

December 25, 2015

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Greetings from the Bishop's House!

Wishing you MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR 2016. I am sure you had a meaningful Christmas celebration in your parish. With this circular you will find 1) circular of Major Archbishop. 2) Major Archbishop's pastoral letter to be read in our parishes on 3rd January 2016. 3) Diocese pastoral calendar. 4) Syro-Malabar Mission week materials: Envelops, Posters and resource note. I wish everyone to have a meaningful celebration of Syro-Malabar Mission week in our parishes.

NEWS AND EVENTS

a. Diocesan Bible Convention cum Religious Year Exhibition

As we had planned the Diocesan Bible Convention cum Religious Year Exhibition was held on 4th, 5th, and 6th of December 2015 at Sacred Heart Church, Padanthalumood. The team from Potta was there to animate us. I thank in a special way Rev. Fr. Raphael VC and his team for giving us spirit-filled talks. I also thank the animators of the retreat for the Kuzhanthai Iso Iyakkam children.

I am grateful to our VG Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumpuram and his Vanthuparungal team, Rev. Fr. Robins Kuzhikodil, Rev. Fr. Prince Maliyil, and Rev. Fr. Kochumon and the parish team for arranging the venue and making it convenient for the retreatants to participate effectively. Special thanks to Fr. Jomon Mangalamadathil and Kuzhanthai Iso Iyakkam team for organizing the children's retreat.

In a special way I would like to mention Rev. Fr. Felix SDB and his team for organizing the Religious Year exhibition for the catechism children. It was wonderful to see the various types of creative exhibits presenting particular charisms of the religious institutes. I believe many of our children were inspired and hope that many of them will heed to their call to religious life.

Thanks to Rev. Fr. Seby and Rev. Fr. Linslal who made a wonderful presentation about the vocation of the Diocesan priests. It was encouraging to see many children participate in the retreat as well as visit the exhibition. I thank the parish priests, sisters and lay teachers who encouraged their faithful and children to take part in the Bible convention and in the Exhibition.

b. Year of Mercy Inauguration

The inauguration of the Year of Mercy was held on 8th December in Padanthalumood. There were quite many lay men and women representatives besides the fathers present for the inauguration. I thank all the sisters who participated and many of whom made it a point to be present as community and some from even far away places.

My special thanks goes to Rev. Fr. Toji the Coordinator and his team for organizing the event and for getting ready the materials.

On 13th all of our parishes organized a Parish-level celebration of the Inauguration of the Year of Mercy. Thank you dear fathers for your cooperation and interest to lead our people this coming year to a deep experience of God's mercy.

I request all the parishes and pious associations to implement the plans for the year of mercy with zest, and profit from this beautiful year of grace bestowed upon us by our mother the church.

We have declared three of our parishes as pilgrim centres during this year of Mercy: Alphonsa Church, Nagercoil, St. George Church, Munchirai, Sacred Heart church, Padanthalumoodu. The HOLY DOOR of these churches will be kept open. Kindly encourage everyone to make pilgrimage to receive grace and blessing

For receiving a plenary indulgence: Enter the holy door that is designated. It is necessary that the faithful be in the state of grace at least at the time the indulgenced work is completed. A plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day. In order to obtain it, the faithful must, in addition to being in the state of grace:

- a. have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin;
- b. have sacramentally confessed their sins;
- c. receive the Holy Eucharist (it is certainly better to receive it while participating in Holy Mass, but for the indulgence only Holy Communion is required); and pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

It is appropriate, but not necessary, that the sacramental Confession and especially Holy Communion and the prayer for the Pope's intentions take place on the same day that the indulgenced work is performed; but it is sufficient that these sacred rites and prayers be carried out within several days (about 20) before or after the indulgenced act. Prayer for the Pope's intentions is left to the choice of the faithful, but an Our Father and a Hail Mary are suggested. One sacramental Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences, but a separate Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father's intentions are required for each plenary indulgence.

For the sake of those legitimately impeded, confessors can commute both the work prescribed and the conditions required (except, obviously, detachment from even venial sin).

Indulgences can always be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.

Indulgence means the complete remission of all temporal punishment due to sin.

c. Pre-Christmas Gathering and Priests Conference

On the 16th of this month the presbyterium gathered at Sangamam to celebrate in advance the Christmas joy, the birth of our saviour. It was purely a family gathering. Glad to see every one too part in it with lots of enthusiasm and joy. Rev. Fr. Johnsilal, and his team with Rev. Fr. Seby had done a great job organizing the programs, the venue, packing gifts, and preparing lunch. I thank all the fathers and brothers who took pains to look into the details, for decorating the place and so on. Your sacrifice made the day.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. Celebration of Syro-Malabar mission week

Our Syro-Malabar Church is celebrating the Syro-Malabar mission week in January. A pastoral Circular of our Major Archbishop is sent to you regarding the mission week. Kindly read it without fail on 3rd January during the Holy Qurbana. Along with it I am sending posters, envelopes and Syro-Malabar Week resource book for conducting various activities. I had asked the Director and Asst. director of CML to carry out this program through Mission league. Still the support and cooperation of every priest is required in this regard. Syro-Malabar Mission Sunday is celebrated the following Sunday on 10th January and I again remind you dear fathers that a Special Collection for Syro-Malabar Mission has to be made on that day.

2. Inauguration of the new College building

Our college building of St. Alphonsa College of Arts & Science has had a steady progress in its construction. Through thick and thin God has helped us to stand in good stead. Today the institution stands in its own pride serving many poor people of our district.

I am glad to say that the Inauguration of the new College building will be held on January 17th. His Beatitude Cardinal George Alencherry will be the Chief Guest for the function and will join us in thanking God for enabling us to establish such a functional and beautiful edifice that will help in the education of many poor children. Rev. Fr. VG and Rev. Fr. Christudas will be meeting all the fathers Forane-wise to discuss in detail regarding the function and how to bring our faithful and students to the college. Let us all work together to make this event a beautiful and impressive one and the prestige of our new college of our diocese needs to be well made-known in our district.

3. Uraviam prayer books

Kindly use the draft of the New Uraviam prayer book given to you for some trial runs this coming month. We can finalise the prayer book in our February meeting after we share our experiences.

4. Fathers' picnic

We have fixed the date for fathers' picnic on 3rd February 2016. Kindly block this date. Rev. Frs. Alex Puthettu, Kochumon, Sajan and Jomon will be organising the picnic. The picnic spot will be informed later.

5. Pastoral Calendar 2016

Diocese level pastoral calendar is ready and is distributed along with this circular. Kindly give one copy each to all the department and pious associations in your parish. Based on this program may I encourage you to prepare your parish-level annual program. Also take note of the diocese-level program where we need your personal presence.

6. Liturgical Calendar

We have distributed the liturgical wall calendars to all the parishes. If any of you have not received them yet kindly inform Rev. Fr. Justin Cheruvilil. As I mentioned to you the cost of one calendar is Rs. 25/-

INFORMATION

1. Fr. Joseph Santhosh will be in the diocese from 8th January for three months.
2. Brothers from various Major seminaries are in the diocese for Christmas holidays
3. Br. John Joseph, was ordained deacon in the Satna seminary on 20th December. We congratulated and pray for him.
4. Minor Seminary brothers have gone home for Christmas holidays and will return on January 4, 2016
5. Fr. Geo returned from the hospital after a few days of treatment. Let us keep him in our prayers.
6. Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil is not keeping well physically. He needs our prayers.
7. On February 13th a special seminar on Laudato Si' will be conducted by an expert team from Thrissur. All the fathers including the religious, are requested to attend the seminar.

CONCLUSION

The Christmas story speaks of a just man Joseph who planned to quit being the father of the Son of God, because he finds himself unworthy (as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas). Jerome and Origen would say Joseph would have no suspicion on Mary. Joseph is assured by the angel in his dream, "Don't be afraid." Joseph also does not want to expose Mary otherwise. In any case Joseph when reassured, commits himself to God's plan.

In the Kingdom of God, Dreams and Plans form an essential part. Dreams are not for achievements of pride and self-glory. Joseph's dream was an outcome of pondering God's plan in his life. He gives place to God's plan rather than that of his own. Today as priests our call is the same. This is our sacrifice. This is the way we are to be just in front of God. Our plans are meant for the Kingdom of God and not for self-glory.

We have planned much and consolidated them in our Pastoral plan even as we enter the New Year 2016. May we have dreams and plans for our people, for their welfare, and ultimately for the Kingdom of God. The reassuring God is with us all. We are fathers, yes foster fathers like St. Joseph.

I wish you all a Year filled with the Mercy of God and a year committed to God's plan.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay