



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb

Diocese of Thuckalay

Bishop's House, P B No: 12, Thuckalay PO,
Kanya kumari Dt- 629 175, Tamil Nadu, India

Ref. No. Priests/GR/143/2023

28 February 2023

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

We have entered the holy season of Lent on 20 February 2023 – a time to prepare ourselves to reflect on the suffering, passion, and death of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of his public life, Jesus fasted and prayed for 40 days and 40 nights. We observe the Lenten season, recalling this event. Lent can be viewed as a time of grace given to us by God in order to live that aspect of the Christian life known as a “change of heart” in a more deliberate and conscious manner. It is also a time to focus on our identity. Searching for our identity is part of life. Identity involves discovering who we are as persons and what our role is by answering these questions: Who am I, and why am I here? Growth in our awareness of our Catholic identity is a lifelong process that shifts as we change. It is rooted in baptism, where we are transformed into our true identity as sons and daughters of the Father. St Paul, in his Letter to the Ephesians, challenges us to put away our former lives and put on the new self. In other words, he tells us to turn from our sinful ways and take on our new life in Christ. In so doing, we become one with Christ, where we find our true identity. We accept this challenge during Lent as we journey with Christ through life's difficulties to eternal life.

In our Syro-Malabar Church, the observance of Lent begins on Monday after the Sunday called *pethurtha* with the celebration of the penitential service of putting ashes in the form of a cross on the forehead. The Syriac word *pethurtha* means ‘looking back’ or ‘repentance’. Real repentance is the result of deep faith in God. Faith is expressed through works of charity. Our faith in God must enable us to do acts of charity and to love God and love one another. Faith without works is dead. That is why St James says in his letter, “faith by itself, if it has no work, is dead” (James 2:17). The last part of the Prayer of the Faithful during Lent, “Help us to observe this Lenten season with sincere prayer, brotherly love, and self-sacrifice,” reminds us to meditate upon three important aspects of the season of Lent and put them into practice in our daily lives. I know you have heard them a number of times. But it is essential that we discuss them at the beginning of every Lenten season so that we are able to make good use of this holy time of grace.

In the first place, we must be in constant communion with God through prayer. One of the main purposes of Lent is to be with God. This is possible only through deep personal prayer. Some of the types of prayer are meditation, repetitive prayer, and congregational prayer. Meditation is a form of personal prayer that consists in closing the eyes and ears of the mind to all else, except the object of one's devotion. For us Catholics, this object of devotion is God or Jesus Christ. At prayer time, our speech is addressed to ourselves and is intended to shake off our listlessness. Some of us are intellectually aware of God.

Nobody has ever seen God face-to-face. We desire to realise Him and become one with Him through meditation.

Repetitive prayer is another form of personal prayer. Constant repetition of a word-symbol connoting God or whatever aspect of it appeals to one with concentration till it results in such a silence of intellect, will, and feeling that the divine Word can be uttered within the soul. It should be part of our spiritual exercises. If the word is simply repeated as a whole and not broken up or undone by discursive analysis, the fact for which the word stands will end up presenting itself to the soul in the form of an integral intuition. For us Catholics, this word could be Jesus or phrases like "Jesus I love you," "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me," "My Lord and My God," etc.

Among all the different types of congregational prayers, the most pleasing and acceptable form of prayer to God is the Holy Qurbana. We are all called to the common priesthood of Christ through baptism. Therefore, it is a privilege for us as baptised Catholics to participate with greater awareness and knowledge in the celebration of the Holy Qurbana, offered by the priest who shares in the ministerial priesthood of Christ. Regarding the participation of the people in Holy Qurbana, Vatican II teaches: "For this reason, the Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at the mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers, they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing with devotion and full collaboration" (SC 48).

During this holy season of Lent, let us make a firm commitment to participate in the Holy Qurbana with greater devotion. The best way to express our love for the Church is to participate genuinely in the Holy Qurbana, as the Church is built on the foundation of the mysteries of the Holy Qurbana. That is why the Fathers of the Church taught us: "Eucharist makes the Church." When the faithful genuinely love Holy Qurbana, they love the Church. This love for the Holy Qurbana and the Church is love for Jesus Christ because the Church is his mystical body and he is its head.

Besides, the Holy Qurbana, during this season of Lent, let us be more fervent and regular in our daily family prayer. As followers of Christ, our unity and love are manifested when all the members of the family gather on their knees to recite the Rosary, read portions from the Holy Bible, and invoke God's blessings upon each member of the family. It is said that a family that prays together stays together. I also urge everyone to find some time, either in the morning or before retiring to bed, for personal meditation. Our quiet moments can bring about much-needed changes in our lives. Let us remember that our daily family prayers and other forms of personal prayer are extensions of the Holy Qurbana.

The second aspect of this season of Lent is the practise of charity. We can manifest our Christian life through our love for one another. I wish to bring to your attention just one aspect of love, namely, forgiving love. Let us pray for the gift of forgiveness for those who harm us, for those who do not like us, and for those whom we consider our enemies. It is essential that we forgive others in order that our prayers may be acceptable to God and our mistakes be forgiven. The Lord says: "If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6:15). How much love and affection have we received from others on numerous occasions in the past, and yet how few people hate us and work against us? Let us forgive them and pray for the gift of forgiveness for them and for us.

When we meditate on the forgiving nature of love, it is good to focus on the sacrament of reconciliation. It is a sacrament that reconciles us with God, with one another, and with ourselves. Frequent confession not only obtains remission for our sins but also helps and strengthens us to overcome temptations and

avoid occasions of sin. Approaching the sacrament of confession as a family is something praiseworthy. As we encourage our youth to frequent this sacrament, we should also instil in them the importance of prayer and sacrifice, the core values of Lent. I advise all of you to make a good confession during this holy season of Lent so that we can worthily take part in the Easter celebrations that culminate this season.

The third aspect of this season of Lent is self-sacrifice. The suffering and death of Jesus on the cross were a sacrifice for the remission of our sins and the sins of the whole world. We, who participate in the same sacrifice offered by the Lord Jesus, must become like Jesus and cultivate the same attitude as that of Jesus. St Faustina reminds us of this when she teaches us to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet. The trials and tribulations of our daily lives have a redemptive value in the sight of God. If we realise this and accept them for the good of our family, our community, and our Church, then we become truly blessed. Sacrifice also implies fasting. It does not mean merely giving up certain types of food items. In fact, true fasting is “tearing one’s heart and returning to God” with true repentance for one’s sins (Joel 2:13). It is “breaking unjust fetters, freeing the oppressed, sharing one’s bread with the hungry, clothing with the naked, and a home with the homeless, and not turning away from the needy relatives” (Is 58:6-7). During this season of Lent, as pastors, we can help our faithful make some tangible sacrifices, like giving up smoking if they are smokers, giving up drinking if they indulge in alcohol, giving up some items from their daily intake of food, etc., and contributing the proceeds thereof for the welfare of some needy people in our neighbourhood. It is also a useful practice to put more effort and energy into our work during this season because work is a means of taking part in the creative work of God.

The Church, during this Lenten period, exhorts us to subdue our carnal desires and overcome temptations through fervent prayer and fasting, penance, and almsgiving. Jesus Christ, who overcame the temptations unleashed by the Evil One through prayer and fasting, should become our model. The season of Lent invites us to reject the path of sin and follow the path of salvation by worthily receiving the holy sacraments that Jesus instituted for us. As mentioned earlier, it is through wholehearted participation in meditation, repetitive prayer, the Holy Qurbana, reading and meditating on the Sacred Scripture and receiving the sacrament of reconciliation that we are able to free ourselves from the bondage of sin and grow spiritually. Let our prayers, acts of penance, and all other good works help us open a new path to get closer to God and our fellow human beings. Through a meaningful observation of Lent, let us prepare ourselves to enjoy the peace and happiness of the risen Lord.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Talent Fest for AIDACT schools and World cancer day celebration: On 3 February 2023, KKSSS in collaboration with AIDACT conducted a Talent Fest for differently abled children to expose their hidden talents by conducting various competitions at Aseer Auditorium, Kalluvilai. Children from 7 schools participated in the competition. Karunai Illam, Nithiravilai got the overall championship this year. On the same day, cancer awareness rally was conducted from Karunalayam to Aseer Auditorium, Kalluvilai to provide awareness and knowledge about cancer to the people on world cancer day. Mulagummoodu Panchayath President flagged off the rally. Around 100 people participated in it. I appreciate Fr. Aby Poovathummoottil for organizing the programme well.

On-going formation Programme for Priests: ‘The on-going formation of priests is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary with the training program which aimed at ordination’ (Ref. PDV no.71). The Presbyterium of our Eparchy gathered together for a two-day exercise at Sangamam on 06-07 February 2023. Rev Dr. Jerry Rosario SJ, a well known theologian, pastor, spiritual counsellor, writer, social

activist, motivator and civil lawyer, animated the priests on priestly responsibility and graces needed for radical pastors. On the evening of the first day by 06.30 pm, Priests' conference was held.

The next day 07 February, was spent in evaluation and presentation of the report of the activities of various departments and pious associations of the Eparchy. It was for second time that the Eparchy spent full-day for this exercise. The Directors of departments came well-prepared with PowerPoint presentation and beautifully presented one-year activities of their respective departments. The presbyterium discussed and gave valuable suggestions. Everyone felt happy and proud to have been informed of the enormous work that is being carried out in the various departments. I am grateful to all the Fathers for attending and benefitting from this two-day formative programme.

10th Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Philip Kodiyanthara: The 10th death anniversary of Rev. Fr. Philip Kodiyanthara was commemorated on 09 February 2023 at Kayalpuram. I celebrated the *requiem* Holy Qurbana at 11.00 am. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, the Vicar General, along with other 10 priests from our eparchy concelebrated the Holy Qurbana. Representatives of teachers of aided schools of the eparchy were also present for the memorial Holy Qurbana. Then we prayed the Office for the Dead at the tomb of Rev. Fr. Philip Kodiyanthara. I thank all the Fathers who took personal initiative to participate in the event. Let us continue to pray for the departed soul of our former Eparchial Administrator.

Silver Jubilee Celebration of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay: The conclusion of Silver Jubilee of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay was solemnly celebrated on 12 February 2023. The thanksgiving Holy Qurbana celebrated by me, was concelebrated by Fr. Geo Chuzhikunnel, the first priest in charge of St. Mary's mission and Fr. Ajin Jose the acting priest in charge. The Holy Qurbana celebration was followed by the Public Meeting presided by me. Fr. Geo Chuzhikunnel, Sr. Cicy Maria FCC and Mr. Siby Michael the pioneer missionaries of St. Mary's Church, Thuckalay were the chief guests of the meeting. The cultural programmes performed by the catechism students made the event colourful. The silver Jubilee endowment was given to the students who passed the 10th public exam with good marks. With the fellowship meal, the programme came to an end by 02.00 pm. I appreciate and thank wholeheartedly Fr. Ajin Jose and the parishioners, for organizing the event very well.

SMYM: Trainers' Training and Workshop: Rev. Fr. Arul Antony sdb, the director the Trichy Vazhikatti, conducted a workshop for the SMYM central and a few selected members of youth on 12 February 2023 at SMYM Office Kalluvilai, from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm. Twelve members benefited from it. The programme is part of the series of training programme for the selected youth members aimed at making them trainers. I thank Fr. Santhosh, the director of SMYM for coordinating well the training programme.

Picnic of Priests: The priests from our Eparchy had a two-day picnic to Hogenakkal in Dharmapuri on 13 and 14 February 2023. With the help of Frs. Tobin and Jomon, Fr. Peter Kizhakkal arranged our breakfast at Virudhunagar mission. Mr. Anil, who is a friend and benefactor of the Eparchy, offered lunch to all the Fathers on 13 February at Salem. The owner of CS Grand resort at Dharmapuri extended his generosity in offering the resort to all of us for the stay and relaxes in a low budget. I sincerely thank Frs. Aby, Tobin, Martin, Jose Muttathupadam, Sumesh and Toji Sebastian for the troubles taken to organize the two-day programme.

Life orientation and career guidance programme for catechesis students: Life orientation and career guidance programme for catechesis students were held on 18 February 2023. For Padanthalumoodu and Nithiravilai Foranes, the programme was held at Sacred Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu. For Arukany, Manjalumoodu and Kaliyal Foranes, it was held at Ozanam College for Higher Education,

Utharamcode and for Soosaipuram and Thuckalay-pilankalai Foranes, the programme was held at SMYM community hall, Kalluvilai. The entire programme was guided and lead by Don Bosco Vazhikatti, Trichy in collaboration with TYES. 45 students participated in the programme. I thank Fr. Abhilash for coordinating well the courses at different foranes.

