



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/129/2021

31 December 2021

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

As we enter the year 2022, I pray that the spirit of Christmas continues to linger in our hearts. The reminder of Christ's coming, his abiding presence with us and the love, joy and hope our Saviour brings are tremendous gifts for our suffering, broken and troubled world. I pray this circular finds you well and enjoying the peace that Christ brings.

The new year provides the opportunities for us to turn a new page in our history. We remember and give thanks for the blessings of the past year, despite the challenges, adversities and uncertainties that we continue to endure. Thank God for Christmas, renewing our confidence that God sent his only Begotten Son, our Saviour to bring new light and life to our world.

Amidst all the troubles and losses, we have experienced in the past year, there were also moments of joy and gladness. Our Eparchy was able to lift most restrictions for liturgical gatherings, so we could come together again as a faith family to worship, celebrate the Holy Qurbana, baptisms, weddings and other services in person. We were able to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the establishment of our Eparchy in a solemn and fitting manner. We were able to organise many of normal programmes towards the end of last year.

Furthermore, the new year gives us the chance to look forward in hope. The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, on 1 January sets the tone for our disposition as we march ahead to write a new chapter in our story. We honour and thank our Blessed Virgin Mary for giving birth to Jesus, the Emmanuel, who guides our path to eternal life. She teaches us to ponder and treasure the various moments we have enjoyed as well as the sorrows and adversities we endured. Her feast day is an ideal time to seek her loving intercession during this new year to renew faith, trust and confidence in God's love and mercy.

We pray to her as we continue to help build a culture of life and a culture of care in our society and in the world. Our pastoral care for unemployed youth, differently able children, mentally retarded persons, women in crisis or without employment, orphans, Catholics in our extended territories, other similar interventions help us to carry forward our mission.

Finally, the new year also presents us with a fresh start, new perspectives and new opportunities as well. We look forward to the coming months as parishes throughout the Eparchy, in communion with the Holy Father and the Catholic churches all over the world, join the Synod of Bishops on Synodality process underway as we all journey together to pray, listen and discern what people value in our Church, their aspirations and suggestions as to how we can do better.

Like Mary, the Mother of God, let us place our lives and the world in the hands of God. Filled with Christ's love, let us be bearers of hope during these challenging times to generously share that hope with others and help renew the hearts of our brothers and sisters. May God bless the year 2022 with his redeeming grace to bring healing, lasting joy and peace to the world.

NEWS AND EVENTS

UCC Christmas Celebration: The Christmas celebration for UCC leaders was organised at Azhagappapuram on 4 December 2021. It was held at Zion Vasal Pentecostal church. The programme began at 10 am. The programme was chaired by the UCC president Most Rev Nazareen Soosai, Bishop of Kottar. All the church leaders were given some time to share Christmas message. The students and other representatives from various UCC Zonal areas presented Christmas carols. The president in his talk highlighted the entire programme of UCC in the coming year. He encouraged the active participation of everyone. All the church leaders then cut the Christmas Cake and shared with all the participants. At the end of the meeting, a sumptuous lunch was provided for everyone.

Thank You and We Appreciate: The Silver Jubilee of the Eparchy ended on a happy note on 14 November 2021. Besides the priests and religious, many lay people were involved in the preparation and production of hymn books, prayer books, History of the Eparchy and Devotional Songs. All these were released officially on the Jubilee Day. On 4 December 2021, I called together all the lay persons involved in the preparation of these books and hymns at Sangamam to express our gratitude. Nearly 30 persons turned up for this gratitude meeting. Both Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuparambil and I expressed words of gratitude and appreciation to all the members on behalf of the Eparchy for their valuable assistance. We presented them with mementos and gifts. The meeting ended with a meal.

SMYM Central Executive Committee Election: The election for the Central Executive Commission was held on 5 December 2021 at Kalluvilai SMYM office. All the Executive members of the seven Foranes took part in the meet. The outgoing team made all the arrangements. Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Eparchial Director, and Rev. Sr Sherin, Eparchial Animator, also took part in the meeting. I presided over the concluding session.

The one-hour training programme for the leaders started at 2.00 pm. The Director animated it. He highlighted the spiritual, social and cultural aspects of leadership. After the animation, the elections were held for the year 2021-2022 through ballot papers. Following were elected as executive members:

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|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| a. Merbin Dhas | - President | d. Jasmine J | - Deputy President |
| b. Anjana | - Vice-President | e. Sajith | - Secretary |
| c. Mary Jenisha | - Joint-Secretary | f. Ajith K | - Treasurer |

In addition to these, six youth were nominated as councillors. They are:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Jein J. Joseph | 4. Jenisha |
| 2. Ananthi | 5. Merin Sujith |
| 3. Praveen | 6. Mernisha |

After the election, I addressed the young people. In my talk, I asked the leaders to stay rooted in faith and lead others to Jesus. With the imparting of blessing and the singing of the anthem, the meeting came to an end at 4.00 pm.

Conclusion of Year of St Joseph: The Holy Father announced 2021 as the Year of St Joseph to commemorate 150th year of the declaration of St Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church. The official conclusion of the year of St Joseph was on 8 December 2021. Since it was a week day, our Eparchy held it on 12 December 2021. However, I officially concluded the year of St Joseph on 8 December 2021 with the celebration of Holy Qurbana at Thettivilai Parish church. At the end of Holy Qurbana, all the fathers of the families assembled near the statue of St Joseph with lighted candle and prayed the special prayer to St Joseph for his protection and guidance. I am grateful to all the Fathers who had taken initiatives to observe this event meaningfully in our parishes.

Madurai Village Visit: It was a unique day for me to be at Madurai Mission. Our missionaries are already working in the villages of Madurai district and I made a friendly visit to two villages, namely, Ariyur and Vilathikulam, on 11 December 2021. Ariyur village is looked after by SABS Sisters and Vilathikulam village is looked after by Fr Anilraj and Deacon Mahesh. In these two villages, the missionaries are organising tuition classes for children, carrying out house visits, organising social development programmes, etc. Though the people of the villages are not Catholics, still they were very happy to receive us in their homes. I was glad to witness the committed work of our missionaries in spreading the Gospel in the remotest of areas.

Christmas at Chavara Mission: The Madurai Syro-Malabar Migrant community at Deepakam celebrated the Pre-Christmas programme on 12 December 2021. I was happy to preside over the Holy Qurbana. It was my first Holy Qurbana in Chavara Mission Church after the unification of Holy Qurbana by the Syro-Malabar Church, which the community under the guidance of its Parish Priest Rev. Fr Babu Thattil is observing well. After the Holy Qurbana, there was a get-together for the parishioners. Programmes highlighting the birth of Jesus were performed on the stage by the Children and the parishioners. A Christmas cake was cut and distributed to every one. I gave the Christmas message to the community and prayed for them. The gathering ended with a community meal.

Meeting of the Missionaries of the Extended Territories: It was a unique occasion for the missionaries working in the extended territories to come together on the occasion of Christmas at Madurai on 12 December 2021. 15 Fathers and Sisters from various mission stations gathered at Deepakam, Madurai. The meeting began with a prayer. It was followed by sharing of missionary activities that are being carried out in the respective mission territories. They shared their joyous moments as well as the challenges that they face while working among the people. In my concluding talk, I encouraged the missionaries to be rooted in Christ who is the greatest missionary that the world has ever seen. We cut the Christmas cake and expressed our happiness to welcome Child Jesus in our midst.

SMYM-Annual Day and Christmas Celebration – Bethlehem. The annual day of the Thuckalay Catholic Youth Movement and Christmas celebration were held on 12 December 2021 at St Joseph's Church, Karode. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Director, conducted the final round of quiz competition on the youth Catechism book called YouCat at 11.50 am. Sacred Heart unit, Padanthalumoodu, St Xavier's Unit Kaisalavilai and Christ the King unit Palapallam secured the first, second and third respectively. Then carol singing competition titled *Karuthum Ganamum* was conducted. Thirteen units participated. Little Flower Unit, Plankalai, Little Flower Unit, Manjalumoodu and St James Unit, Mangarai won the first, second and third prizes respectively.

For the short film competition, the theme was Bethlehem. Six units took part. St Paul's Unit, Thettiyode secured the first place, Sacred Heart Unit, Padanthalumoodu secured the second place and St James' Unit Mangarai secured the third place. Awards were given for the best Director and the best Cinematographer.

The anniversary and Christmas celebration began after the competitions. The welcome dance was performed by the Karode youth. Rev. Fr Ajeesh Attiyil, Kaliyal Forane Director, welcomed the gathering. Central executive team members Jenisha and Ananthi presented the report on the events that the Thuckalay Catholic Youth Movement organised over the past year. Mr John, a special guest, made an inspiring speech. Later the new central executive team took charge. The outgoing president, Jesin J. Joseph, shared his one-year experience as leader. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, delivered the presidential address. In his address he declared that TCYM will be hereafter known as SMYM Eparchy of Thuckalay. Prizes were distributed. The outgoing central executive members were given mementos. The function came to an end at 6.30 pm with the singing of the anthem. We express our sincere thanks to Rev. Fr Ajeesh Attiyil, Kaliyal Forane Director and Rev. Sr Sherin CMC, Eparchial Animator.

Christmas with Heads of Institutions: Christmas was celebrated in the Eparchy at various levels. We had celebrations with all the heads of the institutions of our Eparchy on 13 December 2021. The Sisters and laity who are serving in the Eparchial institutions like schools, production centres, charitable institutions and special schools were also present. It was an opportunity for the Eparchy to express the gratitude and love to these leaders of our institutions for carrying out various ministries. Time was given to all the institution heads to share their experiences in order to understand the ministries that are being carried out by the Eparchy. Vicar General and I appreciated and thanked the Sisters and lay persons for shouldering the responsibility in carrying out the various ministries of the Church. At the end of the meeting, all of us cut Christmas cake and expressed our joy.

Blessing of the Foundation Stone: Caring for the unfortunate brothers and sisters in the society is another ministry of the Church which our Eparchy carries out with utmost care and love. It was a long pending need of the Eparchy to begin a home for the mentally ill patients in the extended territories of Thirunelveli district. After much reflection, land was identified at Vijayanarayanpuram in Thirunelveli district. I blessed and laid the foundation stone for the home on 14 December 2021. Mr and Mrs Joseph from Nlanchira, Mr Augustin Tharepel were special guests. A number of Fathers and Sisters from Thirunelveli Mission were also present. The contract for the construction is given to Mr Lawrence, Nagercoil and Rev. Fr Ginoy Thottiyil will oversee the construction of the Home taking instructions from the Vicar General.

Rev. Sr Mary Xavier SDS Passed away: Rev. Sr Mary Xavier belong to the Sisters of Divine Saviour Congregation, passed away on 13 December 2021 due to Cancer. She made her first profession in the congregation on 19 March 1980 and was sent to Germany where she completed her diploma in Nursing. She worked in the Animation Centre of Kottar Diocese, Pastoral Centre of Palayamkottai diocese and Manvila Boys' Home of Trivandrum Diocese. In all these places, she worked with sincerity and dedication. From 7 March 2021 Sr Mary Xavier took charge as the superior of Nagercoil community and she was doing her responsibility with much dedication and commitment. She served as superior in many communities. She was an obedient, lovable and hard working person. She complained of persistent cough and breathing difficulty. She was admitted in the Holy Cross Hospital for treatment and she was diagnosed with lung cancer in the month of October. She underwent a series of chemotherapy in RCC, Trivandrum. Her health condition was worsening day by day and on 13 December 2021 Sr Mary Xavier had severe breathing difficulty and at 11.30 pm she went to her heavenly home. The funeral was held on 15 December 2021 at their convent in Manjalumoodu. I officiated the liturgy and the funeral rite. Many priests, religious and faithful along with a number of SDS Sisters took part in the funeral service.

