



Bishop's *Circular*

For Priests / Sisters

Bishop George Rajendran sdb
Diocese of Thuckalay

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31 March 2021

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes Bishop's House, Thuckalay! From 28 March we entered the holiest week in the Catholic Church. With the commemoration of Palm Sunday, we have begun the Holy Week. In it we celebrate the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The word Paschal reminds us that the New Testament word for Passover is Paschal. Jesus' death occurred at the time of Passover, when Jews celebrated their passage from slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea to freedom in their own land. Thus, the death of Christ and his resurrection have come to be understood in the Church as the fulfilment of God's mighty acts to save His people. God acted decisively to rescue the people of Israel from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God acted to save His people from sin and death.

Communication with God, which the Jewish people expected through participation in the Passover sacrifices, is fully realized by the Christians who participate sacramentally in the death and resurrection of the incarnate Son. In AD 313 the Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire and it became possible for Christians to travel to Jerusalem, the site of Our Lord's triumphal entry, trial, and shameful death on a cross. The travel diary of Egeria, a 4th-century Spanish nun, gives us detailed descriptions of the Holy Week services of worship in Jerusalem, beginning with the Palm Sunday. These liturgies deliberately and accurately reconstructed the final events of Jesus' life in order to re-present them in the midst of worshipping congregations. An essential principal in our worship exemplified in the Eucharist is that of re-presentation. The Greek word for it is *anamnesis*, which means to make a past event a present reality. Remembrance is the English translation and fails to do it justice.

When Jews celebrate the Passover, they believe that the saving work of God in delivering them from slavery in Egypt is re-presented in their midst by means of these essential elements to *anamnesis*: i) the gathered community of believers, ii) the elements prescribed by God - unleavened bread, wine, lamb, and bitter herbs; and iii) reciting the story of the event using the words of Sacred Scripture. After this fashion, Christ is made truly present in the celebration of the Christian Eucharist. The Assembled community of the faithful, the ordained priest, the bread, and wine, and the biblical words transcend time and space making the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus 2000 years ago a present reality. In a like manner the Holy Week services bring to us today those final events in Jesus' life which comprise the Paschal Mystery.

PALM SUNDAY begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and then the mood reverses rapidly from acclamation to "crucify him! crucify him!" Contemplate how the fickleness of human nature and our personal, sometimes wavering loyalty and devotion is made present before our very eyes. After all, it was our sins that crucified Jesus.

MAUNDY THURSDAY re-presents the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, the Mass, the Divine Liturgy. In this celebration the actions of Jesus and the apostles are made present in our midst. We gather with them to hear Jesus say, "This is my Body. This is my Blood - Do this in remembrance of me." A more accurate rendering would be, "Do this to make me present with you." The day-long adoration helps the faithful to keep watch, uniting them with Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane when he said to Peter, "So could you not watch with me one hour?" Our word "Maundy" comes from the Latin, *maudatum* (commandment) with reference to Jesus' commandment to love one another.

All these lead to GOOD FRIDAY and the cross. The cross involves death as depicted in the passion narratives. It is a cruel death on one hand but on the other a death of love. The cross is the radical expression of love that gives itself completely; it is the expression of a life that is completely being for others.

In the New Testament it is not humans who goes to God with a reconciling gift; but God comes to the humans in order to give the gift to them. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God restores a damaged night on the initiative of His own power to love. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciles us to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

God does not wait until the guilty come to be reconciled; He goes to meet them and reconciles them! Here is the true direction of the incarnation leading to the cross. The cross moves from above to below. It does not stand as the work of expiation which mankind offers to a wrathful God, but as that expression of God's foolish love for us!

Where does the cross lie within our faith? Look at the world in which we live. It is a boiling cauldron of troubles - fear of terrorists at home, fear of war in foreign countries; in our local communities, murders, abductions, broken families, sickness both physical and mental, communal violence, etc.

The Passion of Jesus speaks to this boiling cauldron of humanity - the treachery of Judas, the betrayal of Peter, the cruelty of the soldiers and above all, the devilish demands of the crowd: "Crucify him!" Into this Jesus is plunged. He could have avoided it but chose obedience; obedience out of love. Here is how Scripture describes that love: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. and being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God had highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11). Through faith we cling to him, accept his love, are lifted up by him, and conformed to his image and are thus saved. Good Friday worship makes this present through the liturgy of the Word, and the veneration of the cross.

