



Ref. No. Priests/GR/41/2015

25 April 2015

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings in the Risen Lord!

Annual Exams are over for many of our children and vacation is here. It is time for Vacation Bible School.

Vacation is a time the children are given to relax, refresh, and restart their academic duties. Then VBS is going to be another class? Nay, it is not that routine that we should begin again to send our children into classes of boredom.

Two of the disciples who had harrowing experience of the crucifixion of their master were musing over the events, talking to each other and were walking towards Emmaus. Jesus had failed. He had failed them also. What to do next? It was as if the final test and final exam had failure as the result. It was a moment of gloom and of desperation.

It was here Jesus rightly intervenes and catechises them. Just an afternoon of catechism class – their eyes were opened, they saw the truth, and they recognised him.

VBS is just the same: a moment of catechesis, a moment of walking with Jesus, a moment of revelation, a moment of recognition, and moments filled with hearts burning with love for Jesus.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS)

As you are well aware, Vacation Bible School is a specialized form of religious education for children, and in our case, it is a time to teach the Sacred Scriptures to them. Churches, irrespective of their denominations, usually hold the weeklong events during the summer vacation to deepen the religious faith of the children.

This year we shall organize Vacation Bible School from 3rd May 2015 to 15th May 2015 (any one week).

The origins of Vacation Bible School can be traced back to Hopedale, Illinois in 1894. Mrs D. T. Miles, a Sunday School teacher who also was a public school teacher, felt she was limited by time constraints in teaching the Bible to children. So, she started a daily Bible school to teach children during the summer. The first Bible school enrolled forty students and lasted four weeks. A local school was used for classes, while an adjoining park was used for recess. Later, this practice spread to other parts of the USA. Today, many Churches run their own Vacation Bible School programmes. Modern Vacation Bible School usually consists of a weeklong programme of religious education, which may employ Bible stories, religious songs, arts and crafts, skits or puppet shows which cater toward elementary school-aged children.

Our Diocese, like the other Syro-Malabar Dioceses of Kerala, has been organizing the Vacation Bible School for the past many years. Our children will spend in the Parish one week and they will be with us every day from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm. Everyday our programme begins with the Holy Eucharist. Children are then taught the Bible and matters related to church. To make the VBS classes more interesting and profitable for the children, from this year onwards the Catechetical department of our diocese has prepared special Text books which are followed by Changanassery diocese. In the afternoon, it is time for other activities such as Bible storytelling, learning religious hymns, staging Bible skits and other entertaining programmes through which we help our children to learn the Bible. The weeklong programme normally concludes with a picnic for the children.

I am writing extensively about the Vacation Bible School, dear Fathers, not only to remind you about it but also to exhort to take a proactive role in making it meaningful and useful for our children. With the help of our Sisters and other lay volunteers, you can make this event something unique for the children. The entire programme must be attractive and appealing to them. Only then will they come willingly and happily to take part and benefit from it. Kindly do not leave the organization and execution of the programme entirely into the hands of the Sisters or other lay leaders. I request you to take the initiative and lead from the front in making it successful. I am hopeful that with your love for the Sacred Scriptures and the knowledge that you gained from your study of theology, you will be able to organize it in a creative way for the children so that they learn much from this weeklong programme.

St Jerome, who spent himself many years learning, studying and translating the Sacred Scriptures, tells us so aptly that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Jesus Christ. May our children who have been entrusted to our care may not become ignorant of Jesus Christ due to our neglect in teaching the Sacred Scriptures! May Our Blessed Mother, who pondered over the Word of God and brought forth Jesus into the world, intercede for each one of us in instilling in our children a genuine love for the Word of God, which will nourish and sustain them in moments of doubts and anxieties that crisscross their lives!

SOME NEWS

1. Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Alphonsa Nagercoil

The FCC sisters of the Alphonsa F.C convent are celebrating their Silver Jubilee of their presence on 27th April. I will be presiding over the mass on that day there. We congratulate the sisters who are working there and remember with love and gratitude all those who toiled there.

2. Blessing of Anayadi dispensary and nursery

The SJSM Sisters at Anayadi have begun their apostolate. The new dispensary and a Kindergarten school were blessed on 22nd April 2015. Fr. VG and the parish priest of Anayadi mission were present for the occasion. A number of Sisters and some lay faithful also took part in the programme. We wish the Sisters all the best for the new ministry at the mission station.

3. Blessing of PHD Centre

On 24th April a centre for youth welfare of our diocese was blessed and inaugurated in the KKSSS campus. It was christened Pulari Holistic Development (PHD)

training centre. I appreciate and congratulate Rev. Fr. Felix Arulnathan SDB for his dedication in mobilising the youth of our diocese and for his initiative in starting off this centre.

4. Examinations at St. Alphonsa College

We once again thank God and all those who worked towards the recognition and affiliation of the Alphonsa College. On 24th April the college received the set of question papers of the University for their Exams. We wish the students all the best and God's blessings.

