



# 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/116/2020**

31 December 2020

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

As the year 2020 is ebbing away, we are entering the new year 2021. Whenever we end a year and begin another year, we think of the wonderful gift of God, namely, time. Although God is above time, we are blessed with time with which we can grow, develop and become more humane and spiritual. While wishing you a prosperous and grace-filled New Year, let me remind you that we need to make good use of the precious gift of time that God has generously given to us.

The new year is a gift, totally free and full of promises. The whole lot of opportunities and possibilities lie ahead of us and it is up to us as individuals and communities, to decide what sort of history we will fill it up with, day by day and moment by moment. Certainly our own involvement or 'yes' will be the determining factor towards the actualization of God's plan as it was in the life of our Blessed Mother Mary. No one likes stagnation but rather would like to see our institutions and our apostolate move forward. Every year as we grow chronologically, it is important that we set targets also to grow into better human beings emotionally, mentally, spiritually, intellectually and in being evangelizers of the young effectively. I wish and pray that the future sees us moving ahead and making steady progress in personal life, be it health, professional growth or priestly life.

The message of God's constant and caring presence that we meditate during Christmas season is reflected in the inspiring acts of frontline and other essential workers the past year. Their sacrifice and heroism have been a source of courage and perseverance during months of hardships, uncertainties and other challenges. The arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines is a blessing of renewed hope and a much-awaited answer to people's prayers and aspirations of getting back to our normal lives.

The outlook for the new year is bright, but depends on us to make it a reality. It allows us to turn the page of time and history to brace ourselves for what better things it offers us. One good thing the pandemic taught us is that we are all in this together, and the best answer to its disastrous effect is our unity and solidarity. Pope Francis said recently in the backdrop of a divided and polarized world, that "a crisis can be overcome by the antibodies of solidarity." This was the central message in his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, – the call to global fraternity and social friendship, that all people will live together as a family, as brothers and sisters to one another, treating each other with dignity and equality.

Furthermore, in his message for 2021 World Day of Peace, Our Holy Father promotes a culture of care as a path to peace, urging us against the prevailing culture of indifference to the sufferings of others, of waste, of hatred and confrontation, to practice the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. Let this culture of care start in the family, the fundamental nucleus of our society, where we first learn how to live together and relate to each other with mutual love and respect.

The new year brings a sense of renewal, a chance to reflect on who we are as people of faith and how we might become better followers of Christ. The lessons of the past year highlighted our global interconnectedness and solidarity, our belief in the sanctity of life and respect for the dignity of every human person. We learned that showing our love for one another, friend or stranger, can be as simple as wearing a mask. The inconvenience of such practice is far outweighed by the opportunity to show our regard for the wellbeing of one another.

The Feast of Mary, the Mother of God ushers the start of the new year. This is a perfect time to invoke the loving intercession and maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary to help us join together in mutual resolution to live the Gospel values of faith, hope and charity, as well as to grow in our commitment as responsible stewards of God's gift of creation and to pursue the common good.

The Solemnity of Epiphany that we mark on 3 January is a celebration of God's manifestation of Himself through His son Jesus Christ. Epiphany refers to God's Self-revelation as well as to the revelation of Jesus as His Son. It is an older celebration than the feast of Christmas, having originated in the East in the late second century. In Italy and Spain, the gifts traditionally associated with the Christmas season are exchanged today, on the feast of the Epiphany. Among Italians, it is believed that the gifts are brought by the old woman, *Befana* (from Epiphany), whereas Spanish custom attributes the gifts to the kings or magi. In the Western Church, the feast commemorates the coming of the Magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. In the Eastern Church, the feast also commemorates the baptism of Christ. The angels revealed Jesus to the shepherds, and the star revealed him to the Magi, who had already received hints of him from Jewish scriptures. Later, God the Father revealed Jesus' identity to Israel at his baptism in the Jordan. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus revealed himself as the promised Messiah. These multiple revelations are all suggested by the Feast of the Epiphany. The Epiphany can be looked on as a symbol for our pilgrimage through life to Christ. The feast invites us to see ourselves as images of the Magi, a people on a journey to Christ.

