



Bishop George Rajendran SDB
Diocese of Thuckalay

Mobile: +919443281100
Email: bpgeorgerajendran@gmail.com

BISHOP'S HOUSE
P.B. No. 12, Thuckalay P.O.
Kanyakumari District
Tamilnadu – 629175, India
Phone: +91-4651-250633
Diocese Email: thuckalaydiocese@yahoo.com

Ref. No. Priests/GR/61/2016

31 October 2016

Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from the Bishop's House!

We celebrated the Mission Sunday on 16 October 2016. It was an occasion to pray for the missions, to contribute financially to the missionary works, and above all, an opportunity to review our own attitude towards the evangelizing mission of the Church and to reaffirm our commitment towards furthering the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ. This year the Mission Sunday assumed greater significance in the context of the extraordinary jubilee year of Mercy. Writing on the occasion, Pope Francis says: “The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which the Church is celebrating, casts a distinct light on World Mission Sunday 2016: it invites us to consider the *missio ad gentes* as a great, immense work of mercy, both spiritual and material. On this World Mission Sunday, all of us are invited to ‘go out’ as missionary disciples, each generously offering their talents, creativity, wisdom and experience in order to bring the message of God’s tenderness and compassion to the entire human family. By virtue of the missionary mandate, the Church cares for those who do not know the Gospel, because she wants everyone to be saved and to experience the Lord’s love. She “is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 12) and to proclaim mercy in every corner of the world, reaching every person, young or old.”

The Holy Father invites all – priests, religious and lay people – to engage themselves in the evangelizing mission of the Church. He gives us the *raison d’être* for the missionary activities of the Church when he wrote: “All peoples and cultures have the right to receive the message of salvation, which is God’s gift to every person. This is all the more necessary when we consider how many injustices, wars, and humanitarian crises still need resolution. Missionaries know from experience that the Gospel of forgiveness and mercy can bring joy and reconciliation, justice and peace. The mandate of the Gospel to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20) has not ceased; rather this command commits all of us, in the current landscape with all its challenges, to hear the call to a renewed missionary ‘impulse’, as I noted in my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (20).”

I earnestly invite all of you to imbibe a passion for proclaiming Jesus Christ in season and out season to our people not only in our own settings but even going to the peripheries as Pope Francis invites us to do. We need to have the fire and intense desire for Jesus Christ, which can come only from a genuine personal experience of the Master. May the Mission Sunday that we have just celebrated continue to be a moment of re-dedication to our priestly ministry as ministers of Word and Sacraments!

NEWS AND EVENTS

Annual Priests' Retreat

The annual retreat was a blessing and a grace filled moment for all the Fathers of the Diocese. It was held from 3-7 October 2016. I was happy to note that 42 Priests of the Diocese gathered at Sangamam to make their annual retreat. Mar Raphael Thattil, the Auxiliary Bishop of Thrissur, animated the retreat. Using lot of humour, Mar Thattil drove home the various topics that he dealt with. He spoke about the various qualities that the Priests must possess. A Priest needs to mould his life after the heart of Jesus. He stressed that the Priest is a disciple and an apostle. He also spoke at length about the ministry of the Priest.

I am grateful to you, dear Fathers, for attending this annual spiritual exercise. Some Priests could not attend the retreat due to serious reasons. I do hope that they will find some other suitable time to attend a spiritual retreat in the coming days. On the last day of the retreat we remembered and prayed for the departed missionaries who worked and toiled in the Diocese of Thuckalay.

I place on record my heart-felt gratitude to Mar Raphael Thattil for sparing his time to animate us spiritually. I thank the members of the Curia and Rev. Fr Joshilal for making the necessary arrangements for the retreat.

Adieu to Rev. Fr KJ Antony sdb

Rev. Fr KJ Antony sdb has returned to his province on 20 October after serving the Diocese for two years as its Secretary. During the Priests' Conference on 7 October 2016, as presbyterium we had the opportunity to thank him for his generous service to the Diocese. Fr Antony was not always in the limelight during various Diocesan programmes but he faithfully carried out his assignment from his office. He spent much of his time in recording and keeping all the documents in order. As Secretary of the Diocese, he was exact in discharging his duties. Meticulously, he has put in place a work culture in the Offices at the Bishop's House.

I thank Fr KJ Antony for opting to work in the Diocese. I also thank Rev. Fr George Maliekal sdb, Salesian provincial of Shillong province, for sending him.