Holy week culminates with the Great Vigil of Easter. It is evident from the gospels that the resurrection occurred sometime during the night. The Exodus from Egypt began at night, and because of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Christians expected the second coming of Jesus to happen at night: hence the widespread custom of vigil watch services developed in the Christian community. Expectant people gathered to watch and pray during the night before certain celebrations.

Our observance of and participation in Holy Week are elucidated in these words of St Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome: "He (Jesus) is whose sufferings are shared by the martyrs with their glorious courage and by all those who believe and are born again at the moment of their regeneration. This is why we duly celebrate the Lord's

Pasch with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The leaven of our old malice is thrown away, and a new creature drinks deep and feeds upon the Lord himself. For our participation in the body and blood of Christ has this effect: it makes us become what we receive; it enables us, with our whole being, in our spirit and our flesh, to bear him in whom and with whom we have died and been buried and risen again.”

As we have already entered the Holy Week, let us make good use of the various religious ceremonies that we shall re-enact not only for our spiritual nourishment but also for the religious welfare of the people who have been entrusted to our care. Let me wish you peace and joy of the risen Lord! May he grant you graces upon grace for your well-being.

NEWS AND EVENTS

KK Bishops meet Shri Rahul Gandhi: All the Bishops of the Catholic dioceses of Kanyakumari district had an opportunity to meet Shri Rahul Gandhi on 1 March 2021 at St Mary’s Basilica, Mulagumoodu. It was a private and informal meeting, where the Bishops had an interaction with the Congress leader regarding the socio-political situation of the district. While talking to him one can feel the dream and aspiration that the leader has for the nation.

Bishop’s Visit to the Missions and Health Commission Meeting: On 3 March 2021 I made an informal visit to mission stations in the extended territories, namely, Nangunerry, Thirunelveli, Kayathar and Madurai where I met the Fathers and Sisters and had brief meetings with them. I was happy with their hard work in building up the Kingdom of God. On 4-5 March 2021, I visited the Diocese of Sivagangai in order to take part in the Diocesan Health Commission meeting at Vianny Pastoral Centre. I also took part in the Women’s Day celebrations and the free medical camp organised by Ananda College of Sivagangai Diocese.

Foundation Stone Blessed: The FCC Community at Sukkangalpatti, Chinnamannor are carrying out the mission work staying in a rented house. The Sisters bought a plot of land at Poomalkunduvilakku village in order to build a convent. The foundation stone was blessed by Rev. Fr Benny Thattamparpil on 4 March 2021. Rev. Fr Anil Raj and the Sisters from Maduai mission took part in the blessing ceremony. The FCC Provincial of Idukki and many Sisters from the Province were present. The building work has already started. We wish the Sisters God’s blessings.

Inter-Eparchial Bishops’ Meeting at Changanassery: Bishops of Changanassery Metropolitan Archeparchy gathered at the Archbishop’s House at Changanassery on 10-12 March 2011. It was for the first time after many years that only the Bishops gathered to discuss about the political and educational situation of the State of Kerala. To better guide and give accurate information to the Bishops, Mr Shaji, a lay person belonging to Archdiocese of Changanassery gave an orientation talk on the present political situation of various constituencies of Changanassery, Pala and Kanjirapally. He requested the Bishops to help the Christians to stand together to save democracy. It was sad to note that our people are divided on the basis of different political ideologies. There is an urgent need to bring them together.

St Joseph’s Feast: Pope Francis announced this year as the Year of St Joseph. In our Eparchy, normally we keep the month of March as the Month of St Joseph. On the Feast of St Joseph this year, I celebrated Holy Qurbana at St Joseph’s Mission Station. Thank you dear Fathers for taking special initiatives in your respective parishes for observing this month. May St Joseph intercede for us all!

Death Anniversary of Fr Chaco Basil: The first death anniversary of Rev. Fr Chaco Basil, a pioneer missionary of CMI Congregation in the Eparchy, was commemorated at St Thomas Church, Muzhucode on 21

March 2021. I celebrated the Holy Qurbana along with Fr Sony CMI, Vice Provincial, Priests and parishioners of Muzhucode. We all remember with gratitude Fr Chaco Basil's commitment to God and to the Church. Let us pray for the departed soul.

Priesthood Day and Recollection for Priests and Sisters: Like previous years, we came together for the celebration of Priests' Day on 31 March 2021 on Holy Wednesday and took part in the recollection for the Fathers and Sisters of the Eparchy to prepare for the Holy Week. Rev. Fr Sebastian Chamathara CMI, Provincial of Trivandrum Province, preached the recollection. It was followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Those who wanted to make their confessions opportunities were provided. During the Holy Qurbana that followed, Holy Oils were blessed. Most of the Priests and the Sisters participated.

INFORMATION

- **Holy Week:** The season of Lent ends on 4 April 2021 with the celebration of Easter. I request you to concentrate on the administration of Sacrament of Reconciliation and the celebration of Holy Week in a meaningful way and to instruct the faithful to observe the spirit of the Lent till the end.
- **Home for the Homeless:** As we are celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the Eparchy, we have decided to construct 25 houses for the homeless people in the Eparchy. We shall use the Lenten charity collection of 2020 and 2021 for this purpose. Therefore, I request all of you to give clear instructions to our people to be generous for the Lenten *Undiyal* collection and submit the money to the Procurator as soon as possible.
- **Farewell to Sr Missy Maria SJSM:** Sr Missy Maria SJSM, a pioneer missionary of Madurai Mission, is transferred from Madurai. We are grateful to her for undertaking daring missionary ventures in our region.
- **Vacation Ministry of Major Seminarians:** Our major seminarians have come to the Eparchy from their respective seminaries towards the end of March 2021 for their annual vacation. This year the brothers came to the Eparchy without first going to their houses. Soon after their arrival in the Eparchy they are sent to the various parishes. During their stay, they are expected to help in the Holy Week services and conduct VPV for the Children. In the beginning of May, they are asked to gather at Sangamam for the language class and the vacation camp. In the middle of May, some of them will receive the minor and major sacred orders and will go to home for 15 days of vacation. Dear Fathers, those who want the seminarians to your respective parishes, please contact Fr Joshy Kulathungal, Rector of the Minor Seminary.
- **Vacation of Minor Seminarians:** The academic year of the minor seminaries ended on 18 March 2021 and they have gone to their homes for holidays. I wish to thank the Seminary staff for taking care of the brothers.
- **Kayathar Mission:** It's almost two years that the FCC Sisters from Thuckalay province present at Kayathar Mission doing a commendable ministry and staying with the people in the village. These days they are looking for a land, let's support them with our prayers, so that with the intervention of God they will get a good piece of land.
- **Promoting of Vocations:** Vocation promotion is the bounden duty of every Priest especially of the Parish Priests. We need to take special care and initiative in meeting those boys who show signs of priestly vocation. The Fathers in-charge of promoting and following up the vocations at the Forane level will meet the Parish Priests on a regular basis for assistance and support.
- **Home Mission Retreat:** The Home Mission Retreats are going on well as planned in all the parishes. Together with Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuparampil, I pay a visit to all the parishes where the retreats are going on. I am happy to see the spiritual enrichment of the people and the active participation of our Priests.
- **Visit to Priests' Homes:** As planned, I am visiting the homes of our Priests of the Eparchy. In the first phase, I am visiting the houses of Fathers who hail from Kanyakumari district. From the month of

April, I will be visiting the houses of our Priests who come from Kerala. I thank you, dear Fathers, for the warm welcome I receive from your respective families and for the quality time I am able to spend with you and with your dear ones.

- **Good Friday Collection:** I am sure you have received a special mail from our Major Archbishop regarding the collection on Good Friday for the up-keep of the Holy Land. Kindly do so as instructed.