The year 2021 is important for each one of us as it is the silver jubilee year of the establishment of our Eparchy. The preparations for the great jubilee already began in 2019 and we shall conclude the celebrations in the month of November 2021. As you are aware, our Eparchy was established by the papal Bull *Apud Indorum* on 11 November 1996. It was erected separating the area of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry that extended over to the state of Tamil Nadu. The then Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry Fr George Alencherry was appointed the first bishop of the new Eparchy. Since then our eparchy has grown not only in numbers but also in area. Today almost one third area of the State of Tamil Nadu comes under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy. The number of priests and religious have grown. Hence, it is a moment of thanksgiving to the Almighty for the great things that He has done for us. We need to intensify our preparations so that when we conclude the celebrations we have made great strides that would help our faithful to come closer to the person of Christ.

May the New Year that we are about to enter in be a blessed and peaceful one for us all. We have many things to look forwards to during the course of the new year. Each of us will have our own personal wish list and expectations. I pray that the new year may inspire each one of us to dispel the frustrations, sufferings, grief and loneliness of those who have lost loved ones due to the coronavirus pandemic. Christmas season is a great reminder of God's infinite love for us in the incarnation of Jesus. Born as our Saviour, he came to bring light, joy and peace to the world! May God bless us with the peace, joy and hope 2021 brings. Happy New Year!

## NEWS AND EVENTS

**Renovation of Kudukachivilai Church Hall:** Fr Subin Puthenpurackal, Priest in-charge Kudukachivilai, has taken the initiative to renovate the church. After my last Holy Qurbana in the present church on 10 December 2020, Fr Subin was permitted to demolish some part of the structure and renovate the Church. I wish him God's

blessings and let us assure our prayers for the successful completion of the work with the help of parishioners and benefactors.

**Pre-Christmas Gatherings in Thenkasi and Madurai Missions:** Pre-Christmas celebration for priests and religious of Thenkasi Mission was held on 12 December 2020. All the Fathers and Sisters participated in the meeting and shared the joy of Christmas.

Concentrating on the mission work in Madurai, Holy Qurbana was celebrated for the faithful of St Chavara Mission Church at Deepaham, Madurai on 13 December 2020. After the Holy Qurbana, Fr Babu Thattil CMI organised a brief Christmas gathering for the parishioners. I congratulate Fr Babu and the parishioners for the great progress they are making. At about 1.00 pm all the Fathers and Sisters working in the extended mission territory gathered at the new rented house at K. Pudur, Madurai. I officially blessed the House. Rev. Fr Anil Raj will be staying there and will organise the Madurai Mission activities. We had a very fruitful sharing of mission activities and Christmas gathering.

**Gathering for Youth:** Dear fathers, after having elevated the Kaliyal Forane, all the youth were coordinated and gathered at Kaliyal on December 6, 2020 and officially inaugurated Forane Youth gathering. I participated in the youth gathering and many youth were participated. I congratulate and extend sincere thanks to Fr. Ajeesh Attiyil, the Forane Coordinator and Fr. Tinu Kottackaparampil CMI, the Forane Vicar.

Pre-Christmas Gathering for the youth was organized at Soosapuram on 13 December 2020. Christmas Carol singing competition and a short film competition were conducted. The winners were awarded prizes. More than three hundred youth participated. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil presided over the meeting and distributed the prizes. Rev. Fr Subin Puthenpurackal, Forane Director, Rev. Fr Antony Jose, Rev. Fr. Joseph Santhosh and the youth of the Soosapuram Forane organised the programme. I congratulate all for its successful conduct.

**Blessing of the Newly Constructed Church at Manjalumoodu:** As the result of the great enthusiasm of the parish priest and the hard work of the parishioners, we have a very beautiful new church at Manjalumoodu. It was consecrated and blessed on 21 December 2020. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam, Rev. Fr Tinu Kottackaparampil CMI and Rev. Fr Augustine Thalodil concelebrated with me during the consecration ceremony. I congratulate all the parishioners and Fr Augustine Thalodil, parish priest. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Fr Augustine Thalodil and the tremendous development that Little Flower Forane Church, Manjalumoodu has made. Fr Augustine was appointed in 2015 at Manjalumoodu Forane Parish and he totally changed the face of Manjalumoodu parish with his prayerful life of simplicity and hard work. He was able to unite all the families of the parish. Hereceived the cooperation of parishioners for the construction of parish hall, community hall, kurisadi, entrance gate, cemetery and finally the beautiful church. I sincerely thank the parishioners and Fr Augustine for his love for the Eparchy and for the faithful.

**Christmas Holy Qurbana:** This year, I celebrated Christmas mid-night Holy Qurbana at Amala Maria Church, Cheenivilai on 24 December 2020. On Christmas day, I visited St Michael Mission at Vellambi and celebrated Holy Qurbana at 7.00 am.

**Baptism in the New Mission at O Kovilpatti:** It is a great joy to record that nine members joined in St. Joseph's Mission Church, O Kovilpatti at Viruthunagar by receiving baptism during the eve Holy Qurbana of Christmas 2020. Four members received Holy Communion and the marriage of two couples was rectified and blessed along with Holy Qurbana. The Christmas was solemnly celebrated and around 65 persons attended in the Holy Qurbana. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil was the celebrant of the liturgical ceremony and he has given baptism to these persons. Dear fathers, these are the real fruits of evangelization. It shows that evangelization is

possible everywhere and forever. I sincerely thank and congratulate Fr. Peter Kizhakkal for his missionary zeal and enthusiasm and wish him God's blessings for his future ministry.

**UCC - Pre-Christmas Celebration:** United Christian Council arranged a pre-Christmas celebration at Peyodu on 19 December 2019. All the Catholic Bishops, heads of other Christian denominations and representatives from the UCC were present for the gathering. Rev. Fr. Sathianesan represented our Eparchy. All the Church leaders were given opportunities to give brief Christmas messages during the celebration.

**Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkeyil:** The seventh death anniversary of Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkeyil was commemorated on 14 December 2020 at Mankulam. Rev. Fr Printo Kurias celebrated Holy Qurbana in the parish church. After the Holy Qurbana he prayed the Office for the Dead at the tomb of Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkeyil. Let us remember the departed soul of Fr Thomas and pray for his eternal life. We are grateful to Fr Printo for representing the Eparchy.

### Pre-Christmas Gatherings:

- **Pre-Christmas Gathering of CRI:** Pre-Christmas gathering for the CRI unit of Thuckalay was held on 17 December 2020 at CMC Convent, Kalluvilai at 10.00 am. It was an occasion for the Sisters of all the congregations to come together and wish one another and share the joy of Christmas. I used this special occasion to greet them Merry Christmas and to appreciate their hard work in the parishes. I thank and congratulate Rev. Fr Tinu CMI, President of CRI, Rev. Sr Ancit SABS, Vice President, and all other committee members of the CRI. I specially thank Rev. Mother Vigi CMC who arranged this meeting at Kalluvilai and gave a great treat to all.
- **Gathering of Fathers:** Christmas gathering of Fathers was held on 13 December 2020 at Sangamam and it started at 6.00pm with a procession carrying the Child Jesus. During the Christmas celebration, a variety of games were conducted and all the Fathers participated and enjoyed. I thank you dear Fathers for your presence and participation in the Christmas celebration. I sincerely thank all the junior priests for their well prepared games.
- **Gathering with SEEDS and Minor Seminarians:** Christmas gathering for the members of SEEDS was conducted along with the Minor Seminarians at Minor Seminary, Mukkootukal on 23 December 2020. Rev. Fr Joshy Kulathumkal, Rector of the Minor Seminary, organised the celebration well.
- **Neighbours' Meet:** This year, since we are still under lock down due to the Coronavirus, we did not invite our neighbours to Bishop's House for Christmas celebrations. However, we wished them in their houses and offered Christmas gifts.

### INFORMATION

- **Popular Mission Retreat** starts in the Eparchy from 24 January 2021. As per the direction of the organisers, kindly prepare the faithful well for their spiritual renewal. Popular Mission Retreat during this Jubilee Year is a blessing to our Eparchy and will surely deepen the faith of our faithful. Fr Sebastian Puthenpurayil, Director of Sinai Retreat Centre, has prepared a schedule till the month of March 2021. We will have a solemn inauguration of the retreat on 24 January at 5.00 pm at Paraicode.

### POPULAR MISSION RETREATS (TAMIL) (JANUARY TO MARCH 2021)

S.No.	PMR NO	DATE OF PMR	PARISH	DIOCESE
1.	273	JAN 24-29	PARAICODE பரைக்கோடு	THUCKALAY தக்கலை

2.	274	JAN 24-29	ANAYADI ஆனையடி	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
3.	275	JAN 31-FEB 5	ATHENCODE அதன்கோடு	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
4.	276	JAN 31-FEB 5	KAZHUVANTHITAI கழுவன்திட்டை	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
5.	277	FEB 14-19	KARODE காரோடு	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
6.	278	FEB 14-19	KILLIYOOR கிள்ளியூர்	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
7.	279	FEB 21-26	MUNCHIRAI முஞ்சிறை	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
8.	280	FEB 21-26	VARUTHATTU வாறுதட்டு	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
9.	281	MAR 07-12	PADANTHALUMOODU படந்தாலுமூடு	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
10.	282	MAR 07-12	CHENAMCODE சேனம்கோடு	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
11.	283	MAR 21-26	THAKKALIVILAI தக்காளிவிளை	THUCKALAY தக்கலை
12.	284	MAR 21-26	KOSAVAMPATTI கொசவம்பட்டி	SALEM சேலம்

- **The Priests' Conference** in the month of January will be held according to Foranes. The Conferences will be held on 11 January for Nithravilai and Padanthalumoodu Foranes, on 12 January for Soosaipuram and Thuckalay-Plankalai Foranes, on 14 January for Arukani, Manjalumoodu and Kaliyal Foranes and on 16 January for Thenkasi Mission. Forane Vicars are requested to inform the priests in your respective Foranes and arrange the programme well. Representatives from the Curia will attend the Priests' Conferences.
- **Seminar for Catechism teachers:** One of the Silver jubilee programmes of the catechism department is to organize a Seminar on *Syro-Malabar Holy Qurbana* to all the catechism teachers of our Eparchy. As I have already informed you on 17 December, it is compulsory for all the teachers to attend and it is a certificate programme. Therefore, all the teachers need to register their names in the form provided to you online some time ago by the Catechism Director. All the parish priests are to ensure that all the teachers have registered and take part in the online seminar without fail. The director will send you list of names

that he has received so far. The seminars will be held from 5.00 to 7.00pm on 9 January, 16 January, 23 January and 30 January 2021. Rev. Fr Dency Mundunadackal and Br Mahesh will take the classes.

- **Syro-Malabar Mission Week:** The Syro-Malabar Mission week will be observed from 6-12 January 2021 all over the world. As in previous years, we celebrate the week in our Eparchy with the help of Mission League. We can celebrate it in our parishes on 11-12 January 2021. Prior to this celebration, kindly read the circular that our Major Archbishop has issued in all our parishes on 3 January 2021. The Director of Mission League will communicate to all the Mission League Animators in the parishes on how to celebrate these days so that love for the mission is instilled and vocations for priestly and religious life are promoted. The Mission League children will take a collection with the help of specially prepared envelops. These envelops will be offered during the offertory at the Holy Qurbana. Kindly send this amount to the Bishop's House on or before 28 January 2021 in order to send to the Major Archbishop.
- **Syro-Malabar Synod:** The January session of the Synod will be held online from 11-16 January 2021 from 5.00 to 7.00 pm. Kindly inform all our faithful to pray for our Church.
- **Jubilee Programme 2021:** As mentioned in the pastoral events calendar, I am asking all the Jubilee special committees to actively involve in executing all the special activities that are planned for the respective departments and pious associations. When you are unable to organise some of these programmes on the given dates, kindly inform the Monitoring Committee by giving the reasons and proposing new dates.

#### NEWS FROM THE CURIA

- Permission is granted to renovate the church at Fatima Matha Church Fatimapuram, Kudukkachivilai.

#### FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

04 January 2021	- Forane Vicars' Meeting
11-16 January 2021	- Syro-Malabar Synod
28 January 2021	- TNBC Meeting at Marthandam
31 January 2021	- Feast of St John Bosco

#### CONCLUSION

As already mentioned, on the first day of the year, we celebrate the feast of Mary, Mother of God. It is indeed a wonderful opportunity for all of us to entrust ourselves to the maternal care and protection of Mary as we begin the New Year, a precious gift from God. Let us make good use of this year in order to become more Christ-like and to bring his message to as many people as possible so that the invocation that recite in the prayer Our Father may be realised during this jubilee year: Thy kingdom come.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**  
Bishop of Thuckalay