Eucharistic Convention at Soosaipuram: One day Eucharist Convention was held at SABS Provincial House, Soosaipuram on 18 February 2023. It was conducted in the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary celebration of the founder of SABS Congregation, Venerable Mar Thomas Kurialacherry. In the morning Fr. Benedict Analil animated the Eucharistic convention which was followed by the Solemn Holy Qurbana, celebrated by me. In the afternoon, Eucharistic Adoration and Procession took place in the presence General Councillor Rev. Sr. Elsa Paikada SABS and of all Sisters of SABS Shanthal Province. Around 200 lay faithful from the parishes and mission stations where the SABS Sisters render their service were present for the Convention. I thank the Provincial Rev. Sr. Rose Martin and all Sisters who took initiative to promote the Eucharistic devotion among the faithful of the Eparchy.

Liturgy of the Hours revised text's practice for Religious: The newly revised text of the Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro Malabar Church came to effect from 19 February 2023 onwards. Therefore the Eparchial liturgical commission organized a one day practice of prayers and hymns of the newly revised text for the religious sisters of the Eparchy on 18 February 2023. Rev. Sr. Cilia FCC, the President of CRI welcomed all. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal inaugurated the sessions and Fr. Justin Cheruvilil, the director of Liturgical commission introduced the text and explained the changed made in the new text. Around 40 Sisters participated in the one day programme. I thank Fr. Justin for taking initiatives to organise the classes.

Bible Quiz for Students at Eparchial level: On 19 February 2023, Eparchial level Bible Quiz competition was conducted for the catechesis students at Sacred Heart Forane church, Padanthalumoodu. 455 students attended this Quiz programme. I congratulate the coordinators and especially the catechesis teachers who made good efforts to prepare the students.

Presbyteral Council General Body Meeting: The VI General Body Meeting of the first Presbyteral Council was held on 25 February 2023 at Sangamam. All the members gathered together in order to reflect and deliberate on following agenda: Mission in the extended territories – methods and challenges; Topics for the Eparchial Assembly and Priests' Welfare. The Secretary Rev. Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal presented the agenda and invited the members for an open discussion. The members actively participated in the discussions and offered fruitful suggestions for the good of the Eparchy.

Silver Jubilee Inauguration of Jothi Nilayam, Palappallam: Jothi Nilayam, School for the intellectual disabled, Palappallam turns to 25 years of its establishment. The inauguration of its Silver Jubilee and 25th Annual day were celebrated on 25 February 2023 at 05.00pm. I presided over the meeting and the occasion was felicitated by the presence of Rev. Sr. Elsa Paikada SABS, General Councillor, Aluva, Rev. Sr. Rose Martin SABS, Provincial Superior and a good number of priests and religious. The public meeting was followed by the variety entertainments presented by the students. I congratulate the school administrative team and entire staff for organizing well the event.

Basic Training Course for Catechesis Teachers: Centre for Catechesis is conducting various programmes for the students as well as teachers for deepening their faith. In this academic year from January 2023 onwards the centre for catechesis started a Basic Course for all teachers namely Basic Training for Catechesis Teachers (BTCT). The teachers must attend 6 days on Sundays to complete this

course. In the first batch 56 teachers have successfully participated in the training programme. The second batch began on 26 February 2023 and 60 teachers are already registered for this session. I thank Fr. Abilash and Fr. Jacob Ayyamathra for coordinating this course and all the participants for their readiness to join in this course.

Mathru Jyothis Seminar at Kaliyal: A half day seminar for the Mathru Jyothis members was conducted at St. Mary's Forane Church, Kaliyal for the mothers of Arukani and Kaliyal Foranes on 26 February 2023. The seminar started at 02.00 pm. Rev. Fr. Sebastian Ittiyappara, the director of Family Apostolate from the Archeparchy of Thalassery, animated the seminar. Around 150 members participated in it. The resource person mainly focused on the challenges that the mothers face in today's world and the need of transmitting the faith through the practical formation to our children. I thank Fr. Tinu, the Forane Vicar for this new initiative in the formation of our people.