SILVER JUBILEE ACTIVITIES

- **Jubilee Anthem:** We have released the Silver Jubilee anthem on 31 March 2021 after the recollection at Samgamam. The lyrics were written by Rev. Fr Robin Jose and Music was rendered by Mr Joy Maxwell. After the official release, the Diocesan Choir sang the Anthem. It is a melodious and inspiring hymn. I congratulate all the Fathers and Sisters involved in making of the anthem. I wish to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to the Parishes and individuals who took part in the Jubilee anthem competition. I request the choir groups in the parishes to learn this anthem and sing at the end of all the official gatherings in the church.
- **Parish Level Jubilee celebrations:** I feel it is fitting to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Eparchy at the parish level with a Solemn Holy Qurbana. I give the following suggestions. After consulting your faithful, you are free to follow any one of the suggestions that is fitting your parish:
 - When you are celebrating the feast of the parish, set apart a day for Jubilee celebration
 - On 7 November 2021, parishes can conclude the Jubilee celebrations
 - Any day the parish can choose to conclude the Jubilee celebrationIf you follow the first or the third suggestion, it is advised that you invite either the Bishop or any of the curia members or your respective Forane Vicars for the Holy Qurbana.
- **Philocaliya Retreat:** As part of the Jubilee celebrations, a three-day retreat will be organised for Catechism teachers from 16-18 April 2021. I am sure this spiritual animation programme will help our teachers to be good Christians and effective communicators of Faith. Hence, I request every Parish Priest to encourage all the teachers to participate in it. Kindly make the needed arrangements for the teachers to reach the Sinai Retreat Centre by 9.45 am on 16 April so that we can begin the retreat by 10.00 am. I thank the Catechism Department for this initiative.

CURIA NEWS

Relieve from Offices:

- **Rev. Fr Christudas** is relieved from the office as the Parish Priest of St Martin De Pores Parish, Kazhuvanthittai due to ill health. He has gone to Mangalore for the treatment.
- **Rev. Fr Shojo Erupathanchilchira** is relieved from the office as Parish Priest of Christ the King Parish, Christurajapuram and as Assistant Correspondent of Jayamatha Matric School, Christurajapuram due to ill health. He is under medication.

Appointments to Offices:

- **Rev. Fr Thomas Sathianesan**, in addition to his other offices, is appointed Parish Priest of St Martin De Pores Parish, Kazhuvanthittai with effect from 20 March 2021.
- **Rev. Fr Robin Jose**, in addition to his other offices, is appointed temporarily Priest in-charge of Christ the King Parish, Christurajapuram with effect from 20 March 2021.

POPULAR MISSION RETREATS - (APRIL TO JULY 2021)

S.No.	PMR NO	DATE OF PMR	PARISH	EPARCHY
1	288	Apr 11-16	Penu	Thuckalay
2	289	Apr 18-23	Thuckalay	Thuckalay
3	290	Apr 18-23	Kalluvilai	Thuckalay
4	291	Apr 25-30	Mezhecode	Thuckalay
5	292	Apr 25-30	Nagercoil	Thuckalay
6		Apr 25-30	Palapallam	Thuckalay
7	293	Apr 25-30	Thettiyode	Thuckalay
8	294	May 09-14	Malaicode	Thuckalay
9	295	May 09-14	Palugal	Thuckalay
10	296	May 16-21	Soosaipuram	Thuckalay
11	297	June 13-18	Pallikonam	Thuckalay
12	298	June 20-25	Muzhucode	Thuckalay
13	299	July 4-9	Bengiri	Thuckalay
14	300	July 11-16	Annikarai	Thuckalay
15	301	July 25-30	Nithravilai	Thuckalay

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

01 April 2021

02 April 2021

04 April 2021

24 April 2021

- Pesaha Thursday

- Good Friday

- Easter Sunday

- Priests' Conference at Sangamam

CONCLUSION

On 11 April, we celebrate the Divine Mercy Sunday. It is originally based on the devotion to the Divine Mercy that St Faustina Kowalska reported as part of her encounter with Jesus, and is associated with special promises from Jesus and indulgences that the Church has issued. I invite you, dear Fathers, to make this day special for our people. Kindly organize special devotional practices on this day and propagate devotional practices to the Divine Mercy like the recitation of the chaplet of Divine Mercy among the faithful. We are also consolidating our missionary works in the extended territories of our Eparchy. Let us ask the risen Lord to bless our ventures and to make us missionary-minded in all the ministries that we carry out.

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