Inter-diocesan Meeting

Inter-diocesan Meeting is an event that we all look forward to. It is an opportunity for the Archdiocese of Changanaserry and the Dioceses of Kanjirapally, Palai and Thuckalay to come together. It is a forum for sharing common concerns and issues. It is a means for supporting and helping one another. It is held once in three months.

This time it was our turn to organise the Meet. The meeting took place on 25 October at St Alphonsa College, Soosaipuram. The Archbishop and four Bishops along with Directors of various Departments were present for the meeting. The participants arrived at 10.30 am and the College students gave them a traditional welcome. After refreshments, the meeting began at 11 am. Nearly 50 participants including some Fathers from our Diocese took part. I formally welcomed the participants and briefly spoke about the background for establishing the College. The main points discussed were drug addiction and alcoholism. The participants felt that our society and people were adversely affected by these evil habits and discussed the possible remedies to prevent these evils. We need to create awareness among our youth as well as among the people regarding the negative consequences of the use of drugs and alcohol. It was a moment of sharing and many members contributed with their deep insights.

At the end of the meeting, the students of APJM School performed a traditional dance for the members. The programme ended with a sumptuous lunch. I wish to thank Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Rev. Fr Christudas and Rev. Fr Antony Jose for painstakingly arranging the programme and seeing to all the details. Thanks to all the Departmental heads of our Diocese for their participation. We need to take forward the reflections shared at the meeting.

Chain Rosary

October is a month dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary and we faithfully carried out this devotion to our Blessed Mother in various ways. In all our parishes, we had set aside around 10 days or more for special Holy Eucharist, Rosary Service, etc. But as a Diocese on 16 October all the faithful walked in procession to the houses of the members of their respective *uraviums* praying the rosary. During these processions, the participants carried statues or pictures of our Blessed Mother, sang Marian hymns and prayed the rosary. The entire programme was also meant as a public witness to our faith.

I thank all the Fathers and Sisters for taking the lead in making this pious act effective and meaningful. Many of the Fathers succeeded in participating in all the *uraviums* of their respective parishes. My sincere thanks also go to all the leaders of the *uraviums*.

Rosary Rally

Our annual Rosary Rally organized by Marian Senai was held on 23 October. The Rally began from Christurajapuram and ended at Nithravilai. Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General, inaugurated the Rally at 2.45 pm at Christurajapuram. Nearly 1500 faithful including a large number of Fathers and Sisters took part in the Rally. The statue Our Lady was carried in front and the faithful walked in two lines along the side of the road. The procession advanced along the road in a disciplined and peaceful manner without giving any disturbance to the public. Sound system was arranged in three vehicles to help the faithful to pray the rosary as they walked in procession. It was a graced-filled moment for everyone. Hundreds of onlookers witnessed the event and expressed their love and respect to Our Blessed Mother.

The procession reached the Kurusady of Nithravilai Parish by 4.30 pm. A brief concluding programme was held. Rev. Fr Waislin Xavier gave an inspiring reflection on Our Lady of the Rosary. In my talk, I encouraged our faithful to pray the rosary in their homes and to make it a daily practice. Mr Panneer Selvam, Director of Marian Senai, gave the vote of thanks. The programme ended by 5.30 pm with light refreshments to the participants. I am grateful to all the office bearers and members of the Marian Senai and to all the faithful for taking part in the procession. My special thanks goes to the Parish Priests and faithful of Christurajapuram and Nithravilai Parishes and Nithravilai Forane. May our Blessed Mother pray for us!

Catechism Course for Teachers

Catechism Course for teachers was a long-awaited training programme for all the Sunday school teachers of the Diocese. It was felt that many of our catechism teachers do not possess adequate knowledge of the subject matter they teach. They lack deep faith and shallow understanding of the traditions of Syro-Malabar Church. Hence, it was necessary for the Catechism department to design a special programme for them. To begin with, Fr Alex Puthettu, the Director of Catechism Department, organized a one-day animation programme for all the catechism teachers during one of the holidays. Rev. Fr Justin Cheruvilil, Fr Printo Kurias and Fr Sajan Nettaponghu were the resource persons. They dealt with the topics such as History of Catechism, Catechism of the Catholic Church, history and traditions of Syro-Malabar Church and Holy Qurbana. The teachers attended the classes in large numbers and they appreciated them very much.

It is a new initiative taken by the Catechism Department. I congratulate Rev. Fr Alex and all the Fathers, who were involved in the organization. This is an important ministry of the Diocese and I encourage similar programmes in the future.

Anbakam Celebrates 36 Years

On 9 October 2016, Anbakam, a home for poor senior citizens, run by the Sisters of Destitute (SD) celebrated its 36th anniversary. To commemorate the day, the sisters, well-wishers and the Parish community spent an hour in adoration to thank the Lord for the 36 years of blessings they received. Rev. Fr Mijo Puthenpurauiyil led the service. Soon after, a public

function was organized. Many local leaders were invited for the programme. Rev. Sr Reena Mary welcomed the gathering. All those who spoke during the function expressed their appreciation and happiness for the self-sacrificing services that the SD sisters carry out on behalf of the poor and the elderly people whom the society neglect. The Local MLA of Killiyoor constituency Mr Rajesh Kumar was present for the function and he thanked the sisters for their dedicated service in his area. Rev. Sr Annie Vazhayil, the Provincial Counsellor of Changanaserry Province, speaking on the occasion, expressed her gratitude to all the benefactors and friends for their constant support and guidance.

During the function, all members of *Anbakam* and senior members of Munchirai Parish were felicitated. I thank Rev. Sr Reena Mary, Superior of the community, and Rev. Fr Ajeesh Attiyil, Parish Priest, for their planning and execution of the programmes. The Diocese is grateful to the SD sisters for carrying out this humanitarian work with great love and devotion.

Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting

The Fifth Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) was recently constituted. Rev. Frs Jose Muttathupadam, Mijo Puthenpurayil and Mr John were appointed to elect the new members from the different Foranes. The Commission did an excellent job in electing worthy members to the DPC. The distribution of members to the DPC is as follows: Ex officio members= 19, Presbyterial Council members = 4, Representatives from the Religious Congregations= 7, Representatives from Departments and Associations= 9, Elected members = 36, Nominated members = 13. I am happy that this time we have 23 Fathers representing various Departments and Commissions as members of the DPC.

Prior to the DPC meeting, I had a meeting with all the 23 Fathers who are members of the DPC. In the meeting, I exhorted the Fathers to take the DPC seriously and requested them to contribute positively for the growth of the Diocese. In this meeting we felt the need for constituting a special committee to chalk out the various agenda and to have a detail plan for the DPC meeting. Hence, for the first time we formed a working committee consisting of Rev. Fr Felix (President), Rev. Fr Antony Jose, Rev. Fr Robins, Rev. Fr Justin, Rev. Fr Mijo (Secretary) and Mr John. The main responsibilities of the committee were to prepare the agenda, to study the various issues at length and to plan the proceedings of the DPC meeting in detail. I also encouraged all the Forane Directors to call for meetings of all the DPC members of their respective Foranes in order to welcome them and to inform them about their special responsibility towards the Diocese. All the Foranes carried out these meetings.

The first meeting of the Fifth Diocesan Pastoral Council was held on 11 October 2016 at Sangamam. Rt Rev. Vincent Mar Paulus was the Chief Guest. After lighting the lamp, the Bishop gave an orientation talk to the 87 members present for the DPC meeting. He spoke about the various responsibilities of all the members. In my talk, I welcomed all the members and gave an over-view of the Diocese and its activities. I also presented its future vision and mission. I invited every one to be part of the project. All the members were formally introduced and welcomed. They were presented with a kit containing writing materials.

After lunch, Rev. Fr Justus, from the Diocese of Kottar, took one-hour class on Children's Parliament. He also spoke about leadership. He explained how to carry forward the various Diocesan level projects to the parish and grass roots levels through various forms of Church leadership. All the 87 members were divided into five groups depending on the need of the diocese namely: education, politics, pastoral mission, spiritual activities and finance. The groups were then given 30 minutes for self-introduction and appraisal of their activities in the groups. The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm with a prayer. Rev. Fr Mijo Puthenpurayil and Mr John will continue to be the Secretary and Joint Secretary of DPC respectively.

Inter-department Meeting

A number of activities are being carried out in the Diocese as well as in the parishes through various departments and pious associations. On 12 October 2016, inter-department meeting was held at Bishop's House. All the Directors of pious associations and departments were present. For the first time the Directors of Ecumenical Council, Sinai Retreat Centre and DB Tech were invited. All the Directors shared their activities. It was also an opportunity for us to evaluate our activities and set new goals and guidelines. All the Directors submitted their Annual Pastoral Plans for the year 2017

Thanks dear Fathers for shouldering great responsibilities in the Diocese. I do appreciate your meticulous planning and commitment in running the Departments entrusted to you.

Visits to Major Seminaries

I had planned to visit our major seminarians in the month of September 2016. But due to some unavoidable reasons I could not carry it out. Hence, from 13-18 October 2016 I visited the major seminarians. On 13 October I visited Ujjain Seminary where five of our Brothers. They are Amento Sunny Edakkoottil, Lintomon Tomy Thakidiyel, Shijin Dev, Ajin C R and Ajin D. They are doing their philosophical studies. On 15 October, I visited Satna Seminary where Deacon John Joseph and Br Toji Sebastian are pursuing their theological studies. On 17 October I visited Warangal Seminary where Br Angel Jinu Joseph is studying philosophy.

All the Brothers are doing well in their studies and in other activities. The Rectors, staff and the students of these Seminaries welcomed me wholeheartedly. I had opportunities to share about our Diocese to the seminarians and encouraged them to go forward with great commitment to the Lord. I also visited all the Bishops of those regions where our seminarians are studying. The Brothers are happy and they sent you their wishes and prayers.

Celebration for Canonization of Mother Teresa and Inauguration of Palliative Care Unit Held

The Diocesan level celebration for the canonization of Mother Theresa was held on 30 October 2016 in Aseer Auditorium at Kaluvilai. The central event of the programme was the Holy Qurbana offered in thanksgiving for raising Mother Teresa to the altars. The venue was tastefully decorated for the occasion. Over one thousand people along with many Fathers and Sisters participated in this meaningful programme. The Holy Qurbana began at 2.45 pm. I presided over it. All the Priests present including the Vicar General concelebrated with me. During my homily, I exhorted everyone present to emulate the example of self-giving that Mother Teresa teaches us with her life and ministry.

The day also marked the inauguration of the Palliative Care Unit dedicated to St Teresa of Kolkata and it was held as part of the celebration of the Year of Mercy. This new form of ministry that the Diocese initiated takes care of the sick and the bed-ridden patients in their own homes. It is aimed giving them relief and dignity in their pain and suffering. KKSSS took the lead in realizing the project. Rev. Fr Saji, Director of KKSSS, with the help of his staff and members of various SHGs collected the money required to purchase an Ambulance. The Kottiyam Holy Cross Sisters will help in running the project. I am grateful to Rev. Sr Eileen, Provincial for accepting our proposal and appointing a qualified Sister to run the project.

After the Holy Mass, there was public meeting. Rev. Sr Eileen, Provincial of Holy Cross Sisters, Mr John Bright, Local Panchayath President, and Rev Br Jacob MC, representative from the Mother Teresa Congregations, were present. During the programme I blessed the new Ambulance and inaugurated the project.

Thuckalay, Plankalai and Soosaipuram Foranes organized the entire programme under the able guidance of Rev Fr Saji. I am grateful to him and his collaborators for taking this initiative. I also thank all the Fathers, Sisters and the faithful for your august presence.

ChristmasGreetings

Christmas is fast approaching and I am sure you are preparing in advance to celebrate it meaningfully. As every year, this year too I will be sending special Christmas greetings to all our Catholic families and the letters will be despatched to you in the parishes before you begin the Carol singing in families. The envelope contains my Christmas message, prayer/mass request card, Mother Theresa bookmark, a book mark about feast days of saints, a self addressed envelope and our liturgical wall calendar. Only the liturgical wall calendar will be charged. The exact amount will be told to you later. Kindly distribute the Christmas letters to all the families without fail. There could be some mistakes in the addresses. Hence, the Office will send you some extra letters without writing the addresses on them so that you can write the addresses yourself and give to the families. I request you to encourage all the faithful to give some contribution towards the charitable activities of the Diocese in the self-addressed envelopes. Let them seal it and submit to you in person. They must be handed over to Rev. Fr Thankachan Joseph sdb, Mission Procure, at the Bishop's House later.

I am happy to note that last year many of you worked very hard and collected a good number of envelopes with contributions/donations. Kindly do the same this year as well. I want to thank you in advance.

New Assignments

- ❖ Rev. Fr Santhosh is appointed as the Assistant Director of Youth Ministry, Translation of Prayer of the Church and Formation of *Christava Valvurimai Iyyakkam*. He will continue to be the Editor of Iraiarul and Sinai magazines. He will reside at KKSSS, Kaluvilai
- ❖ Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan is appointed as Secretary and Judicial Vicar of the Eparchy. He will also head the team preparing the statutes of the Eparchy (particular Law). He will reside at Bishop's House.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Seby Manimalakandathil is appointed the in-charge of Vellambi Mission.

We wish God's blessings upon them and offer our wholehearted support as they take up their new ministries in the Diocese.

INFORMATION

- ❖ Deacons Vinu Joseph and John Joseph will complete their Diaconate Course by November and will return to the Diocese for diaconate ministry. We welcome them warmly to the Diocese.
- ❖ Late Rev. Fr Mathew Plathottam was remembered during the Retreat of the Fathers on 6 October
- ❖ Rev. Fr Santhosh had taken up pastoral work in Switzerland from 12 November to 6 December 2016. This was planned before his arrival to the Diocese. We wish him happy journey and God's blessings.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Kochumon has discontinued his B.Ed. studies due to some personal and health reasons. He will continue as full time Assistant Parish Priests of Vailankarai and Cheenivilai
- ❖ Rev. Fr Tom is appointed Parish Priest of Laikad, Changanaserry. He left the Diocese on 17 October. Once again we thank him for his committed service to the Diocese.
- ❖ Our Brothers from the Major Seminaries of Kerala were in the Diocese for a short time during their semester holidays.
- ❖ The CRI unit of Thuckalay was formed some time ago and its formal inauguration will take place in January 2017
- ❖ Rev. Fr Robin Koorumullil has reached Ireland. He is appointed Assistant Pastor in-charge of Syro-Malabar community in the Diocese of Limerick.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Kurian Koipuram is back in the Diocese. He is preparing to go to Saudi Arabia for a longer term to serve the Syro-Malabar faithful there.
- ❖ The Maria Mediatrix (MM) Sisters, residing at Kamaraj Nagar will change their residence to Kalluketti, Kuzhithurai for pastoral reasons

- ❖ We have applied for the Post-graduation courses in our College. We need to put up an additional floor for classrooms. Kindly keep praying for divine providence to aid us in the constructions.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Mathew Thekkekutt is attending an on-going formation course at Trivandrum. Let us remember him in our prayer.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Sajan's visa application to go to UK is delayed due to some technical problems. We have reapplied.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Geo Chuzhikunnel came back to the Diocese after 10 days of pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was a faith-filled experience for Fr Geo and he is grateful to all of us for giving him this opportunity. We welcome him back.
- ❖ Rev. Fr Saji Elambaserril has returned to the Diocese after his Europe trip. We welcome him back.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

- 01November:Special Pastoral Council to implement the final statement, recommendations and suggestions of 4th Syro-Malabar Assembly
- 04November: Blessing of Kursady and Tuition Centre at Mekkarai, Sengkottai
- 06November: CML Rally will be held from Plankalai to Kalluvilai
- 12 November: 20th Foundation Day Celebrations of the Diocese and conclusion of Year of Mercy
- 16 December: Pre-Christmas gathering for all the Fathers at Sangamam
- 23 December: Pre-Christmas gathering of UCC members
- 23 December:Pre-Christmas gathering for all the Major Seminarians
- 24 December: Christmas Vigil

CONCLUSION

Our Diocese is twenty years old. During these years we have experienced God's provident care in a tangible manner in various ways. We have grown as a Diocese. We have opened new parishes and mission stations. We were able to enter into new communities. We have initiated new forms of apostolate. Our families have received fresh impetus through the home mission. Our parishes are renewed through the regular pastoral visits. We have entered into the field of higher education. Our social work apostolate is ever growing and becoming more relevant. We were able to help thousands of poor people during these years. The number of Diocesan Priests have gone up. New Religious Congregations have established their presences in the Diocese. All in all, the Diocese is maturing over the years. All these are graces that we have received from the Lord. We need to constantly sing the magnificat for all the wonders that he has accomplished through us.

20 November 2016 is the official closing of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. As a Diocese, we were able to carry out a number of works of mercy both spiritual as well as corporal to celebrate the mercy of God. We have undertaken pilgrimages to Churches

specially assigned by entering through the Holy Doors and carrying out various forms of devotions. We were able to present a report on the activities and ministries that we carried out during this year to our Major Archbishop. I want to thank you, dear Fathers Sisters and lay faithful, for your cooperation in making this year of mercy something meaningful to each one of us. Let us continue to spend the rest of the days of this great jubilee with greater fervour and devotion!

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in the Christ,



+George Rajendran SDB

Bishop of Thuckalay