Marthandam Eparchy completes 25 years: The Eparchy of Marthandam was established on 16 December 1996 bifurcating from the Syro-Malankara Archdiocese of Trivandrum. The year-long preparation and celebration of the Silver Jubilee came to an end on 16 December 2021 with concelebrated Holy Qurbana and Public meeting. All the Syro-Malankara Bishops and the Catholic Bishops of the district were present on the occasion. His Beatitude Moran Baselious Mar Cleemes presided over the Holy Qurbana. During the Public meeting the speakers recalled the blessings and graces of God all these years. They also highlighted the enormous growth that took place in the Eparchy. Many developmental and charitable projects were inaugurated during the celebration.

Christmas with Migrants Community: The Eparchy takes special interest in contacting and ensuring the spiritual needs of the faithful who are away from their parishes for various reasons. The migrant apostolate of our Eparchy headed by Rev. Fr Sumesh organises regular online meetings and pray with them. Christmas was an occasion for gathering all the migrant families online. On 17 December 2021, we organised the Christmas gathering for migrant families. The meeting began with a prayer song. The Director welcomed the gathering. Mr Edwinson coordinated the events and introduced all the families. Time was given for every one to express their experiences and concerns. The daughter and wife of Mr Severius from Bahrain performed a dance online which every one appreciated. The Vicar General delivered the Christmas message. I concluded the meeting with a Christmas message. A Christmas cake was cut with a migrant family in the Bishop's House. I am grateful to Fr Sumesh and his team for organising this meeting.

Christmas with CRI members: The Christmas celebration with Conference of Religious India (CRI)-Eparchy of Thuckalay was organised on 18 December 2021. All the members representing various religious communities in the Eparchy took part in the programme. More than 150 Sisters were present. It was also an opportunity for the Sisters to wish the local Bishop on Christmas and to share gifts. This year the programme was hosted by Sacred Heart (SH) Sisters at Nambikkai, Aalayam. The children from the Sacred Heart School displayed a lovely live Crib scene. Sisters from various congregations sang the traditional and modern carols on the occasion. All the members of the Curia were present. Vicar General of the Eparchy gave a message to the Sisters on Christmas. The meeting concluded with a solemn lunch.

Christmas with the members of the Family Apostolate: The Mather Jothis animators of the Eparchy gathered at the Family Apostolate Centre on 18 December 2021 to celebrate Christmas. I was happy to see many religious Sisters and mothers of the families involved in the family ministry. The sharing of Christmas messages and singing of carols were the highlights of the gathering. Rev. Fr Jimmy, Director, thanked every one and wished them Merry Christmas.

Thenkasi Mission Turns Silver: The Sengottai Mission began in 1997 in a humble way. Rev. Fr Matthew Kuzhijalil and Rev. Fr Peter Kizhakeyil were the pioneer missionaries who began the Mission there. The inauguration of the year-long Silver Jubilee celebrations began with a Solemn Holy Qurbana at Little Flower Church, Puliyarai. Nearly 50 persons including priests, religious and lay people from various parishes of Kanyakumari district joined celebration. Soon after the Holy Qurbana, there was a public meeting in which cultural programmes were performed. The action-plan for the coming one year was released on that day. I gave the concluding message to the gathering. The happy news was the presence of Rev. Fr Mathew Kuzhinjalil and Peter Kizhakeyil for the silver jubilee inauguration programme. The meeting came to an end at 8.30 pm with a family meal. The Fathers, Sisters and faithful of Thenkasi Mission under the leadership of Rev. Fr Jiji Koipuram prepared well for the inaugural programme and the action plan. I am grateful to them.

Christmas with Well-wishers: The Eparchy gratefully remembers all the supporters and well-wishers especially during the Christmas season. This year on 20 December 2021, the department of Public Relations Office (PRO) invited persons who are directly helping the Eparchy in various ways for its life and mission. The participants included persons from the Eparchy as well as from outside the Eparchy. The members of the friends of Thuckalay too joined the meeting. Nearly 40 members were present for the programme. The meeting included Christmas messages by the representatives. Paraicode parishioners sang Carols. Fr Antony Jose, Director of PRO, welcomed the gathering. Vicar General and I thanked everyone present for the herculean task that they are doing for developing the Eparchy. Later everyone came together to cut the cake and wished one another happy Christmas.