Presbytery Blessing at Theni: Theni district was entrusted to the Eparchy of Kanjirapally in June 2019 and Fr. Benny Thattampampil was appointed as director. FCC Sisters from Idukki Province started their mission work in Sukkangalpatti, near Chinnamanoor. Staying in a rented house they started visiting villages and houses and started two tuition centres in nearby villages. Meanwhile a land of 2.30 acres was bought by them in Jangalpatti and construction of a convent was started. At the same time one acre land was bought for the church adjacent to the convent land. Blessing of the convent was held on 22 January 2022 by me in the presence of Mar Jose Pulickal. On the same day foundation stone for the presbytery was laid. Construction of the presbytery started in June and it is now completed. The newly constructed presbytery was blessed on 26 February 2023 at 04.00pm by Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of Kanjirapally. From the Eparchy of Kanjirapally, the Curia members and Kumali Forane Fathers were present for the ceremony. From our Eparchy, along with me, Fr. Thomas Powathupampil, priests and religious from extended mission territories were present. I congratulate and thank sincerely Fr. Benny Thattapampil for his tireless efforts to realize the dream of constructing a presbytery at Theni. Gaining a new vigour and enthusiasm we look forward for a new evangelical awakening and spiritual growth in Theni mission.

INFORMATION

- **Fr. Christudas** is sent to Rameswaram mission to assist Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil on 01 February 2023.
- **Fr. Shijo Aikkarakunnel** is nominated as the contact person from our Eparchy to the Syro Malabar theological forum.
- **Fr. James (Shan) Ayalloor** from the Eparchy of Kanjirappally is appointed as the Asst. Director of Theni mission. We welcome him wholeheartedly to the Eparchy.
- **Fr. Rocky Kulangara MCBS** is appointed as the Assistant Director of Anbu illam, Shenkottai. We welcome him wholeheartedly to the Eparchy.
- **Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil** is incardinated recently in the Eparchy of Palai. But he will continue his ministry at Rameswaram in our Eparchy. We always admire his missionary zeal, spiritual life, commitment, hard work and love for the Mission.
- **Fr. Mijo Puthenpurayil** is staying presently at St. Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal for rest.
- **I visited our major seminarians**, Bros. Albin Jose, Linto and Bibin at Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee.
- **Holy Qurbana in Tamil was celebrated at Madurai mission** (St. Alphonsa Hall, Ariyur) for the first time on 11 February 2023. Fr. Peter Kizhakkal, the mission coordinator was the main celebrant and Fr. Jebaneesh concelebrated.

- **Four deacons from Ramanathapuram Diocese** went back to their home diocese after one month diaconate ministry on 28 February 2023. After one week of intensive Tamil language course, they were gone for pastoral ministry at four parishes: Manjalumoodu, Thettiyodu, Nithiravilai and Kalliyoor. Then in the last week they were sent to Tenkasi mission. I thank all the Fathers who organized their programme and accommodated them in parishes.
- **Rev. Sr. Rosily LSDP**, the Superior General of LSDP congregation visited our Diocese and had a short meeting at Bishop's House on 28 February 2023.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

13 March	-	Forane Vicars' Online Meeting
14 March	-	Liturgy of the Hours – Practice for Presbyterium
20 March	-	Forane Priests' Conference (Soosaipuram – Thuckalay Pilankalai)
21 March	-	Forane Priests' Conference (Padanthalumoodu – Nithiravilai)
22 March	-	Forane Priests' Conference (Manjalumoodu – Arukani – Kaliyal)

Liturgy of the Hours – Newly Revised Text Practice for Presbyterium

Place: Sangamam

Dates: 14 March 2023, Tuesday

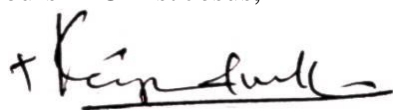
Time: 09.30 am – 01.30 pm

CONCLUSION

As we have already reflected, we are preparing ourselves for the great feast of the Resurrection. In the beginning of next month, we will be entering Holy Week, remembering and celebrating the Lord's Passion and Death. Death precedes resurrection. Our bodies will undoubtedly perish one day. But our faith says we will participate in the resurrection of our Saviour. St Paul declares, "All of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death" (Rom 6:3). Even when living in our bodies, we are called to die. As disciples of the Lord, we are to take up our daily cross (Lk 9:23). Our former selves will be crucified with the Lord (Rom 6:6). We must live as if we have died to sin (Rom 6:2).

During this season of Lent, may I wish all of you, dear Fathers, a blessed time of spiritual journey with the Lord, into the desert and also towards Jerusalem, where we will join with him in his passion, death, and resurrection.

With my prayers and blessings,
Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

