



Ref. No. Priests/GR/50/2015

28 November 2015

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and Blessings for the season of Annunciation and the Feast of Christmas!

The Reason for the Season

We are entering a new liturgical season and a new liturgical year. The reason for this season and as for every season, it is Jesus himself. We never lose focus on Jesus: he is our saviour.

At a bus stop or railway station, at the doctor's, or at the exams results notice board, there is always anxiety of waiting. We await something important that would affect our life, change the course of our life, determine what and who we will be after the meeting and encounter. Now we wait for the Lord and this waiting is much more important than any other type of waiting we just mentioned!

God's Mercy in Flesh and Blood

Jesus is God's mercy personified, made real in flesh and blood. Zechariah sings for joy praising God saying, "He has raised up for us a mighty saviour... to show mercy to our ancestors..." (Lk 1: 69, 72). And today we experience that mercy of God in Jesus Christ, "through forgiveness of all [our] sins," and experience "the compassionate heart of our God." (Lk 1:78).

Mary too sings for joy of this truth and she says that the Lord remembers his mercy, the mercy promised to our fathers (Lk 1:54). Mercy, compassion, loving-kindness – all these are promised to our forefathers and today we are the beneficiaries. Today we await the Son of God who will be born for us.

God's mercy for us is assured and is permanently stamped in human history when Jesus, the anointed one, the messiah was born on that glorious day. History is not simply of the past. Today the grace and mercy of God is made available to each one of us, to us who believe.

Year of Mercy and Jesus' Birth

On 8th December we will be inaugurating the year of Mercy. It is indeed very meaningful and apt, even if it be a coincident, that we celebrate Christmas this same month. Christmas is but the celebration of realization of God's mercy in flesh and blood in our midst, in the human history.

Christmas is not a celebration of birth of just another baby. It is the birth of our Saviour, of our salvation and redemption. Redemption means paying a price. God pays the price through sacrificing his only son: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn

3:16). This is true mercy. Sinners though we are, God in his mercy has redeemed us through Jesus Christ.

Jesus our Good Shepherd makes real this mercy of God when he lays down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:15). Jesus states the reason of his coming. He says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection completes the redemption story of God's mercy. It is this mercy which gives us Christians a living hope. St. Peter in his first epistle exclaims: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1Pet 1:3).

Mystery of Mercy and Mystery of Jesus Birth

Pope Francis unarguably declares: our salvation depends on mercy. He says, "We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace" and "Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us" (*Misericordiae Vultus* 2). God comes to meet us in and through Jesus. The mystery of Jesus' Birth is the mystery of Mercy. Jesus' birth is not a mystery just because it was a virgin birth. It is much more a mystery because God who should have punished us for our sins, through his mercy today he forgives us and takes us to be his children.

God's mercy is universal but it must be appropriated: it must be accepted by a person and be made one's own. Thus when the Word becomes Flesh (Jn 1:14) only those who receive him are given the right to be children of God (Jn 1:12). We are born again in him "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:13). Here is the mystery unfolding to us as grace and truth: Jesus who dwelt at the beginning with God today dwells among us, so that we who are flesh be saved through the Word that becomes Flesh. It is a mystery of God's Mercy and Love, yet awaiting our acceptance. And it is not we who actually wait: but it is God who awaits us.

I wish you all a meaningful and Merciful experience of Christmas!

NEWS AND EVENTS

1. CML Rally

Cherupushpam Mission League Annual Rally was conducted on 1 November 2015. The Rally began from Annikarai at 2.00 pm and ended at Padanthalumoodu school grounds. It was very encouraging to see most of our children from our parishes to have come to participate in spite of a threatening rain. In fact God blessed the day with a dry condition though it looked it would rain heavily.

I congratulate Rev. Fr. Shojo Erupathanchilchira the director and his team, the catechism teachers and everyone for organizing the Annual Rally very well. I also thank Fr. Shojo once again for the successful release of the *Sirumalar* monthly.

2. Priests Conference

An emergency Priests Conference was conducted at Padanthalumoodu on 1st November after the CML rally. The meeting was to discuss the plan for the forthcoming 19th diocesan day celebration. Thank you dear fathers for the sharing and for the useful input you had given on that day. Since the conference was held on 1st itself, the scheduled priest conference for the 10th November was cancelled.