5. Conclusion of all the Board exams for students

Our students have completed their Board exams. They are awaiting their results. Let us continue to pray for them.

6. New Kindergarten School at Killiyoor

To strengthen our educational ministry at Killiyoor parish we have begun a Kindergarten school for the neighbourhood children who want to join the English medium school. New class rooms and other facilities are being prepared for the academic year 2015-2016. We wish Rev. Fr. Geo Choozhikunnel all the best for this new venture. However the Tamil medium school at the campus will function as usual.

7. FDSHJ of Sangamam complete their ministry

The sisters of the Fervent Daughters of the Saint Heart of Jesus (FDSHJ) of Sangamam complete their ministry at Sangamam and will return to their community in Kerala. Their patient work and unstinted dedication stand out and all those who stayed at or visited Sangamam appreciate their service. I wish to thank them for their commendable contribution at our animation centre, Sangamam. I impart my blessings to the sisters and to all the other members of the congregation. I place on record my gratitude to the mother general and the congregation for having spared these sisters for helping us in our mission.

8. New Presence of FCC at Thadikarakonam

The FCC sisters have been visiting the Thadikarakonam mission centre from Nagarcoil community and have now decided to start a new presence there. They have begun building a new convent and the work is in progress. The building work was blessed on 2nd April, Pesaha Thursday. We wish the sisters, blessings of the Risen Jesus to guide them, bless their mission and help them grow as a community in the new place.

9. New Students for Alphonsa College 2015-2016

The Alphonsa College of Arts and Science is a minority institution run by our Diocese. The members of our Diocese are definitely given preference and so I encourage you to promote students from our parishes to Alphonsa college for the year 2015-2016. Our children can be assured of quality education and follow up in a Christian environment and dedicated staff.

10. Visit of German students

Seven young students from Germany had come over to our Diocese for work experience program. They arrived on 14th March and were with us till 9th of May. They

visited, helped and had experience of our mission work at Soosaipuram School, Nambikai Alayam, Perumchilampu Providence Home, Nithiravilai Karuni Illam, Karode DNN. They had also arranged-excursions to Kanyakumari, Kovalam and Veli beaches, Thiruvithamcode, Thitparappu, Thottipalam, Padmanabhapuram Palace, Alleppey back waters, and Ernakulam Wonderla. We thank our benefactors for arranging the exposure program for these students and hope more number of involved students will be sent in the future.

11. Ordinations to Priesthood

I am very glad and I thank God profusely for gifting us with eight new priests for our diocese this year. Seven of them were ordained in April in the Easter week. We congratulate the newly ordained priests,

- a. Rev. Fr. Abraham Puthenpurackal (Shoji) ordained at Pacha-Chekkidikadu on 6th April
- b. Rev. Fr. Thomas Attiyil (Ajeesh) ordained at Kulipura, on 6th April
- c. Rev. Fr. Jose Vayalil ordained at Pooyamkuty on 7th April
- d. Rev. Fr. Joseph Kurias (Printo) ordained at Mankulam on 8th April
- e. Rev. Fr. James Kanakalil (Vinod) ordained at Mavady, on 9th April
- f. Rev. Fr. Thomas Poovathummottil (Abin) ordained at Manjapetty on 9th April
- g. Dn. George Valliyamthadathil (Sumesh) ordained at Kanayankavayal on 11th April

I also thank all the fathers from our diocese who took great pains to go and participate in these ordinations.

SOME INFORMATION

1. Constructions:
 - a. Construction of Mezhacode church is in progress
 - b. Christurajapuram church is nearing its completion
 - c. In Padanthalumoodu the entrance of the school is given a facelift with a new pious Articles Shop, a Kurusady and new entrance
 - d. Alphonsa College, Soosaipuram: The two-floor structure is nearing completion.
 - e. Alphonsa School, Nagarcoil: The work of an additional floor at the main building is on and a new building for CBSE school has been begun.
2. Upcoming programs:
 - a. On 12th May will be the Priests conference at Malaicode and at 2.00pm Holy Qurbana will be celebrated by our new priests.
 - b. I am leaving for Europe on 13th May to meet some benefactors and also to attend Salesian Bishops conference at Turin, Italy. I will be back on 28th May.
 - c. Inter-diocesan meet will be held on 28th May at KKSSS. I ask all the heads of departments to be present without fail.

IN CONCLUSION

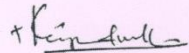
Faith is a gift. But it is a gift that is shared among believers, and shared with those who have not yet heard of it. Those who have already heard and

accepted it strengthen it by living it day by day. We priests are supposed to be persons strong in our faith. If our gift of faith is not shared through our life, works and through our teachings, then it is as good as dead.

VBS is a moment critical to our Christian community wherein we priests can play our significant role as pastors who have lived their faith and who share it with the young generations that are waiting to experience the new life in the Risen Lord.

Wish you all a fruitful time of animation and happiness through VBS.

Yours in the Risen Christ,



+ George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay
