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Ref. No. Priests/GR/70/2017

30 May 2017

Dear and Reverend Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

The month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus invites us all to turn to the heart, the deepest root and foundation of every person, the focus of our affective life and, in a word, his or her very core. During these days, we need to contemplate the two hearts: *the Heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd and our own heart as Priests.*

The Heart of the Good Shepherd is not only the Heart that shows us mercy, but *is* itself mercy. There the Father's love shines forth. In it all of us are welcomed and understood as we are with all our sins and limitations. We can know with certainty that we are chosen and loved. Contemplating that heart, we renew our first love: the memory of that time when the Lord touched our souls and called us to follow him, the memory of the joy of having cast the nets of our life upon the sea of his Word.

The Heart of the Good Shepherd tells us that his love is limitless; it is never exhausted and it never gives up. There we see his infinite and boundless self-giving; there we find the source of that faithful and meek love which sets free and makes others free; there we constantly discover anew that Jesus loves us even to the end, without ever being imposing.

The Heart of the Good Shepherd reaches out to us, above all to those who are most distant. It is there that the needle of his compass inevitably points to. It is there that we see a particular weakness of his love, which desires to embrace all and lose none.

Contemplating the Heart of Christ, we are faced with the fundamental question of our Priestly life: *Where is my heart directed to?* Our ministry is often full of plans, projects and activities: from catechesis to liturgy, to works of charity, to pastoral and administrative commitments. Amidst all these, we must still ask ourselves: What is my heart set on, where is it directed to, and what is the treasure that it seeks? For Jesus says: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt 6:21).

The great riches of the Heart of Jesus are two: the Father and ourselves. His days were divided between prayer to the Father and encountering people. So too the heart of Christ's Priests knows only two directions: *the Lord and his people.* The heart of the Priest is a heart pierced by the love of the Lord. For this reason, he no longer looks to himself, but is turned towards God and his brothers and sisters. It is no longer a fluttering heart, allured by momentary whims, shunning disagreements and seeking petty satisfactions. Rather, it is a heart rooted firmly in the Lord, warmed by the Holy Spirit, open and available to our brothers and sisters.

To help our hearts burn with the charity of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, dear Fathers, we can train ourselves to do three things, namely, *seek out, include and rejoice*.

The prophet Ezekiel reminds us that God himself goes out in search of his sheep. As the Gospel says, he “goes out in search of the one who is lost” (*Lk 15:4*), without fear of the risks. Without delaying, he leaves the pasture and his regular workday. He does not put off the search. He immediately sets to it; his heart is anxious until he finds that one lost sheep. Having found it, he forgets his weariness and puts the sheep on his shoulders, fully content. Similarly, a Priest must seek out for the lost members of his parish.

Christ loves and knows his sheep. He gives his life for them, and no one is a stranger to him. His flock is his family and his life. He is not a boss to be feared by his flock, but a shepherd who walks alongside them and calls them by name. He wants to gather the sheep that are not yet of his fold. So it is also with the Priest of Christ. He is anointed for his people, not to choose his own projects but to be close to the real men and women whom God has entrusted to him. No one is excluded from his heart, his prayers or his smile. With a father’s loving gaze and heart, he welcomes and includes everyone, and if at times he has to correct, it is to draw people closer. He stands apart from no one, but is always ready to dirty his hands. As a minister of the communion that he celebrates and lives, he does not await greetings and compliments from others, but is the first to reach out, rejecting gossip, judgments and malice. He listens patiently to the problems of his people and accompanies them, sowing God’s forgiveness with generous compassion. He does not scold those who wander off or lose their way, but is always ready to bring them back and to resolve difficulties and disagreements.

Finally, God is full of joy. His joy is born of forgiveness, of life risen and renewed, of prodigal children who breathe once more the sweet air of home. The joy of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is not a joy *for himself* alone, but a joy *for others and with others*, the true joy of love. This is also the joy of the Priest. He is changed by the mercy that he *freely* gives. In prayer he discovers God’s consolation and realizes that nothing is more powerful than his love. He thus experiences inner peace, and is happy to be a channel of mercy, to bring men and women closer to the Heart of God. Sadness for him is not the norm, but only a step along the way; harshness is foreign to him, because he is a shepherd after the meek Heart of God.

Dear Fathers, in the Eucharist that we celebrate daily, we need to rediscover each day our identity as shepherds. In every Mass, we need to make our own the words of Christ: “This is my body, which is given up for you.” Our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should help us become good shepherds after the heart of Jesus. Let us constantly renew the promises that we made at our Priestly ordination during this month.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Major Archbishop Visited our Eparchy: Our dear Major Archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry arrived in our Eparchy on 6 May 2017. He had lunch at FCC Sanjoe Provincial House, Azhakiyamandapam. He visited the ailing Mother Maria FCC and prayed for her. Thereafter, around 4.00 pm he visited the CMC Vice Provincial House at Thuckalay. Around 5.00 pm he met all the Religious Sisters who are working in the Eparchy at KKSSS, Kalluvilai and shared some pieces of information about the Syro-Malabar Church. The Priests’ meeting was also arranged at KKSSS, Kalluvilai. During his talk, he spoke about the situation of the Universal Church and about the Priestly life in the Syro-Malabar Church. At the end of meeting, Mr. Varghese Innocent and his family who funded the constructions at Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai were introduced to all the

Priests. The meeting ended with supper. Next day, on 7 May 2017 Major Archbishop had breakfast at Bishop's House along with some invited guests.

Solemn Blessing and Inauguration of Sinai Retreat Centre: The Inauguration of Sinai Retreat Centre took place on 7 May 2017. A solemn reception was accorded the Cardinal and other invited guests: Mr. Varghese and his Family, and Rev. Br. Mario Joseph Suleiman from Muringoor Retreat Centre, at 10.00am. The Major Archbishop inaugurated and blessed the Retreat Centre. During a brief public meeting that followed, I welcomed the Major Archbishop and other dignitaries formally. I also expressed our gratitude to Mr. Varghese Innocent and his family for sponsoring the Retreat Centre. At 11.30am, there was a concelebrated Holy Qurbana presided over by the Cardinal. The afternoon session was presided over by Br. Mario Joseph Suleiman and ended with Eucharistic blessing at 4.00 pm.

I sincerely thank all the Fathers and Sisters who made this function as a momentous and historic event for the Eparchy by your hard work and your presence. A special word of thanks goes to Rev. Fr. Mijo Puthenpurayil, Director of Sinai Retreat Centre, Rev. Fr. Printo Kurias, Assistant Director of Sinai Retreat Centre, other Fathers, Sisters and lay people who shouldered various responsibilities to make the programme meaningful to the people. The Eparchy wants to place on record the generous help of Mr. Varghese Innocent who spent nearly 70 lakhs for the construction of the Retreat Centre. Let us make good use of it by sending regularly our people to the Centre for various spiritual animation programmes.

Welcome to New Priests: The new Priests of the Eparchy, Rev. Fr. Vinu D. Joseph and Rev. Fr. John Joseph were welcomed to the presbyterium on 9 May 2017. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Proto-Syncellus, felicitated them. We whole-heartedly welcome our new Priests and wish them fruitful ministry in the Eparchy.

Farewell to Rev. Fathers: During the Priests' Conference held on 9 May 2017, five Fathers who worked in the Eparchy for varying years were given farewell. These Fathers are: Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumpuram, Rev. Fr. Kurian Kunnumpuram MST, Rev. Fr. Joseph Thannippara MST, Rev. Fr. Peter Kizhakkeyil and Rev. Fr. Felix Arulnathan SDB. They left our Eparchy and went to their own respective Eparchies or Congregations. As an expression of our gratitude, Rev. Fr. Joseph Santhosh felicitated them on behalf of everyone in the Eparchy for their dedicated ministry and hard work. I am grateful to all for them for sacrificing their time, energy and talents to build up our Eparchy.

Meeting of *Kaikars* and Accountants: One day training programme for *Kaikars* and Accountants was held on 14 May 2017. The programme also included Holy Qurbana. 61 members from different parishes participated in this meeting. I congratulate the Fathers who encouraged them to take part in this meeting.

Vacation Ministry of our Major Seminarians: The Major Seminarians spent nearly a month in our Eparchy. They went to the parishes for Easter ministry. They helped to solemnise the Priestly Ordination ceremonies. They had work experience at Sangamam. They were involved in data collection in the parishes. They also animated the VBS training programme for the teachers and played key roles in organizing VBS in the parishes. Their presence was the moments of blessing for our Eparchy. I was happy to see how our younger brothers were active and alive during their stay in the Eparchy. After their vacation ministry, the Brothers have returned to their respective seminaries to continue their formation programme. I am grateful to every one of them for their proactive presence and ministry.

Tamil Intensive Course for Sisters: A week long Tamil Intensive Course was organized for the Sisters who were struggling with Tamil language. It was held at Sangamam from 21-27 May 2017. Rev. Fr. Santhosh organised the Course. Qualified teachers and some young people took classes for the Sisters. 19 Sisters took part in this course and they expressed their happiness and satisfaction for the way the Course was organised. The Sisters benefitted much from it. They were able to improve their reading and speaking skills. I appreciate all the professors and the young people of our Eparchy who helped the Sisters to learn Tamil well. A word of appreciation, gratitude and congratulations goes to Rev. Fr. Santhosh who organized the Tamil course in an attractive, effective and useful way.

Tamil Nadu Board Exam Results: The classes 10 and 12 Board results were declared and all our Catholic Schools performed very well. Hearty congratulations to all our Fathers and Sisters. The good results are indication of the commitment that the Eparchy has towards the education and the upliftment of under-privileged sections of our society. Special word of congratulation goes to St. Alphonsa Higher Secondary School for securing highest mark in Plus Two Exams and St. John Paul II School, Kulasekaram for securing highest mark in SSLC. I congratulate Pulari Matriculation School Shenkottai for producing good results at its maiden appearance in the SSLC examinations. Given below are the results of our schools.

Class X results 2017

Name	Total appeared	Passed	Highest	Remark
John Paul II Kulasekaram - SABS	19	19	496	
St. Alphonsa, Nagercoil	195	195	495	
St. Michael's, Kattathurai - FCC	69	69	494	
Jaya Matha, Christurajapuram	18	18	494	
Sacred Heart, Padanthalumoodu	125	125	493	
APJM HSS, Soosaipuram	81	81	493	
St. Joseph's School, Panpoli -MCBS	105	105	492	
Carmel Matha, Kanyakumari-CMC	85	82	491	
Carmel Jyothi, Colechal - CMC	43	43	490	
Mount Carmel, Muzhucode - CMC	45	45	490	
Mar M. Kavukatt Meml. High School, Varuthattu	54	54	489	
St. James High School, Mankarai	74	74	488	
Holy Family, Mukkootukal	79	79	485	
Pulari Matric School, Puthur	5	5	484	
St Joseph's Pilankalai -CMI	68	67	480	
St. Mary's, Kaliyal - CMI	132	130	475	
St Thomas, Netta - CMI	25	24	472	
Holy Family HS Arukany	26	26	450	

Plus two results 2017

Name	Total	Passed	Highest	Remark
Alphonsa, Nagercoil	375	375	1188	
Sacred Heart, Padanthalumoodu	112	112	1163	
St. Joseph's Matric, Panpoli MCBS	78	78	1149	

APJM HSS, Soosaipuram	51	51	1142	
St. Mary's, Kaliyal CMI	171	163	1096	
Carmel Matha, Kanyakumari CMC	64	64	1095	
Holy Family, Mukkootukal	83	83	1024	

Minor Seminary: The annual vocation camp was held in the Minor Seminary from 23-26 April 2017. 17 Matric and post-matric students from our Eparchy participated in the camp. 11 of them were selected. We have 2 students from Kerala as well. This year, we have 11 students in the first year, 2 in the second year, 5 in the third year and 4 in the fourth year. In this academic year, there will be 22 brothers in the Minor seminary. We thank God for the gift of vocations and let us continue to pray that these Brothers may persevere in their desire to become Priests. We wish the seminary team all the best.

INFORMATION

Training Programme for Parish Council Members: The meeting-cum-training programmes for the Parish Council Members for the three Foranes have been completed. I was informed that many members participated in those sessions. The rest of the Foranes will hold similar meetings according to the dates given below. I request all the Fathers to encourage all the members to participate in the meetings.

DATE	EPARCHY/FORANE	TIME	IN CHARGE
04-06-2017	Padanthalumoodu	2.00 pm to 5.00 pm	Fr. Dency
04-06-2017	Thuckalay-Plankalai	2.00 pm to 5.00 pm	Fr. Sathianesan
18-06-2017	Arukani	2.00 pm to 5.00 pm	Fr. Dency
09-07-2017	Shenkottai Mission	2.00 pm to 5.00 pm	Fr. Sathianesan

Europe Visit: I will be visiting Europe from 1 June to 2 July 2017 for mission appeal. I will take the opportunity to meet friends and to interact with our Fathers and Brothers studying there. I would be happy to visit any of your dear ones working in Europe provided you introduce them to me. In my absence, Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Vicar General, will see to the ordinary running of the Eparchy. Kindly approach him for all the necessary permissions and keep him informed of the various developments in your respective Centres.

Transfers 2017: I made some transfers this year and they will take effect from 24 May 2017. I was happy to meet those Fathers in person and to hand over the transfer letters. I have also given to some Fathers additional responsibilities. I thank you personally for your self-sacrificing ministry you accomplished in your previous parishes and institutions. In a special way, I express my gratitude to Rev. Fr. Christudas for serving the Eparchy as Chancellor and Curia member for nine years. I also welcome Rev. Fr. Thomas Sathianesan as the new Chancellor of the Eparchy.

Mission Appeal to the USA: Rev. Fr. Saji Elambasseril SDB will be leaving for the USA on 2 June for the Salesian Mission appeal. He will also meet the members of the Syro-Malabar communities. He will return to the Eparchy in the first week of September. In his absence, Rev. Fr. Vinu Joseph, Assistant Director, will see to the ordinary running of KKSSS.

Hearty Welcome: I welcome heartily Rev. Frs. Ritto Thoompunkal, Justin Sutheesh, Ajin Jose and Anil Raj Dominic to our Eparchy. For the last one-year, they were serving in the Archeparchy of

Changanassery or in the Eparchy of Kanjirapally. Due to lack of personal we will not be sending the new Priests to Kerala for pastoral ministry this year.

Youth Leaders Training on YOUCAT: Rev. Frs. Santhosh and Ajeesh Attiyil will take part in the youth leaders' YOUCAT training programme at Bangalore from 1-10 June. We wish them God's blessings as they take leave of us.

Sehion Retreat Centre: Rev. Fr. Mijo Puthenpurayil, will be leaving for Sehion Retreat centre, Attapady for three months' spiritual ministry from 4 June 2017. In his absence Fr. Printo will see to the organization of Sinai Retreat Centre. We wish Fr. Mijo God's Blessings.

Episcopal Ordination of Rev. Dr. Fr. Nazarene Soosai, New elect Bishop of Kottar: The Bishop-elect Rev. Fr. Nazarene Soosai visited Bishop's House, Thuckalay on 29 May 2017. The Curia members along some priests and staff of the Bishop's House were present and welcomed him solemnly. He welcomed all the priests, religious and faithful of our eparchy for his Episcopal ordination on Thursday, 29 June 2017 on the premises of the Bishop's House Kottar.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

- 01 June 2017 - Minor Seminary Re-opens
- 03 June 2017 - CRI Recollection for Sisters
- 05 June 2017 - Environment Day
- 10 June 2017 - CRI Recollection for Sisters
- 13 June 2017 - Priests' Conference
- 18 June 2017 - Catechism Examination for Class 10 and Class 12 at Padanthalumoodu
- 25 June 2017 - CML Annual Day celebrations

CONCLUSION

The month of May is coming to a close. We have honoured Mother Mary through various devotional practices during the month. As we enter the month of June, all our students are busy with preparing themselves to enter the portals of their educational institutions to begin another year of learning. I wish them happy schooling. I also remember all the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters who run the various educational institutions in the Eparchy and pray that the new academic year may be fruitful. My wish is that you will be able to form our young people into God-fearing and compassionate human beings. We need to re-dedicate ourselves to enter into the world of the young so that we can instil in them values, which are so essential in today's world.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

