

Dated 30 June 2014

**Dear Fathers and Brothers,**

Greetings and prayers from United States of America where I am doing the mission preaching on behalf of the Salesian Congregation! On 3 July we shall celebrate Dukhrana, the feast of St Thomas. It is an important feast for us who belong to the Syro-Malabar Church. I am sure the circular letter of our Major Archbishop is read in all our Parishes on 29 June. While celebrating this solemnity, let us consider briefly the life of St Thomas and the message that he imparts to each one of us.

Reading the Gospels, we discover that St Thomas was known for his inquisitive mind. This made him doubt God's work in the world. However, he was eager to pursue answers to his questions, which ultimately led him to great faith. Thomas is known in popular culture as 'Doubting Thomas' because of the famous Bible story in which he demands to see physical proof of Jesus' resurrection before believing it, and Jesus appears, inviting Thomas to touch the scars of his wounds from the crucifixion.

After getting the physical proof he wanted of the resurrection miracle, Thomas' doubt turned to strong belief: Thomas said to him: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). The next verse reveals that Jesus blesses people who are willing to have faith in something that they can't see right now: "Then Jesus told him, 'because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'" (John 20:29). Thomas' encounter with Jesus shows how the right response to doubt - curiosity and searching - can lead to deep belief.

When Thomas believed, he could be quite courageous. The Gospel records in John chapter 11 that when the disciples were worried about accompanying Jesus to Judea (because the Jews had previously tried to stone Jesus there), Thomas encouraged them to stick with Jesus, who wanted to return to the area to help his friend Lazarus, even if that meant being attacked by Jewish leaders there. Thomas says in verse 16: "Let us also go, that we might die with him."

Thomas later asked Jesus a famous question when the disciples were eating the Last Supper with him. John 14:1-4 of the Bible records Jesus telling his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas' question comes next, revealing that he's thinking of physical directions rather than spiritual guidance: "Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Thanks to Thomas' question, Jesus clarified his point, uttering these famous words about his divinity in verse 6 and 7: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and

the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.””

In his *Book of Thomas the Doubter: Uncovering the Hidden Teachings*, George Augustus Tyrrell comments: “It may be that Thomas’ critical mind compelled Jesus to explain the teachings more deeply to him than to the credulous disciples. For the prologue in the *Gospel of Thomas* states: ‘These are the secret teachings the living Jesus spoke and Judas Thomas wrote down.’”

After Jesus ascended into heaven, Thomas and the other disciples each travelled to various parts of the world to share the Gospel message with people. Thomas shared the Gospel with people in Syria, ancient Persia, and India. Today, we honour him as the Apostle of India. He is the father and patron of our Syro-Malabar Church. Let this feast become a solemn moment for each one of us to re-dedicate ourselves to the ministry of the gospel which St Thomas carried out in our land in an admirable way. HAPPY FEAST TO EVERY ONE OF YOU.

### **MISSION PREACHING IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

As I write this circular letter from St Mary’s Church, Walnut Creek, Oakland, California. I remember every one of you dear Fathers and Brothers. I am constantly praying for your intentions. It is said when you are far away you remember your home and loved ones very dearly. Joining the Salesian Mission appeal programme, I reached New York on 9 June 2014. During the first ten days of my stay, I was able to visit our Syro-Malabar Parishes at Philadelphia, Bronx and Long Island in New York. The Parish Priests and the Christian communities were extremely happy to welcome me. I had ample opportunities to share with them the various activities that we are carrying out in our Diocese. I have 3 Mission Appeals in California: Twain Harte, Stockton and Los Angeles. You can follow my programme that I had sent to you through email. I will be in Chicago from 11 July to 5 August 2014. I will meet the members of Syro-Malabar Church there too. I will be celebrating the Holy Eucharist in the Chicago Cathedral on 27 July 2014. The Catholic Faith in America is still alive. On weekends, the Churches are packed with people and there are more than 5 Masses on Sundays in some of the Parishes. Kindly pray for me and for the people of America.

### **NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE**

#### **INAUGURATION AND BLESSING OF CMC CONVENT, KALIYAL**

The CMC Sisters came to our Region in 1969 and established their first Convent at Kaliyal. This House served these missionary Sisters for nearly 45 years and now they have a brand new building with a well-built chapel and other amenities. It was blessed on 31 May at 2.20 pm. Many Fathers, Sisters and Faithful took part in the solemn Holy Qurbana and blessing. Rev. Sr Viji along with her Council members and the Sisters worked very hard for building up this new Convent. As we congratulate them, we continue to pray for the Sisters and for their apostolate in our Diocese.

#### **ST JOHN’S MONTESERRI SCHOOL, SENGOTTAI**

Sengottai Mission has yet another new project put in place with the opening of St John’s Montessori School for kids. Keeping in mind the need of the Region and to give quality formation to the little ones, we gave a face-lift to the existing nursery school at PSSS. The project was taken up by Rev. Fr John Paul, the Director of PSSS. The campus and the classrooms look attractive with painting and play materials.

The School was inaugurated on 9 June 2014 by Rev. Fr Thomas Muttathupadam in the presence of Fathers and Sisters working in the Sengottai Region. Our prayerful support to the school team!

### **ALPHONSA COLLEGE INAUGURATED**

The much awaited Higher Education Institution in our Diocese was inaugurated on 8 June 2014. It was a historic event for the Diocese of Thuckalay. This is indeed a sign of God's continued providence in our Diocese. The event was marked by a solemn Eucharistic celebration, which was held at 2.00 pm. This was followed by the formal inaugural programme. Rt. Rev. Peter Remegius, Bishop of Kottar, was the special guest for the occasion. The inauguration and the dedication of the College was done symbolically by lighting the lamp.

I must place on record my sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuparambil and Rev. Fr Antony Jose for their hard work in making the College a reality. They were in the forefront, facing all the hardships, never giving up in the face of failures and pursuing doggedly the dream of establishing the College. I need to mention the contribution of Rev. Sr Archana DM who stood with us and worked very hard for the success of the project. Together with them we have a host of Fathers and members of various committees. I thank them all. The temporary building that houses the office and classes are ready. The classes will commence from 30 June 2014. I wish Rev. Fr Tom Kunnumpuram, the Principal and all the Staff Members all the best for the new academic year. I invite you to visit our College site at leisure and encourage them.

### **PULARI OFFSET PRINTING PRESS**

We have blessed and inaugurated the Pulari Offset Printing Press on 8 June 2014 at 12.00 noon. Rev. Fr Mathew Mulangaserry, the Procurator, Rev. Fr. Ginoy Thottiyil the Director, Rev. Fr. Alex Puthettu the Joint Director, the CMC Sisters, and some of the young people from Mankarai Parish were present on the occasion. It is yet another major initiative of the Diocese and I request every one's support to our new venture. Kindly give your printing orders to our Press. Rev. Frs Ginoy and Alex are working hard to get everything in place.

### **VANTHUPARUNGAL RETREAT TEAM**

Up to now, the organisation of our Bible Conventions and Retreats in the Parishes were taken care of by the *Sinai* Prayer Group. But due to some unavoidable reasons, the group has expressed its inability to render such services. Hence, we have asked the existing prayer team *Vanthuparungal* to organize these programmes. As I had mentioned to you Rev. Fr Antony Chirakal will be in-charge of the Parish Level Bible Conventions and Retreats. The following members constitute the team and they will animate the Bible Conventions:

- Rev. Fr Joseph Nedumpuram
- Rev. Fr Antony Chirakal
- Rev. Fr Mijo Puthenpurakal
- Rev. Fr Felix Arulnathan
- Rev. Fr Robins Kuzhikodil
- Rev. Fr Peter Kizhakkeyil
- Rev. Fr Antony Jose
- Rev. Sr Lysa FCC
- Mr Sounder Raj
- Mr Vanslas, Palavilai

We also have begun one more *Vanthuparungal* Prayer Centre at Christ the King Parish, Palapallam. Here, the programme will be held on every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month. This Centre is specifically meant for the Faithful of the Soosaipuram Forane. I request all the Fathers from Soosaipuram Forane to make the necessary announcement about the Centre in your respective Parish Churches. I request you to encourage the Faithful to take part in the Bible Conventions organized by the Diocese. At the same time, you need to dissuade our Catholics from taking part in Conventions organised by non-Catholic groups. I thank Rev. Fr Justin, the Parish Priest and the Parishioners for taking up this additional responsibility to host the prayer programme in the Parish every month.

We have now three Prayer Centres in the Diocese:

- ◆ FCC Plankalai - First Saturday of the month
- ◆ Palukal - Second Saturday of the month
- ◆ Palapallam - Third Saturday of the month

## **SUCCESS 2014**

On behalf of the Diocese, KKSSS took the initiative to congratulate and honour all the students of Classes 10 and 12, who came out with bright colours in the recently held Board Examinations. The felicitation programme was held on 18 June, 2014. Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General, was the chief guest on the occasion and Rev. Fr Felix Arulnathansdb and Rev. Fr Johnslal felicitated the students. The rank holders were awarded with both cash prizes and gold medals. Our heartfelt thanks goes to the Director and the staff of KKSSS for organizing this event

## **REST IN PEACE**

The father of Rev. Fr. Robin Kurumullil passed away on June 17, 2014, after a prolonged illness. The funeral ceremony took place in his parish church on the next day. Our Vicar General along with many of our fathers and some sisters were present for the funeral. We all are close to Fr. Robin and his family members at this griefstricken moment and express our heart felt condolences and prayers to the family.

## **INFORMATION**

- ◆ Rev. Sr Clairelet CMC has taken charge as the new Principal of Pulari Matriculation School, Puliarai, Sengottai. We thank the outgoing Principal Rev. Rev. Sr. Sherin CMC who served the School for the last 3 years.
- ◆ Rev. Sr Jane Mary SABS joined the APJM School community as the Principal of the School and Rev. Sr Rose Martin SABS who worked 6 long years as Principal of the School has been transferred to Thanranpett. We thank her for her selfless service.
- ◆ The Sisters have completed the Home Mission in Munchirai Parish. They will now move to Nithravilai Parish to begin the Home Mission. We wish Rev. Fr Christudas, the Parish Priest and the Sisters God's blessings. For your information, the following Sisters are engaged in the home Mission in the Diocese. Kindly keep them in your prayers.
  - Rev. Sr Lysa FCC
  - Rev. Sr Lincy FCC

- Rev. Sr Leema Rose FCC
- Rev. Sr Dorathy SH
- Rev. Sr Annie James SH
- Rev. Sr Alphy ASMI
- Rev. Sr Elsit SABS
- Rev. Sr Blessy CMC

◆ Following are the new appointments of Religious Priests in the Diocese:

	NAME	TRANSFERRED TO
1	Rev. Fr Davis Karukapally CMI	Parish Priest, St Mary's, Kaliyal Parish Priest, St Mary's, Penuthadam
2	Rev. Fr Luka Kollamparambil CMI	Parish Priest, Little flower Church, Plankalai Parish Priest, St. Xavier's Church, Kaisalaviali and Regional Superior
3	Rev. Fr Sebastian Puthuparampil CMI	Parish Priest, St Thomas Church, Anchugrammam and Maharajapuram
4	Rev. Fr Joseph Anithottam CMI	Parish Priest, St Thomas Church, Netta
5	Rev. Fr Chako Baisil CMI Rev. Fr. Baiju Peroor CMI	Parish Priest, St Thomas Church, Muzhukode Parish Priest, St Mary's Church, Pallikonam
6	Fr. Tomy Varavumkal MCBS	Anbullam, Sengkottai
7	Fr. Jino Kollamparpil MCBS	St. Joseph School, Sengkottai

We wish them well in their ministries in the Diocese. May God bless them!

- ◆ The following Fathers, who worked in our Diocese are transferred by their respective Provincial Superiors:
- Rev. Fr James Ambalathatt CMI
  - Rev. Fr Varghese Kottur CMI
  - Rev. Fr Berchmans Kattapuram CMI
  - Rev. Fr. Tomin Kunnathettu MCBS
  - Rev. Fr. Martin Elackadunaluparayil MCBS

We thank them for their ministries in the Diocese. May God bless them!

- ◆ These days the following Parishes are celebrating the feasts of their patrons:
- Padanthalumoodu
  - Thettiyode
  - Athencode
  - Palukal
  - Pathukani

We wish them Happy Feast!

- ◆ Rev. Br Shijo Aikkarakunnel has left for Italy to begin his Theological Studies at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome.
- ◆ Deacon Jinu Jacob has come back to the Diocese and he is assigned to St Alphonsa Parish, Nagarcoil for his Diaconate ministry. Since he is asked to pursue his Licentiate in Social Communications at Rome, he will be ordained this year itself. His Priestly Ordination will be held on 13 September 2014. As the Alphonsa Parish is celebrating its silver jubilee this year, we shall celebrate the Priestly Ordination of Deacon Jinu Jacob at St Alphonsa Parish,

Nagarcoil. The Licentiate study requires that a candidate be a priest. Hence, we are making this exception. I request everyone to mark off this date in your personal diaries and attend the ordination at Nagarcoil without fail.

- ◆ Rev. Fr. Dency will leave for Guwahati on July 6, 2014 to pursue his Management studies at DBIM. We keep him in our prayers.

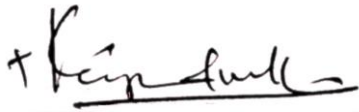
## COMING EVENTS

- ✚ TNBC- DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL (DPC) will be held on 6 July 2014 at Epiphany Centre, Selam. From our Diocese, Rev. Fr Mijo along with five members of the Pastoral Council will attend the programme. The topic of the meeting is "Christian Family Life and Political Awareness of Christians in the light of 'Evangelium Gaudium'." Bishop Singaroyan will be the resource person. There will be group discussion after the talk.
- ✚ The next Priests' Conference will be held on 8 July 2014. The main agenda for discussion and decision-making will be on the forthcoming pilgrimage to St Alphonsa Shrine, Nagarcoil. Other agenda will be given by the Vicar General.
- ✚ 26 July 2014: Diocesan level Youth Pilgrimage to St Alphonsa Shrine, Nagarcoil
- ✚ 3 August 2014: Diocese level celebration and pilgrimage to St Alphonsa Shrine, Nagarcoil

## CONCLUSION

On 29 June, we celebrated the solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul. Peter was an illiterate man while Paul had gone through what we would today call a university education. Paul was far more intelligent than Peter. Further, Peter allowed himself to be carried by feelings; he was a very impetuous man. Paul, on the other hand, reasoned things out very carefully. Yet, both had one thing in common: a deep love for Christ, which urged them to carry out faithfully the task Jesus had entrusted to them. St Thomas, whose feast we shall celebrate soon, too exhibited similar love for Christ. As missionaries, whatever be our problems and short-comings, what is important is that we love Christ. It is in loving Christ that we are all united. In the love of Christ, with courage and determination, let us move forward in our mission!

Yours in Christ,



+ **George Rajendran sdb**  
Bishop of Thuckalay