Christmas with the Presbyterium: On 21 December 2021, the priests of the Eparchy came to the celebration of Christmas and to express our brotherhood at Sangamam. The get-together began with welcoming of baby Jesus in the chapel. All the Fathers came to the venue in procession singing the carols. The Junior priests organised the event. All the priests were divided into four groups and different tasks were assigned. There was stiff competition among the groups. Prizes were given to the winning teams. At the end of the gathering, all the Fathers came together to cut the Christmas cake and to share it. Later some announcements were made and pieces of information were given by the various departments about forthcoming programme. The programme ended with a family meal. I am grateful to Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuparampil and the junior priests for organising the celebration.

Christmas Gathering for the Members of SEEDS: It was conducted along with the minor seminarians at St Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal on 22 December 2021. Rev. Fathers and Rev. Sisters from Manjalumoodu Forane, representatives from Mukkoottukal parish, major seminarians and almost 30 families of SEEDS were present for the gathering. I presided over the meeting and the Vicar General facilitated the event. The gathering ended with Christmas agape!

Christmas with Major Seminarians: The annual gathering of Major seminarians was held on 22 December 2021. Except those from Ujjain and Poonamallee, all the major seminary brothers were present. They were all happy to see one another after some months. The personal sharing of their seminary experiences made all of us aware of the type of formation that our candidates are receiving. They all expressed their happiness in coming back to the Eparchy and being close to one another during this season of Christmas. The two deacons Mahesh and Jose also joined the gathering. Rev. Fr Joshy and Fr Thomas Pawathuparampil shared Christmas messages. All the brothers together cut the cake and shared Christmas gifts.

Christmas at Kudukachivilai: Nearly 22 families belonging to Malaicode parish live in this village which is quiet far from the parish church. Fr Abilash Xavier and Mr Mariadas give pastoral care to these Catholics on week days and they would go to their parish church on Sundays. On my way to the Minor seminary, I visited them for the first time. The people welcomed me warmly into one of the homes where weekly prayer service would take place. After a short prayer service, I gave a Christmas message and encouraged them to remain firm their faith. I also requested them to bring together people who are not regular in the church. We cut the cake and shared Christmas joy and happiness with one another.

Christmas with Bishop's House Neighbourhood: I consider this event very important. On 23 December 2021, nearly 32 families living in the neighbourhood of the Bishop's House gathered at Bishop's House to celebrate Christmas. The Thuckalay parish with the help of Mr Edwinson planned and prepared the whole event. The programme began at 6.30 pm. The children from the parish put up some cultural programme. Mr Krishnan Nair gave a short felicitation talk in which he appreciated the efforts the Bishop takes every

year to organise this event. Mr Edwinson read out the report of previous gathering and introduced all the families. They were given Christmas gifts. At the end of the meeting, all the heads of the families called to cut the Christmas cake. Dinner was served to everyone.

Bible Fest 2020-2021: Forane level competition for Catechism students was held from 28 December 2021 to 31 December 2021. The Forane catechism Directors organized the competitions at the Forane level. The competitions were monitored by the central team. They were conducted at three stages. The dance competition was conducted in first stage. Singing competition was held in the second stage. Speech, Bible recitation, Bible Reading and mono-act were conducted in the third stage. There were volunteers who helped to conduct the events. The events were held at APJM School, Soosaipuram; St Michael School, Kattathurai; Holy Family School, Mukkoottukkal; St Mary's School, Kaliyal; Sacred Heart School, Padanthalumoodu; Jeya Matha School, Christurajapuram and Holy Family School, Arukany. The Rank list of each Forane is listed below:

Foranes	Rank -1	Rank -2	Rank - 3
Kaliyal	Pallilkkonam	Kaliyal	Marappady
Manjalumoodu	Manjalumoodu	Malaicode	Muzhucode
Nithiravilai	Varuthattu	Nithiravilai	Cheenivialai
Padanthalumoodu	Padanthalumoodu	Palugal	Kazhuvanthittai, Annikkarai
Soosaipuram	Palappallam	Soosaipuram, Killiyoor	Mankarai
Thuckalay- Pilankalai	Thuckalay	Kattathurai	Nagercoil
Arukani	Netta	Arukani	Pathukani