3. 19th Diocesan Day Celebration cum Jubilee of Syro-Malabar Extension to South India

The Diamond Jubilee celebration of the extension of Syro-Malabar Mission to South India was celebrated on the 19th Diocesan Day held on 14th November at Kalluvilai. His Grace Mar Joseph Powathil gave us great joy by taking great pains to come all the way from Changanassery and join the celebration. The Archbishop presided over the function and felicitated us and shared from his heart about the growth of our Thuckalay mission. Rev. Fr. Mani, the VG of Changanassery too shared about the growth of the Diocese and felicitated it. We gratefully remembered on that day all the pioneer missionaries and those who cooperated in the growth of the Thuckalay mission. Thanks to Rev. Fr. Antony Jose, Fr. Robins Kuzhikodil and their team for presenting us with a very well-prepared documentary on the history of the Thuckalay Diocese and I thank all those who made the day a memorable one.

4. Thadikarankonam convent blessing

The blessing and inauguration of the new building of the Thadikarankonam FCC convent was held on 26 November 2015. I once again thank and congratulate Rev. Mother Celia FCC and her team of sisters for hitting another milestone in the mission work of the Diocese and for the consolidation of their works in this region. It was good to see many of our priests participating in the ceremony. I thank them for coming over to Thadikarankonam. Let us continue to encourage and accompany all our sisters and be of assistance to them while we remember that we share a common mission.

5. The CMC Vice-Province

The CMC Vice-Province had their Provincial Election Synaxis from 14th to 17th November. Rev. Sr. Alice Viji CMC was re-elected as the Vice-Provincial. The Assistant Vice-Provincial is Rev. Sr. Agnetta CMC. The councillors are, Rev. Sr. Therese CMC, Rev. Sr. Alphonse Jose CMC, and Rev. Sr. Jessy Therese CMC. The finance secretary is Rev. Sr. Roselet CMC, and the Vice-Provincial secretary is Rev. Sr. Anne Maria CMC. We congratulate Rev. Sr. Viji and the new team as they assume their office and we assure them of our prayerful support.

6. National Eucharistic Congress

A five member team headed by Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam VG and comprising of Rev. Sr. Ansit SABS, Mr. Ramesh Pallikonam, Mr. Abin Smith Kattathurai, Mrs. Benila Selvan Manjalumoodu went to Bombay to take part in the National Eucharistic congress that took place from 12th to 15th November. The main subject of Eucharistic congress was “Nourished by CHRIST to Nourish others.” The programme consisted of Sharing of Faith Experience, Praise and worship, Catechesis, Testimonies, Adoration of Blessed sacrament, Celebration of faith in regional basis, Cultural programme, Eucharistic Procession, and celebration of Holy Mass in Three rites (Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara). “It was a very good experience for everyone who participated in the congress,” says Fr. Jose VG. The participants included 73 Bishops, 130 Priests, 125 Sisters, and more than 600 lay people from 133 Dioceses.

7. Cardinal’s brother passes away

Cardinal Mar George Alencherry’s brother Mr. A. P. Augustine passed away on 17th of November. The funeral was held on 19th November at Thuruthy. Some of our fathers and sisters from our Diocese and I had participated in the funeral service. We

extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to our dear Cardinal and to the family members and relatives of Mr. Augustine.

8. Demise of beloved ones

We condole the deaths of the beloved ones of Rev. Fr. Thomas Paul Urumpackal, of Rev. Sr. Lincitta CMC, and of Rev. Sr. Anila FCC.

- a. Rev. Fr. Thomas Paul Urumpackal lost her younger sister Rev. Sr. Maria Dasi SH aged 69, on 7th November. She died at Anicad, Changanassery
- b. Rev. Sr. Lincitta CMC lost her mother Mrs. Rosamma, 83. Sr. Lincitta's mother passed away at Veroor, Changanassery on 9th November.
- c. Rev. Sr. Anila FCC lost her uncle, younger brother of her mother, Rev. Fr. Chacko Valiyaveetil aged 76. He died in Changanassery Priest Home on 2nd November.

We assure them of our prayerful support at this moment of loss and grief and pray for the souls of the departed ones.

9. New Kurusady blessing

I was happy to bless the new Kurusady at St. Martin de Porres Church Kazhuvanthittai on 3rd November 2015 and at Christ the King Church, Palapallam on 13th November 2015. I congratulate the parish priests of both the parishes, Rev. Fr. Shojo and Rev. Fr. Justin and the parish council members for their efforts at coordinating the construction and completion of the Kurusadys.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. Diocesan Bible Convention cum Religious year Exhibition

Annual Bible Convention will be held 4th, 5th, and 6th of December 2015 at Sacred Heart Church, Padanthalumoodu. I encourage everyone of our fathers to be present all the three days. Kuzhanthai Iso Iyakkam children will have social retreat on 5th and 6th at the same time.

Since the Catechism children, children from Mission League and from Kuzhanthai Iso Iyakkam will be present on 5th and 6th December, we thought of organising the long awaited Religious year exhibition. The exhibition is organized by the sisters and priests of the religious congregations. Rev. Fr. Seby and Rev. Fr. Linslal will make a presentation about the vocation of the Diocesan priests. Kindly encourage all the Mission League children to take part in the exhibition. Primarily this exhibition is meant for Vocation promotion.

Note: During the Bible convention on 6th December at 1.30 pm, I request all the fathers to come for a short meeting in the fathers' refectory at Padanthalumoodu. I would like to meet and consult with you regarding the solemn inauguration of our college and the visit of our cardinal on January 17, 2016 before I can make a formal announcement to the faithful about the event.

2. Year of Mercy Inauguration

The inauguration of the Year of Mercy will be held on 8th December at 9.30 am in Padanthalumoodu. I request all the fathers to be present there for the inauguration. Kindly bring two representatives (Kaikars) each from your parishes. Kindly invite all the faithful from Padanthalumoodu Forane.

I am attaching a Pastoral letter with regard to the Year of Mercy along with this circular. Kindly read the Pastoral letter on 6th December. On the following Sunday on 13th kindly organize a Parish-level celebration of the Inauguration of the Year of Mercy in your Parishes.

A liturgical ceremony is also attached along with this circular. Those who have any doubt kindly contact Fr. Toji, the Coordinator of the Year of Mercy in our Diocese. Try to implement all the plans for the Year of Mercy in your Parishes both at the Parish-level and in the pious associations. Kindly integrate these plans in your Parish pastoral calendar.

I request you to discuss well the Year of Mercy programs in your parish council and take appropriate decisions for parish-level activities. I am also providing a poster to be displayed in our churches and convent chapels and stickers for families to remind and motivate all of us about this year and to implement the plans. The posters will be distributed to you personally on December 8th after Mass. The stickers will be given to the families together with Christmas mail.

Kindly encourage all our faithful to come and participate in this meaningful event of the Inauguration of the Holy Year. I ask the whole presbyterium to be present on this day to celebrate the event.

3. Priestly Ordination of Rev. Deacon Ritto Thoompunkal

Rev. Deacon Ritto Thoompunkal will be ordained priest on 28th December 2015 in his home parish Fathimapuram, Changanassery. We wish Deacon Ritto all the best and assure him of our prayers. I encourage as many of us as possible to participate in the Ordination ceremony and pray for our Deacon Ritto.

4. Pre-Christmas Gathering and Priest Conference

Pre-Christmas Gathering and Priest Conference will be held on 16th December at our Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal. I ask you to kindly attend the gathering without fail.

5. Christmas Mail

As I mentioned in my previous circular, I am sending my Christmas message to all our faithful parish-wise. The letters will reach you before you go for Carol singing to families. Wherever the home mission is completed and for those families whose full name and addresses are available the letters will have the addresses written already. Those parishes where home mission was not completed and sufficient addresses are not available for families, letters will be given to the parish priest. Kindly arrange to write the names and addresses of those families and hand them over to them.

I am also sending a few extra copies of these Christmas letters and envelopes without names so that you can give them to those families whose addresses might have been left out in case.

Kindly encourage people to contribute something to the diocese and ask them to make a collection using the envelope given to the individual families. You can fix a date for collecting the envelopes back.

6. Liturgical Wall calendar

I am grateful to Rev. Fr. Justin for preparing the liturgical wall calendar and to Rev. Fr. Ginoy and his team for designing and printing. Kindly distribute the calendar during the carol singing time and collect Rs. 25 per calendar. We have incurred a huge

expense this year but we are asking you to collect money only for liturgical wall calendar. I request you to kindly cooperate in collecting back the expenses of the wall calendar.

7. Uraviam prayer books

A draft of the New Uraviam prayer book is being distributed for a trial use. Kindly take it seriously and use the new version for Uraviam meetings. As we have agreed we shall share our experiences and finalise the prayer book in our February meeting.

8. Sacramentary in Tamil

The new Tamil version of the Sacramentary called *Kudasagal* will come into force from 25th December 2015. I am sure before this date you will be receiving the new printed books. I thank Rev. Fr. Justin Cheruvilil and the Liturgical department for undertaking the translation work and completing it successfully.

INFORMATION

1. We welcome back our deacons to the diocese for their Diaconate ministry. Dn. Samuel will serve at Manjalumoodu, Dn. Justin Sudeesh at Nithiravilai, Dn. Ajin Jose at KKSSS, and Dn. Anil Raj at the Minor Seminary. They will be in these places until February after which they will have immediate preparations towards their priestly ordinations. We wish them all a beautiful experience of the Diaconate ministry.
2. As I have mentioned to you we will be celebrating the Syro-Malabar mission week in January. More information will be given by Fr. Shojo the CML director and Fr. Alex Puthettu the Assistant director regarding the celebration. Syro-Malabar Mission Sunday is on 10th January and the Special Collection for Syro-Malabar Mission has to be made on that day.
3. Parish Pastoral Plan (PPP): During our last Priest conference at Padanthalumoodu I spoke to you regarding the importance of planning our activities. Failing to plan is to planning to fail. Let everyone in your parish/institution know the programs well ahead of time. When you make the PPP or chart the programs for your parish you need to include the Kaikars, and the Parish council. Ask for the annual plan of all the parish pious associations. All these should be incorporated into the parish pastoral plan. I have attached a copy of the guidelines for preparing the pastoral plan. Kindly adapt what is necessary for your parish and what is needed only. Kindly keep a copy of the Parish Pastoral Plan in a separate file. I would like to refer to it when I visit the parish.
4. The FCC Province of Thuckalay are having their Provincial Election Synaxis from 27th November to 2nd December. Let us continue to pray for the sisters.
5. Inauguration of the new College building of St. Alphonsa College of Arts & Science is postponed to January 17, 2016. His Beatitude Cardinal George Alencherry will be the Chief guest for the function.

CONCLUSION

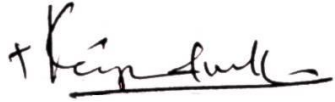
I had made my personal retreat from 23rd to 26th November at Don Bosco Monvila. I remembered you all and had prayed for you dear fathers in a special way during my retreat.

Prayers work miracles. The first miracle God's grace can work in us is the conversion of our hearts and God's forgiveness for our sins. Then the first prayer on our

lips must be the prayer for God's mercy. The Year of Mercy which we are about to commence invites us to trust in God who is merciful and who is ready to forgive our sins. Further our dear Pope Francis tells all the priests to exercise this ministry of Mercy as authentic confessors. He says, "We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy (*Misericordiae Vultus* No. 17)." As we are about to begin this season of Annunciation with the 25 days fast and as we await Christmas, let us make use of this opportunity to inspire in ourselves personal and interior conversion.

Wish you all a meaningful and Blessed Christmas!

Yours in Christ,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay



BISHOP'S ENGAGEMENTS

December 2015

DATE	Day	TIME	EVENTS
1	Tuesday	12.15pm 5.15pm	CNEWA meeting with lunch FCC chapter
2	Wednesday	4.30pm	Soosaipuram: Annual Day
3	Thursday		Bishop's House
4-6			Padanthalumoodu: Annual Bible Convention
7	Monday	6.30 pm	Muzhucode: CMC convent, Holy Qurbana
8	Tuesday	9.30 am 6.30pm	Padanthalumoodu: Year of Mercy Inauguration Pilankalai: Holy Qurbana at FCC
9	Wednesday	9.30am 3.45pm	Curia Meeting Vellambi: Holy Qurbana
10-15			Muscat visit
16	Wednesday	9.30am	Pre-Christmas gathering for Presbyterium
17	Thursday		Bishop's House
18	Friday	10.00am 3.15pm 5.00 pm	Education Commission Meeting Melpuram: Christmas Meeting Christmas Meeting, Nagercoil
19	Saturday		Visit to Charitable institutions
20	Sunday	3.15pm	Bishop's House
21	Monday	1.00pm	UGC Christmas Gathering, Thuckalay
22	Tuesday		Pre-Christmas gathering for Shenkottai mission
23	Wednesday	10.15am	Holy Qurbana, Cheruvally
24	Thursday	12.00am	Christmas vigil at St. Alphonsa, Nagercoil
25	Friday		Home visit
26	Saturday	5.00pm	Alleppey: Engagement, Holy Qurbana
27	Sunday	8.45am	Manimala: Silver Jubilee Mass
28	Monday	9.15am 4.00pm	Priestly Ordination of Deacon Ritto Marriage Qurbana, Ernakulam
29	Tuesday	10.00am	Edathua: Silver Jubilee of Fr. George Kulangara sdb
30	Wednesday	11.00am 4.00pm	Mannanam: Talk to the Pilgrims Mannanam: Feast day Holy Qurbana
31	Thursday		Bishop's House

Fr. K. J. Antony SDB
Diocese Secretary