay