

## **Ref. No.GR|1|2012**

Dear Fathers, Religious and Faithful of the dioceses of Thuckalay,

I want to express through this pastoral letter my sincere thanks and gratitude to God and to you all for all that took place in recent weeks. My priestly ordination motto was: “The almighty has done great things for me” (Lk 1:49). Now I am entrusted by God with the great responsibility of shepherding the Diocese of Thuckalay. The verse that gave me courage to respond to the call of God was “With God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26) and I have made it my Episcopal Ordination motto.

(Here I have two paragraphs in Tamil to thank people and priest who came for my Episcopal Ordination)

I thank my God whenever I think of you, and every time I pray for you all, I always pray with joy (Phil.1:3). I express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry and his collaborators in the Curia and the member of the Clergy, for all that has been achieved in the diocese for the past years. Cardinal Alencherry has animated and governed the diocese with great dedication and zeal from its foundation. He was our Bishop from 2 February 1997 till his election as the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church in 2011. The diocese has grown in terms of the number of parishes and people. With grateful heart, I salute all of you, dear clergy, religious and faithful, for all your contributions to the diocese in the past. I know you are still helping the diocese to grow and I am sure you will continue to support the diocese. I do appreciate your support and concern for its welfare.

My dear people of God, you have a special place in my heart. It is my prayer that your love for one another may grow more and more as you mature in knowledge and complete understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. I am happy to know that you have firm faith in the Lord. The unity that you exhibit in the Spirit and your working together as a team for the spread of the gospel in the diocese are something admirable. I also pray continually that our God will make you worthy of His call. By His power you may fulfil all your desires for goodness and completeness all that you have been doing through faith (2 Thes1:11).

My dear beloved brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, you have a special and indispensable role in the mission of our diocese. The diocese cannot be what it is without you. You are in the frontline of the Church’s life in the diocese. You do not merely belong to the Church. But you are the Church! I am sure you are fully aware of the active role played by the first early Christian community and in particular in the Syro-Malabar Church. You need similar zeal for the mission!

The world today is experiencing a degradation in spiritual, religious and moral values, which is seriously hampering the Christian life. We can find the ever-growing existence of religious indifference and atheism in their more varied forms, particularly secularism which is so widespread today. This calls for a deeper look into ourselves to realise our great responsibility in the mission of the Church. Our mission is nothing but the evangelization and sanctification of all people. Every member of the Church has to be like a leaven in today’s world. For this great mission, we need to be open to the working of the Holy Spirit who will fill our hearts with His divine spirit and prompt our actions. The fruitfulness of our mission depends on our union with Jesus Christ. He is the true vine who gives life and fruitfulness to us the branches. St John has beautifully expressed it: “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in

me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15: 5). Jesus is the ‘true wine’ to which, we the branches are engrafted, so that we can have life, life in its fullness (Jn10:10).

When we lack faith, we act in ignorance. We need to have constant recourse to Jesus Christ so that we may be filled with his faith, grace and love. Our spiritual union with Jesus must be our priority. The Church offers wonderful opportunities to grow in our intimacy with Jesus. This intimacy with Jesus should guide all our actions. The word of God, the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments should help us to deepen our faith and to build bonds of union. Let us take advantage of all that will help us to grow in our spiritual life. Through our daily reading and meditation of the word of God and active participation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, let us encounter Jesus personally and as a community. For “it is in Him that we live, and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). We have in us a spiritual gift which has been given to us when the gospel was proclaimed to us. Let us keep it with care as a precious patrimony. Let us persevere in our efforts to retain the faith that we have received so that we may always make progress in our spiritual life and come closer to Jesus. Let us lift our hearts and minds reverently in prayer. Let us continue to be fervent in our personal prayer, family prayer and the recitation of the holy rosary.

We, as a faithful of the diocese of Thuckalay, have a greater role towards the unity of the Church. Let us preserve the brotherly and sisterly relationship with the members of other Churches and denominations. We need to continue to offer mutual support in all their needs through our active, yet prudent co-operation. The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that divide us. God gives us every possible encouragement. He supports us in every hardship so that we are able to come to the aid of others in their difficulties with the encouragement that we ourselves receive from God (2 Cor.1: 4-5). At the same time, we need to be aware of the forces that lead us away from the ecumenical spirit and all that tarnish the face of the Church. Let us rely on the Lord Jesus Christ, who will give us strength and guard us from the evil one (2 Thes 3:4).

My dear people of God, let us stand firm in faith, keeping all the traditions that we have inherited from the past through the ministry of our clergy and lay leaders. Let us encourage and strengthen one another in words and deeds. Let us think well of all, speak well of all and do good to all. It is my wish that we unite ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ in an intimate manner and join in his mission of evangelization and sanctification of all people. Let us make our own the mind of Christ Jesus (Phil.2:5). Let us grow strong in the Lord with the strength of his power. Never get tired of praying for all God’s holy people (Eph.6:10, 19). Let us read the signs of the time and respond to it with cheerful hearts. Let us entrust the whole diocese to the maternal care of our Blessed Mother Mary and Blessed Apostle St Thomas. May the God of peace make you holy (1Thes.5:23). May He give you peace at all times and in every way. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

(Add your own style of concluding as a Bishop...)

My dear brothers and sisters, these days I am visiting all the parishes to offer Holy Eucharist and to meet the members of the Parish. I thank you for your unconditional support and encouragement that you give me by your presence and prayers. Let’s be united in prayer.

( please write a few lines about Bishop Pawathil, Conclusion of Mission Year and Diocesan day)

I request that at least 25 members from large parishes and 10 members from small parishes to take part in the programme to be organised to wish our beloved Bishop God's blessings and good health. The programme is as follows:

Date: 14 October 2012

Time: 2.00 pm to 5.00pm

Venue: Sangamam, Thuckalay

Programme: 2.00 pm - Prayer service  
2.45 pm - Felicitation meeting  
4.45 pm - Refreshment