

Ref. No. Priests/GR/2/2012

November 1, 2012

Dear Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes from the Bishop's House, Thuckalay! May Jesus Christ shower his abundant blessings upon you, your dear ones and your mission! This is my second personal note to you to thank you for your unconditional love and support that you have extended to me. With your help, I am able to carry out the ministry that is entrusted to me.

Through this letter I would like to share with you a brief reflection on the Year of Faith. I also want to remind all of you about the decisions that we had taken during the priests' conference which was held on 26 November 2012. I earnestly request all of you to comply with these directives for the smooth running of our parishes, schools and institutions.

YEAR OF FAITH

In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that God opened the door of faith for the early Church. But God continues to open the door of faith for each one of us and He invites us to step through the threshold into a deeper relationship with him. The 'Year of Faith' that has just commenced is an opportunity for every priest and religious to turn towards Jesus Christ and to encounter him in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and rediscover the Faith and Church. During the Year of Faith, we are asked to study and reflect on the documents of Vatican II and the catechism so that they can deepen their knowledge of the faith. Pope writes: "The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life in abundance" (*Porta Fidei*, 2). We, as pastors and ministers in the Church, responsible for her well being, need to grow in faith so that we can act as carriers of faith to other people.

One of the important means to kindle and re-kindle the faith among those who have not yet heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and those who have become indifferent to the faith is evangelization. And today we speak of New Evangelization. We know that the Church from the inception dedicated herself to the work of evangelization. Pope John Paul II taught us that "missionary activity belongs to the very nature of Christian life" (RM 1). In its precise sense, evangelization is the *missio ad gentes* directed to those who do not know Christ. But the phrase 'New Evangelization' designates the pastoral outreach to those who no longer practise the Christian faith. Speaking about New Evangelization to the Latin American Bishops in 1983, Pope John Paul II said: "Evangelization cannot be new in its content, since its very theme is always the one gospel given in Jesus Christ." Hence, New Evangelization is Church's project of undertaking anew her fundamental mission, her identity and reason for existence. It is a response to new cultural realities. It is an example of the Catholic understanding of tradition as both conserving the essentials of the past as well as responding to new situations and challenges.

Catechesis forms the major dimension of New Evangelization. Christians who have become lukewarm need to be educated in the Christian doctrines so that they can be won over to the Church. New evangelization should also focus the poor and the marginalized, who are slowly moving away from the Church due to their abject poverty and misery. The Church needs to disassociate herself from the powerful and the rich and should turn to the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. If evangelization means to carry the good news, the New Evangelization is called to announce the good news to the suffering people as their number has grown into unbelievable proportions often caused by the widening gap between the rich and the poor. The Church in this era of New Evangelization needs to be sensitive to the suffering majority and is committed to accompany them and announce the good news within such context.

It is a happy coincidence that we are inaugurating the Year of faith in our diocese when the universal Church has just concluded the Synod of Bishops in Rome dedicated to the New Evangelization for the Transmission of Christian Faith. A faith lived passively or privately, a refusal to be educated in one's faith, a separation between life and faith can repel others from Catholicism. Similarly, pressures from outside the Church such as secularization, nihilism consumerism and hedonism can also dampen the faith. As the synod deliberates upon these themes, let us too in our way and in our own context deliberate upon the same themes and derive the requisite impetus that is so vital for the continuance of missionary enterprises in our Syro-Malabar Church.

It is my earnest hope that the Year of Faith that we have just begun will help us to deepen our own faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ and will serve as a catalyst in transmitting this faith that needs to be fructified in our own life first and then in the lives of the people to whom we are sent. May the missionary spirit of St Thomas, the Apostle, the heavenly patron of our Church and the zeal of St Francis Xavier, the patron of the missions enkindle a desire to disseminate the message of Christ to others! Let this Year of Faith enable us to delve deep into the reservoirs of the missionary spirituality of the Church. My wish and prayer for you, dear Fathers, is that you may become the lamp that cannot be hidden but keep shining and emanating light of faith to everyone who comes under its influence.

REMINDERS

The Inauguration of the Year of Faith

The inauguration of the Year of Faith in our diocese will take place on 13 November 2012 in Nitravialai Parish at 10.00 am. Kindly read the special pastoral letter prepared for the occasion in all the parish churches on 11 November 2012 and explain to the faithful the details about the Year of Faith programme prepared for our diocese. From each parish five members including a priest and a nun are requested take part in the solemn Eucharistic celebration. There will be a procession from Nitravialai parish wedding Hall to the church. All are expected to be in the wedding hall by 9.30 am. During the Eucharistic celebration, just before the recitation of the credo, the specially prepared earthen lamps and the Year of Faith Flags will be distributed. In alphabetical order of parishes, the parish priest and one of the trustees are requested to come forward to receive the lamp and the flag from the Bishop.

Vocation Promotion in the Diocese

We have to nurture vocations in the diocese. All of us need to feel the need for recruiting vocations from our own parishes and institutions. We need to constantly talk about priestly and religious life to our children. We need to spot promising boys showing priestly inclination and

talk to them privately. I have appointed Rev. Fr John Paul to animate CML and Altar boys. Along with Rev Fr Philip Kodianthara, they will meet the students Forane-wise on the following days to speak to them about priestly and religious vocations:

- 11 November 2012 - Padanthalumoodu at 2.00 pm
- 17November 2012 - Plankalai at 2. 00 pm
- 18November 2012 - Soosaipuram at 2.00 pm
- 24November 2012 - Manjalumoodu at 2.00 pm
- 25November 2012 - Arukani at 2.00 pm
- 01December 2012 - Nithrivialai at 2.00 pm

I request all the parish priests to accompany the boys in person or entrust them with a sister to reach them to their Forane church on the respective days mentioned above. I also request all the Forane Vicars to extend their whole-hearted cooperation for success of these interactions. The team will require two class rooms. It will be appreciated if you can arrange some tea for all the participants at the end of the programme.

Bible Convention

We are going to have our Annual Bible Convention on 7,8 and 9 December 2012 at Padanthalumoodu from 10 am to 3 pm. Kindly encourage as many people as possible from your parishes to take part in the Convention.

Silver Jubilee of the Priestly Ordination of Rev Fr Jacob Aiyamatra

Rev. Fr Jacob Aiyamatra is celebrating the silver jubilee of his priestly ordination this year. While we congratulate him for the years of service in the vineyard of the Lord, we sincerely thank him for his committed ministry and for his life of fidelity to the Lord and to the diocese. We pray that God may grant him abundance of His blessings as he moves on in life. We shall celebrate his jubilee at the diocesan level on 9 December 2012 during the Bible Convention.

Tamil Medium Schools

I have visited all the Tamil medium schools in the diocese and I get the impression that we are not giving sufficient attention to their development. Discipline needs to be improved. I request all the parish priests in-charge of these schools to give special attention and see to the following activities:

- Holding of staff meeting once a month
- Organising the PTA meeting twice a year
- Calling of executive meeting as per the need of the respective school
- Over-seeing the discipline of teachers and students
- Having an overall supervision on the running of the school

Role of the Procurator in the Diocese

I have requested the Diocesan Procurator to visit all the parishes, schools and institutions to monitor the land, buildings and other material goods. It is meant to prepare an inventory of the temporal goods of the diocese. He will look into the land documents, the land tax Receipts and other details. Kindly help him to complete his mission. Let me remind you to prepare regular accounts and send to the Procurator the balance sheet every two months.

Data Collection

It is important for all of us to have a correct picture of all the activities that are going in our parishes, schools and institutions. I have already passed around the data collection forms. Kindly fill these forms adding photographs to support the claims. Let me remind you to hand over the duly filled forms on or before 5 November 2012 to the following Fathers.

Data Collection in-charges	: Padanthalumoodu	-	FrJohn Paul
	: Soosaipuram	-	FrJosy
	: Manjaloomoodu	-	FrDency
	: Plankalai	-	FrTobin
	: Nitravialai	-	FrJohnsilal
	: Arukani	-	FrJomon

Beatification of Servant of God Devasahayam Pillai

The Beatification of the Servant of God Devasahayam Pillai will be held in Nagarcoil (Kottar Diocese) on 2 December 2012 at 4.00 pm in the Carmel Ground. I request all of you to take part in the programme along with maximum number of faithful from your parishes.

Jubilee Celebration of Archbishop Joseph Powathil

At the diocesan level, we celebrated the golden Jubilee of Ordination and Ruby Jubilee of Episcopal ordination of Archbishop Joseph Powathil on 14 October 2012 in Sangamam. Nearly 700 people gathered to congratulate and wish our dear archbishop who is responsible for the initial growth of our diocese and its major activities. I wish to thank Rev. Fr Philip Kodiantha, the Vicar General, and all the members of the various committees for meticulously organising the event. I express my sincere thanks to you, dear Fathers, for bringing along with you large number of representatives from your respective parishes.

Irai Arul

We have decided to bring out the diocesan news bulletin *Irai Arul* on the first week of every month. It will cover the various events that take place in all the parishes, schools and institutions of the diocese. I request all of you to send reports and articles on the various events that you organize in your centres to the editorial board.

The following are the members of the editorial board:

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| ○ Fr John Paul | - | Executive Editor |
| ○ Fr Dency | - | Chief Editor |
| ○ Fr Pawathuparambil | - | Associate Editor |
| ○ Fr Antony Jose | - | Associate Editor |
| ○ Mr Devaraj | - | Associate Editor |
| ○ Fr Mijo | - | Associate Editor |
| ○ Sr. Pushpalatha | - | Correspondent, Sengkottai |

Documents to be kept in the Parish/Institution Archives

A good parish/institution should be known for its well maintained archives. In many places, our works and activities are not recorded and no document of the past is available. During the priests' conference all were given a copy of the names of files to be kept in the parish/institution archives. They should be produced for inspection when the Bishop makes his pastoral visit.

INFORMATION

Kindly take note of the following pieces of information:

- The Vestition of the FCC sisters will be held on 10 November 2012.
- We congratulate Sr Francelet FCC of Thakkaliviali and Sr Anila FCC of Thettiyode, as they complete 40 years of missionary work in our diocese. We thank them for their dedicated service, our diocese is grown because of their hard work.
- Fr John Paul has been asked to complete his B.Ed. as a regular student.
- We have this year five decons, and they will be in the diocese for diaconate ministry and preparation for ordination. We welcome them and wish them God's blessing.
- Fr. Sathanasan has gone back to Rome in order to complete his Ph.D program in Canon Law. We wish him all the best in his studies.
- Fr. Jacob Vellaringatt, Fr. Toji Parampiparampiln and Br. Shijo are not keeping well these days, kindly remember them in your prayers.

CONCLUSION

We have just concluded the Month of October in which we honoured our Blessed Mother, The Queen on the Holy Rosary. In all our parishes and centers we organized Rosary services, special prayers and Holy Qurbana in order to show our love and respect to our Heavenly mother. Let us re-dedicate our mission and all our activities to Her motherly protection and guidance.

Yours in Christ

+ George Rajendran
Bishop of Thuckalay