Nirmala Home Foundation Stone Blessed: With the help of Rev. Sr Nirmala Matthew, the Eparchy is building a home for the destitute women at Vijayanarayanapuram, Nanguneeri. Rev. Fr Tobin prepared the project and made all the arrangements for its execution. On 30 December, I blessed the foundation stone and Rev. Sr Nirmala Matthew laid the foundation in the presence of Vicar General and two representative Sisters from SD Congregation. The building works will begin as soon as all the legal requirements are completed. We are grateful to Sr Nirmala for giving this project to the Eparchy of Thuckalay.

Consecration of Kaisalavilai Church: The parish of St Xavier Church, Kaisalavilai consists of 80 families. Rev. Fr Luka Kollamparambil CMI, the then parish priest, with the help of the parishioners prepared the plan and decided to construct the Church. The foundation stone was blessed on 15 August 2016. Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkethalekkel CMI with the help of the CMI congregation, benefactors and well wishers completed the project. The people of the parish stood with their parish priest giving all the support to complete the work. The church was blessed on 30 December 2021. Rev. Fr Sony, Vice Provincial of CMI Trivandrum Province, was present for the occasion. Many priests, religious and faithful were also present.

INFORMATION

- LSDP, Perumchilampu convent turns Silver this year. The inauguration of the Jubilee was held on 3 December 2021 with the Holy Qurbana at 6.30 am.
- Psycho-Spiritual refreshment course for the Sisters was organised on 3 December 2021 by the Family Apostolate department. Nearly 25 Sisters took part in the course.

- Mission Quest 2022: The Department of Catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church in collaboration with Mission Office is organising a Mega Quiz programme on 9 January 2021. Kindly encourage all our Catechism children and other persons to take part in the competition.
- Eparchial level study and reflection on Synod on Synodality will begin from the month of January. The circular for the same will be read in all our churches on 9 January. A one-day workshop for Fathers and Sisters are arranged on 4 and 8 January. I request all the Fathers to attend the workshop on anyone of the days.
- The FCC Sisters of Idukki province completed the construction of the convent at Chinnamannur Mission, Theni. The convent will be blessed on 22 January.
- The MCBS Fathers in Thenkasi Mission completed 25 years of their presence. There will be a thanksgiving holy Qurbana on 18 January to mark this occasion. We congratulate the MCBS Fathers
- In collaboration with the Government of India, Manjalumoodu parish will begin a new project on skill training for three different trades. The project will be inaugurated on 5 January and we wish the parish priest and everyone involved in the project God's blessing.
- The Syro-Malabar Synod will be held from 7-15 January 2022. I request all of you to pray for the success of the Synod. This time it will be held at Kakkaad.
- The golden Jubilee of Sr Nirmala Matthew was celebrated on 30 December 2021 at Bishop's House. The Sisters and Fathers around the Bishop's House were invited for the function.
- The Priestly Ordination Deacon Libin Kottapuram CMI, from Kasalavilai parish, was held on 27 December 2021 at Chethipuzha. His first Holy Qurbana was held on 31 December in his own native parish at Kaisalavilai.

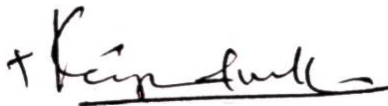
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

04 January	Synodality: Workshop for priests and religious- I
08 January	Synodality: Workshop for Priests and religious – II
09 January	Mission Quest 2022
10 January	Forane Priest conference: Padanthalumoodu and Nithravilai
11 January	Forane Priest conference: Soosaipuram and Thukly-Pilankalai
13 January	Forane Priest conference: Manjalummodu, Kaliyal and Arukani
18 January	MCBS- Silver Jubilee and Mission Meeting
19 January	Synodality: Workshop for Missionaries of Thenkasi and Ext. Territories
22 January	FCC Convent Blessing
31 January	TNBC Meeting, Chennai

CONCLUSION

It is gratifying to note that 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 2022, which is 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. Let us make the invocation that recite in the prayer Our Father, Thy kingdom come, a reality!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



+ George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay

