

THUCKALAY TIDINGS

JANUARY 2022 | VOL. 2 | ISSUE 1
DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY



DENHA

Celebrating The Light of the World



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THUCKALAY TIDINGS

January 2022 | Vol. 2 | Issue 1

A Monthly online newsletter of Diocese of Thuckalay

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INSIDE STORY

➔ Message from the Bishop	3
➔ A Day to Express our Gratitude	4
➔ Diocesan Syro-Malabar Youth Movement Gets New Office Bearers	5
➔ Marking the Closure of the Year of St Joseph	6
➔ Let the Children Come to Me	7
➔ Mission in the Extended Territories	8
➔ Demise of Rev. Sr Mary Xavier SDS	9
➔ 25 Silver Years of Marthandam Diocese	10
➔ Bible Fest for Catechism Children	11
➔ Nirmala Home Foundation Blessed and Laid	12
➔ Consecration of Kaisalavilai Church	13
➔ Thenkasi Mission Turns Silver	14
➔ Siddha Medical Camp	15
➔ SMYM Re-living Bethlehem	16
➔ JULE-2021 – Educare Celebrations	17
➔ SEEDS and Seminarians	18
➔ Glance of Christmas Celebrations	19
➔ VOCATION AND MISSION	25



DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY
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Kanyakumari District, Tamilnadu – 629 175

Message

Dear Friends and Well Wishers,

The celebration of Christmas and the commencement of a new year have brought a lot of cheer in our lives. I wish that the joy of Christmas remains with us in every step and that the hope of a new year be filled with Divine grace for us to receive the gifts of life that we deserve.

The Diocese of Thuckalay has joined the Syro-Malabar Church community to celebrate the Denha Feast on January 6, 2022. I could personally experience the enthusiasm, joy and the innovations being displayed by the priests, the religious and the faithful in celebrating it in a befitting manner. Denha has been celebrated through the centuries with several significant practices for strengthening of our faith in Christ Jesus as the Church commemorates the epiphany with the public manifestation of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of Jesus, where God the Father testified Jesus as the Son of God and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22)

Every celebration in our lives rekindles the enthusiasm for life and hope in the providence of God and the continued protection we receive through the kindness of our Creator. We renew ourselves and reinforce our hope in God. Yes, it is an essential part of the evangelical message and witness as Christians. True, we place our hope in


God; but this hope is not conditional; most often we express our hope and indirectly condition it with certain desires of ours to be fulfilled; the Christian hope means complete surrender to the will of God. Let us allow God to determine our lives, at the same time, making all efforts to live a life worthy of our creation. We do face a lot of problems in our journey of life, however, the hope we all profess eases the pain that these problems cause.

The health emergency due the fast spreading variant of the pandemic that has surfaced calls on us to rededicate ourselves with renewed spirit of mind and heart to the Light of the World, when we celebrate the manifestation of the Trinitarian God to the human race, keeping our hope ever alive. Let us continue to pray for each other and for all those suffering human beings throughout the world for protection and speedy recovery.

Please be assured of my personal prayers imploring God to shield you from all illnesses.

May we continue to enjoy the presence of God in our lives.




+ **George Rajendran sdb**
Bishop of Thuckalay



A Day to Express our Gratitude

The Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Diocese had to face a lot of changes due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic; however, the priests, religious and the faithful kept alive the spirit through various activities to strengthen and deepen the faith in God. All the functionaries, the priests and the religious had planned, organised and executed the various events. Everyone in the Diocese, parishes and the families participated effectively for the success of the jubilee and the celebrations came to an end on 14 November 2021. It is to be applauded that many lay people were involved in the preparation and production of Diocese history, hymn books, prayer books, devotional songs and all these released officially on the day of Jubilee.

On Sangamam day, at Pastoral Centre of the Diocese, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB and the Vicar General, Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuparampil invited few representatives of lay persons who involved in the preparation of books and hymns and expressed their sincere appreciation and gratitude for their valuable contribution and encouraged for the same in future. The Diocese was very happy to honour them with mementos and gifts. The participants recollected the fruits of their hard labour and rejoiced when they were presented to the faithful.



Diocesan Syro-Malabar Youth Movement Gets New Office Bearers



The youth play an important role in the faith practices in the Diocese and Thuckalay Catholic Youth Movement (TCYM) has been engaged in keeping the faith active in every Parish, Mission Centres and Forane. There is a Central Executive Committee at the Diocese level and they function for a term of one year. The term of the previous Committee getting over, the election for the new Central Executive Committee was held on 5 December 2021 at Kalluvilai. The name of the Youth Movement has been changed from TCYM to Syro-Malabar Youth Movement (SMYM) Diocese of Thuckalay.

The outgoing members made all the arrangements and all the executive members of the seven Foranes of the Diocese took part in the meet. Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Diocesan Youth

Director, and Rev. Sr Sherin, Diocesan Youth Animator took part in the program. The program which began at 2.00 pm began with an hour of training program for the youth leaders animated by the Director. 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 in which the Executive Committee of the new SMYM Diocese of Thuckalay consisting of President, Vice President, Deputy President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Treasurer and six councillors were elected through ballot. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb presided over the concluding session and urged upon the youth leaders to stay rooted in faith and lead others to Jesus.

Marking the Closure of the Year of St. Joseph



The Diocese of Thuckalay had observed the Year of St. Joseph as declared by the Holy Father to commemorate 150 years of the declaration of St Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church throughout the year 2021. Our Diocese held it on 12 December 2021 as the designated date had not been a Sunday. However, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb 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 candles and recited the special prayer to St Joseph for his protection and guidance.



NEED PRAYER SUPPORT!

The Diocese has prayer groups.

Please write the following and send SMS



+91 94871 65903:

Name:

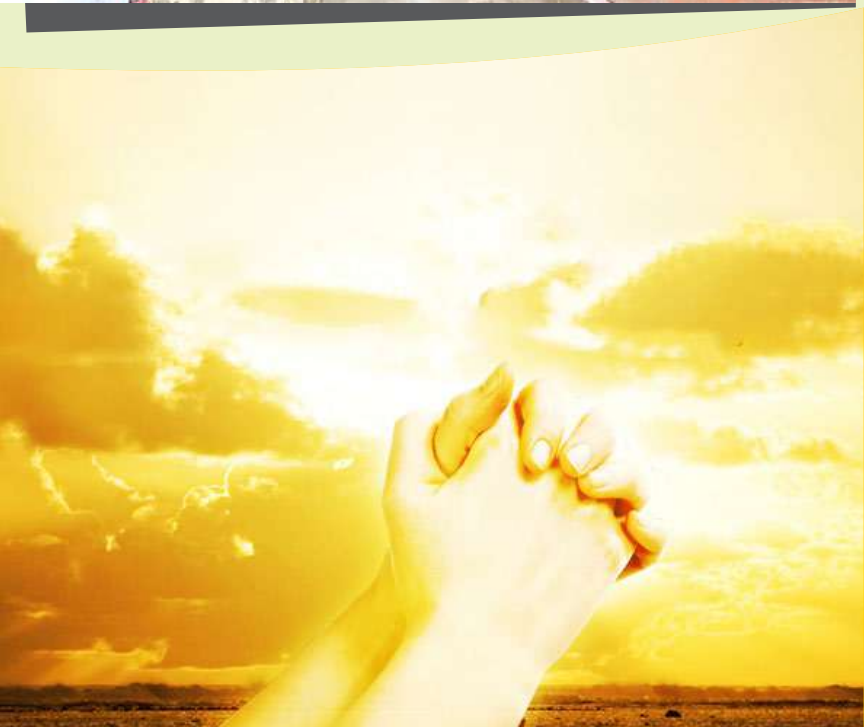
Place:

Intentions:

In detail you wish to express,



: bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com





Let the Children Come to Me

– Mt 19:14

Our missionaries are working in the villages of Madurai district and His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb made a friendly visit to two villages of Ariyur and Vilathikulam on 11 December 2021. Ariyur village is being looked after by SABS Sisters and Vilathikulam village is looked after by Fr Anil Raj and Deacon Mahesh. The missionaries organise tuition classes for children, carry out house visits, organise social development programmes for the people and conduct special programmes for women and children. It is wonderful to see our missionaries reaching out to the poor and needy, though they belong to a different cult. The people are very happy to receive the missionaries in their homes and interact with them sharing their problems and difficulties. The Bishop had a unique experience with the people, as a Catholic missionary, particularly loving his time with the children as he reached out to them and provided some tips for their learning. He appreciated the works of the missionaries in difficult and remote areas.





Mission in the Extended Territories

Walking the path of a missionary means challenges in abundance. But the cause of Christ keeps everyone alive and active in approaching them. On 12 December 2021, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB called for a meeting at Deepakam, Madurai, for all the missionaries in the extended territory in South Tamil Nadu for a unique sharing of experiences in the mission. About 15 Fathers and Sisters from various mission stations participated in the get-together. They

shared the joyous moments, challenges and demands they faced while working amidst people in their respective mission territories. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB encouraged the missionaries to be rooted in Christ who is the greatest missionary, the world has ever seen. At the end of the session, to gladden the joy of Christmas, cake was cut and shared greetings with one another. The presence of the Bishop added more joy and happiness to the occasion.





Demise of Rev. Sr Mary Xavier SDS

Rev. Sr Mary Xavier, belonging to the Congregation of Sisters of Divine Saviour, passed away on 13 December 2021. 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 the three dioceses, she worked as a sincere and responsible person with dedication. On 7 March 2021 Sr Mary Xavier took charge as superior of Nagercoil community and she was doing her responsibility with same dedication and commitment and she served as superior in many communities. She was a lovable, obedient and hard-working person.

She complaint of persistent cough and breathing difficulty for which she was admitted in the Holy Cross Hospital for treatment and she was diagnosed with lung cancer in the month of October. Though she underwent a series of chemotherapy in RCC, Trivandrum her health condition worsened day by day. On 13 December 2021, Sr Mary Xavier had severe breathing trouble and at 11.30 pm she departed to her heavenly home. The funeral was held on 15 December 2021 at their convent in Manjalumoodu. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB officiated the liturgy and the funeral rite. Many priests, religious and faithful along with the grieving SDS Sisters took part in the funeral service.



25 Silver Years of Marthandam Diocese



His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb participated in the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the establishment of Syro-Malankara Diocese of Marthandam on 16 December 2021. His Beatitude Moran Baselios Mar Cleemes presided over the Holy Qurbana in the morning and it was followed by a public function in the afternoon. All the Syro-Malankara Bishops and the Catholic Bishops of the district were present on the occasion. During the public function, the speakers recalled the blessings and graces of God

through the 25 years of the Diocese. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb congratulated and appreciated the works of the Diocese. They also highlighted the enormous growth in faith that took place in the Diocese. Many developmental and charitable projects were inaugurated during the celebrations. It was recalled that the Diocese of Marthandam was established on 16 December 1996 bifurcating from the Syro-Malankara Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

Bible Fest

for Catechism Children



The Forane catechism Directors organized competitions at the Forane level for Catechism students that held from 28 to 31 December 2021. The competitions were organized and monitored by the central team and volunteers helped to conduct the event. The programmes were conducted at three stages: first being dance, second singing and third speech, Bible recitation, Bible reading and Mono-act.

We could witness the enthusiasm and competitive spirit among the young students and their teachers who train them at all levels. Excitement too was very high when the prizes were declared. We observed the faith of the young people in their spiritual formation. We congratulate all the participants and accolades to the winners.



NIRMALA HOME Foundation Blessed and Laid

The Diocese has been holding very strong hold on the Providence of God through the years of its History from the beginning of the Syro-Malabar Church in Tamil Nadu. All the activities of the Church, including those for the educational and socio-economic development of the downtrodden have been actively supported by friends, well-wishers and benefactors. This time, with assistance from Rev. Sr Nirmala Mathew, the Diocese is building a home for the destitute women at Vijayanarayanapuram, Nanguneri. Rev. Fr Tobin prepared the project and made all the arrangements for its implementation.



On 30 December, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB blessed the foundation stone and we were very happy that Rev. Sr Nirmala Mathew was personally present on the occasion and she laid the foundation in the presence of Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General and two representative Sisters from SD Congregation. The building works will begin once all the legal requirements are completed. The Diocese of Thuckalay is grateful to Rev. Sr Nirmala for giving this project to our mission land.



Consecration of Kaisalavilai Church



St Xavier Church, Kaisalavilai was blessed and consecrated on 30 December 2021 by His Excellency Mar George Rajendran. Rev. Fr Sony, Vice Provincial of CMI Trivandrum Province, many priests and religious from the Diocese joined to share the joy of the faithful community. The joy, contentment and the satisfaction of the Catholic community of 80 families were witnessed by everyone on that day. Rev. Fr Luka Kollamparambil CMI, the then parish priest, with the help of the parishioners had prepared the plan and decided to construct the Church. The foundation stone was blessed on 15 August 2016. After which, Rev. Fr Thomas Thekkethalekkel CMI with the help of the CMI congregation, benefactors and well-wishers completed the project. The people of the parish participated, supported and joined hands with the parish priest to complete the work. May God, through the intercession of St. Xavier, continue to bless everyone who enters this holy place to witness God's love to everyone.





Thenkasi Mission Turns Silver

The Sengottai Mission began in 1997 in a humble way, one year after the establishment of the Diocese. Rev. Fr Matthew Kuzhijalil and Rev. Fr Peter Kizhakeyil were the pioneer missionaries to begin the mission here. 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 the missionaries and the faithful of Tenkasi in the celebration. Soon after the Holy Qurbana, there was a public function with colourful cultural programmes. The action-plan for the coming one year was

released on that day. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB in his concluding message showered praises of gratitude on the pioneer missionaries and expressed joy of having the presence of Rev. Fr Mathew Kuzhinjalil and Rev. Fr Peter Kizhakeyil for the silver jubilee inauguration programme. The meeting came to an end at 8.30 pm with a family meal. We congratulate Fathers, Sisters and faithful of Thenkasi Mission, under the leadership of Rev. Fr Jiji Koipuram, for preparing well to celebrate the joyous year.



Siddha Medical Camp



Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS), the social arm of the Diocese of Thuckalay, organized a one day Siddha Medical Camp in Holy Family Church, Mukkutukal, in collaboration with ATSVS Siddha Medical College Hospital, Munchirai. Free Medical check-ups, guidance and promotion of traditional medicines and organic food were the major components of this medical camp. The camp was inaugurated by Rev. Fr Thomas Sebastian, Director and Secretary of the KKSSS and supervised by Dr. Jayanthi and Dr. Prathiba of ATSVS Siddha Medical College Hospital. We are happy that 198 beneficiaries profited from the camp. In the afternoon session, Dr. Jayanthi conducted an awareness program for the school students on the theme "Siddha Medicines and Organic Farming". 65 participants, including medical college students, teachers and students participated in this knowledge sharing session.

SMYM Re-living Bethlehem



The annual day cum Christmas celebrations of the Syro-Malabar Youth Movement (SMYM) was held on 12 December 2021 at St Joseph's Church, Karode. The events began with the final round of quiz competition on the youth Catechism book called YouCat conducted by Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh, Director, SMYM. Then carol singing competition titled Karuthum Ganamum (Christmas Message in Music) was held in which thirteen units participated. Six units participated in the short film competition on the theme 'Bethlehem'. Prizes were given to all the winners. For the short film, awards were given to the best director and the best cinematographer.

The anniversary and Christmas celebrations commenced after the competitions. The report for the year was presented by the office bearers listing the number of events and programs held

for the benefit of the youth and the faithful of the Diocese. Mr. John, a special invitee to the event congratulated the youth for their involvement, collaborative activities and motivated them for greater support for the welfare of the people in and around the Church. The new Central Executive Team took charge on the occasion. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General, delivered the presidential address in which he congratulated the Director, the Diocesan Animator, the Forane Directors and the Parish animators for continuously engaging the youth and praised the youth for their involvement in the right activities. In his address, he declared that TCYM would hereafter be known as SMYM Diocese of Thuckalay. The youth had a very good interaction among themselves and a joyful celebration of the annual day cum Christmas.



JULE-2021 – Educare Celebrations

JULE-2021, a Christmas Fest for the EDUCARE students, was organized in the KKSSS hall on 19 December 2021. The mega event was inaugurated by Fr. Thomas Sebastian, Director cum Secretary of the KKSSS and Dr. Justin, Principal of Pope John Paul College of education graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Dr. Justin appreciated the initiatives of KKSSS to enable the students to learn English for their academic excellence. He added that although Kanyakumari district tops in education, it lags behind in employment opportunities. The lack of knowledge in professional English is the key reason behind this state. He encouraged the pupils to utilize this opportunity and develop their language skills and become human capitals for the country. At the end, Fr. Thomas Sebastian distributed Christmas gifts to all students and encouraged them to bring about positive changes in the society. 100 students and their parents attended the event. One of the Educare students thanked KKSSS and the Diocese of Thuckalay for supporting them in various aspects of the educational development and also, he thanked the Chief Guest for the encouraging thoughts for their growth.



You can come forward to partner the Educare Sponsorship Program of the Diocese of Thuckalay.

You can help a Child for Education at different levels.

School Education : 5 - 7 Years

College Education : 3 Years

For details contact

Rev. Fr Abin Poovathumoottil

Director, Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS)

Kalluvilai, Mulagumoodu P.O

Kanyakumari District

Phone: +91 77087 26043; 98845 61965

Email: abypoovathummoottil@gmail.com

SEEDS and Seminarians



Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the workers are few. Ask the master of the harvest therefore to send workers to gather his harvest." – Mt 9:37-38

The need for people committing themselves for vocation for priesthood and religious life is increasing constantly. The Diocese makes continuous efforts for vocation to priesthood by motivating young boys. There are many friends, well-wishers and benefactors who have been supporting the Diocese for vocation as participants in the Sponsor a Seminarian Program. We are very grateful to every one of you involved in this mission of the Church.

Within the Diocese, we have SEEDS, an organisation of lay volunteers for with the objective of sowing and growing vocation to priesthood, at present 63 of them, who sponsor for the maintenance of the Seminary in the

Diocese. Their primary aim is to support vocation to priesthood and sponsor for the maintenance of the Seminary, Seminarians for their education and organise seminars for the seminarians. They hold a very good spirit of assistance to the Church, however, during the pandemic, majority of them could not render their support.

The SEEDS took part in a Christmas meeting cum celebration joining the minor seminarians at St Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal on 22 December 2021. Thirty families of SEEDS joined the seminarians, fathers and sisters from Mukkoottukal parish for the celebrations. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb presided over the meeting and the Vicar General, Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil felicitated the participants. The gathering ended with Christmas agape. The Diocese expresses our indebtedness to the SEEDS. May God bless you abundantly.

You can support the missionary activities by sponsoring a Seminarian in his formation:

Please write / mail to us for any enquiry / details. We shall contact you with all further details soliciting your generous support:

Postal Address:

Bishop's House, P.B. 12, Thuckalay,
 Kanyakumari District,
 Tamilnadu – 629 175, INDIA

Contact Mission Procure:

Rev. Fr Robin Jose
 +91 4651 250633; +91 94871 65903;
 Email: bishopofthuckalay@gmail.com



GLANCE OF CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Christmas is a special occasion when families, friends and communities come together to express as the Holy Father stated and to celebrate and share the joy with each other. We celebrate in various ways in the parishes and mission centres and also at the Diocese level.

Christmas with the Presbyterium was held on **21 December 2021**, to celebrate Christmas and to express our brotherhood at Sangamam, the pastoral centre of the Diocese. All the fathers came to the venue in procession singing carols. All the priests were divided into four groups and different tasks were assigned. There was stiff competition among the groups and prizes were distributed to the winning teams. At the end of the gathering, all the fathers came together to cut and share Christmas cake. The programme ended with a family meal to celebrate the relationship and family spirit. We congratulate the junior priests for organising a memorable event.



The **annual gathering of major seminarians** and the **Christmas celebration** was held on **22 December 2021**. All the brothers were present except those from Ujjain and Poonamallee. They were very happy to see one another after a short break of few months. The personal sharing of their seminary experiences made all of us aware of the type of formation that our candidates are receiving and encourage them to live up to the expectations

in the formation houses. They all expressed their happiness in coming back to the Diocese 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 Powathuparampil shared Christmas messages. All the brothers together cut the cake and shared Christmas gifts.



The **Christmas** celebration with **Conference of Religious India (CRI) - Diocese of Thuckalay** was organised on **18 December 2021**. All the members representing various religious communities in the Diocese took part in the programme. It was a joy to see more than 150 Sisters present for the celebrations. The Sisters used this opportunity to share cakes and gifts with His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb. Sacred Heart (SH) Sisters at Nambikkai Aalayam hosted the celebrations. Students from Sacred Heart Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Padanthalumoodu displayed a lovely presentation on a live Christmas Crib scene. Sisters from various congregations sang the traditional and modern Christmas carols on the occasion. The celebration was attended by all Curia members. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General gave a message to the Sisters on Christmas.



Christmas with Heads of the Institutions of our Diocese took place on **13 December 2021**. The Sisters and laity who are serving in the Diocesan institutions like schools, production centres, charitable institutions and special schools were also present to share the joy of Christmas. The Diocese expressed our gratitude and love to these leaders 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 Diocese. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb and Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General appreciated and thanked the Sisters and lay persons for shouldering the responsibility in carrying out the various ministries of the Church.



Christmas with Mather Jothis animators of the Diocese was organised at the Family Apostolate Centre on **18 December 2021**. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb was happy to note that many religious Sisters and mothers of the families worked in collaboration in the family ministry. The sharing of Christmas messages and singing of carols were the highlights of the gathering. Rev. Fr Jimmy, Director, thanked everyone for the dedication being exhibited in the interest of the Catholic families in different parishes and wished all Merry Christmas.



KKSSS Christmas Celebration was held on **23 December 2021** under the chairmanship of Rev. Fr Thomas Sebastian, Director cum Secretary of the KKSSS. Various cultural programs were performed by the SHG animators and staff. In his Christmas message, Rev. Fr Director emphasized the significance of 'we feeling' and unity. He added that Lord Jesus Christ was born in this world for all people. Instead of making Christmas as a commercial festival, we have to try to ease the pain of others. Dr. Satyadhas, Consultant of the KKSSS felicitated the gathering and wished all. Christmas gifts were distributed to all staff of the KKSSS.



Christmas is a special occasion to gratefully remember all the supporters and **Well-Wishers** of the Diocese. This year on 20 December 2021 the department of Public Relations Office (PRO) invited persons who are directly helping the Diocese in various ways for its life, vitality and mission. The participants for the gathering were from the Diocese as well as from outside the Diocese. There were 40 members were present for the programme. Fr Antony Jose, Director of

PRO, welcomed the gathering. The Christmas messages were given by the representatives and the Paraicode parishioners sang Carols. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB and the Vicar General thanked everyone who present for the Herculean task that they are doing for development of the Diocese. Later everyone came together to cut the cake and wished one another happy Christmas.

The **neighbours of Bishop's House, Thuckalay** were invited to a Christmas celebrations on **23 December 2021**. 32 families living in the neighbourhood of the Bishop's House gathered at Bishop's House to celebrate Christmas. The parishners of Thuckalay Parish, with the help of Mr Edwinson, one of the staff in the Bishop's House, planned and prepared the whole event. The program began at 6.30 pm. The children from the Parish performed cultural programs. Mr Krishnan Nair gave a short felicitation talk in which he appreciated the efforts taken by the Bishop to organise this meaningful event every year to build-up friendly relationship with the neighbourhood. Mr Edwinson read out the report of previous gathering and introduced all the families to the Bishop and other attendees. They were given Christmas gifts. At the end of the meeting, all the heads of the families were called to cut the Christmas cake together and a Christmas meal was shared by all the neighbours.

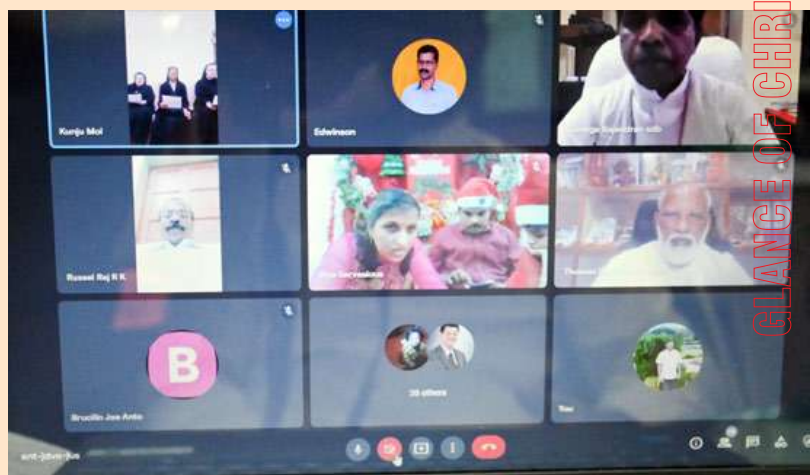




Nearly 22 families belonging to Malaicode Parish live in a village called Kuzhinjanvilai, which is quite far from the Parish Church. Rev. Fr Abilash Xavier and Mr. Mariadhas give pastoral care to these Catholics on week days and the faithful would visit the Parish Church on Sundays. On **22 December 2021**, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb visited for the first time and celebrated **Christmas at Kuzhinjanvilai**. The people welcomed the Bishop warmly into one of the homes where weekly prayer service would take place. After a short prayer service, His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb gave a Christmas message and encouraged them to remain firm in their faith. Bishop also requested them to bring together people who are not regular to the Church. The Bishop shared the joy of Christmas with cutting the cake and distributing to all the faithful. Indeed, a day of great joy for the people of Kuzhinjanvilai. The Bishop expressed his gratitude to Rev. Fr Abilash Xavier and Mr. Mariadhas for providing the opportunity to visit the people in their village.



The Diocese takes special interest in contacting and helping in the spiritual needs of the faithful who are away from their parishes for various reasons. The migrant apostolate of our Diocese headed by Rev. Fr Sumesh organises regular online meetings and prayer with them. Christmas was an occasion for gathering all the **migrant community** online on **17 December 2021**. The online celebration began with a prayer song. All the families were introduced to the Bishop and to each other. Time was given for everyone to express their experiences and concerns. The daughter and wife of Mr Severius from Bahrain performed a dance online which was appreciated by everyone. Rev. Fr Thomas Powathuparampil, Vicar General delivered the Christmas message. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran sdb concluded the meeting with a Christmas message. A Christmas cake was cut in the Bishop's House, accompanied by a migrant family, who have come for vacation to their home town. There is a joy of being away, yet together in Christ.





The Madurai Syro-Malabar migrant community at Deepakam celebrated the **Pre-Christmas programme** on **12 December 2021** at **Chavara Mission Church**. His Excellency Mar George Rajendran SDB was happy to preside over the Holy Qurbana along with the Parish Priest Rev. Fr Babu Thattil and the community at Madurai. There was a Christmas get-together for the parishioners. Programs highlighting the birth of Jesus were performed on the stage by children and parishioners. A Christmas cake was cut and distributed to everyone, keeping the Christmas spirit alive.



Christmas celebrations as **Infants Day** were commemorated at Devasahayam Nalvazhvu Nilayam (DNN), Karode, a home for the mentally ill female patients on **26 December 2021**. Children from around the area gathered at DNN, joining its inmates. During the Holy Mass, offered by Rev. Fr Ajeesh, Director of DNN, the children

took out the offertory procession and a special blessing of children was organised. After the Eucharistic celebration, gifts were distributed to all the inmates and to the children who gathered at DNN and the children themselves shared sweets among themselves.



VOCATION AND MISSION

Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil

Kudaiyachan with a heart to shelter people in Jesus

The disciples of Jesus felt an urge within themselves for announcing, witnessing, sharing all that they have received, all that the Lord has bestowed and given to them to people of all kinds. Today, we too can feel the apostolic and missionary zeal of many pioneer missionaries who touched the suffering and the afflicted in order to share the destiny of hope, that indubitable note which comes from knowing that we are accompanied by the Lord. Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil is one among them who did not keep the Lord to himself, but flaming with the evangelizing spirit of the Church, had expressed his intrinsic desire for the transformation of the world and in the care of creation. As we commemorate the 25th year of his demise on 25 December 2021, it is important to recall his good works for the growth of our mission. The entire Syro-Malabar Church recollected his missionary zeal, with our Major Archbishop Mar Cardinal George Allencherry himself leading the memorial Holy Mass.

Looking past to the pictorial history of the Diocese and then mission, a priest in cassock with a long umbrella, in the person of Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil, strikes the hearts and minds of the elderly in the Diocese who have witnessed the missionary in him. The distance which he walked through the



Born	: 23-03-1927
Ordination	: 16-03-1957
Died	: 25-12-1996

land of Kanyakumari is countless. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Is 52,7). Through his simple and humble style of life and prayerful heart, he had attracted many people to the love of Jesus and to Christian Faith. What inspired him to be a missionary in our land?

No doubt! It is the Christian faith formation which he received from his birth on 23 March 1927 from his parents. Palai, being the cradle of priestly vocations in Kerala, nurtured the call of God in the heart of Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil very early in his life. After his ordination on 16 March 1957, his missionary spirit and the zeal for the poor brought him to the land of Ooty hills in Tamilnadu, where he started exercising his priestly ministry. It was his first heroic act which had been a testimony for the boundless love of Christ. After some years of service in Ooty for the poor and afflicted, the Spirit of the Lord inspired him to render his service to the southern tip of Tamilnadu – Kanyakumari.

It was in 1976, he reached Kanyakumari to take up his new mission. As he served many years in Ooty, language was not a barrier for him; Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil communicated very fluently with people in the villages. As he began his ministry here, he observed that a majority of the people were living in utter poverty. He walked from place to place visiting the families and he had all the time and patience to listen to their woes. Rev. Fr Vakkayil





surrendered to God the pathetic situation of the people in his prayers. He worked for bringing in funds to help the neediest families, without having to discriminate them on the basis of their creed or caste. The common people began to connect with him very fast as they were very happy with his simplicity and friendly approach.

Even though he was short in physical stature, people would say, he was a man of high intellectual with purest love for the poor and the suffering. He walked very fast so much so that, the people say, others would be running to match his walking speed. In some areas where he served, people addressed him as Kuttisamiyar. He would not hesitate or fear in venturing into newer places for his mission as he fervently believed in the words of St. Paul, “If God is

for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8, 31) He would not hesitate to teach the catechumens even in the night in order to prepare them for their baptism. Being pretty fluent in Tamil and with assistance from capable and qualified lay people, he translated the Liturgy and Catechism into the Tamil language. He was very rigid in the liturgical practices, being much disciplined with the historical and traditional principles of the Church. This touched the lives of the people, who had a reverential fear towards Rev. Fr. Vakkayil. His priestly ministry as the coordinator of the Kanyakumari Mission, was not to be rooted to his office, but rather it was a meaningful journey of miles and miles surrendering himself and his people to the will of God, pleading through his fervent prayers for support to come for the poor. The missionary enthusiasm exhibited by Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil was of great inspiration to the priests, then missionaries from other dioceses to the Kanyakumari Mission, to offer their lives for the welfare and progress of the people in every aspect of their lives. He was a far-sighted person for the Church and invested in a number of properties in prospective places of growth for the Church and brought in Church personnel to begin ground work. Rev. Fr Vakkayil brought the SABS Congregation to Soosaipuram, today it has grown into a province; he shifted himself to the work room in the school and provided the presbytery for the sisters.

During the famine and hunger that struck the people, Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil understood very well that the people were struggling even for drinking water. He arranged finances, asked people to give land and constructed deep wells around the habitations of people for drinking water. Agriculture was providing





them some means of livelihood, however, there was no water for agriculture. He helped to construct deep wells with steps for people to draw water for agriculture and for their bathing purposes. The wells that he had helped to create still exist as testimony for his concern for the welfare of the suffering people, and some of them continue to be used. He went to the assistance of extremely poor families and helped them replace the thatch in their houses with tiled roofs. The people continue to speak of hard work, love, dedication, strict nature of Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil.

As he had always carried a long umbrella with him, either carrying it on his shoulder or holding firmly by the two arms, keeping the umbrella on the back waist or using it as a support for his immense walking, people lovingly called him as Kudaiyachan. But he was really a Kudaiyachan, to shelter many under the loving care of Jesus, spiritually and materially. He was always much preoccupied for the betterment of the people. In order to provide quality education to the poor, he established the APJM Matriculation School at Soosaipuram and now it is one of the prestigious institutions in the district. Rev. Fr Vakkayil established the school at Killiyur and he upgraded the Sacred Heart School at Padanthalumoodu. There are a number of missions in the district that he himself had begun, namely, Killiyur, Mathapuram and Nagercoil and he cared for parishes and mission centres like Padanthalumoodu, Soosaipuram, Mankarai, Mezhakode and Thakkalivilai. As a mission coordinator for more than 8 years, he realized the best collaboration from the priests and religious

serving in different places and ministries. Weekly meetings, assessments, evaluations and sharing had helped priests and sisters to improve their mission services at different levels during those initial years. All the senior priests in our Diocese share their great joy and love for collaborating with Rev. Fr Vakkayil, which in turn made their life exemplary for the Diocese.

People of Thuckalay ever remember him as an energetic priest, who never cared for himself even at dolorous situations in life. He was a diabetic patient, but never complained of his ailments. His heart always burnt to contribute for the mitigation of pain among the suffering people. "A merciful heart is able to be a place of refuge for those who are without a home or have lost their home; it is able to build a home and a family for those forced to emigrate; it knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion. A merciful heart can share its bread with the hungry and welcome refugees and migrants." (World Youth Day, Krakow 2016). The personality of Kudaiyachan and Kuttisamiyar can be summarized in these words.

He had longed very much for the erection of the Diocese of Thuckalay and God granted him life to witness spiritually the erection of the Diocese of Thuckalay in the year 1996. And in the same year, on Christmas day, Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil breathed his last. The Diocese of Thuckalay is ever grateful to a missionary priest, who sets an example for each one of us to possess a loving heart for the poor and the suffering.



Note: We request any member of the family or friends of Rev. Fr Mathew Vakkayil having additional information / details may kindly share the same with us for our Archives. We shall be grateful.
Email: thuckalaydiocese@yahoo.com



THUCKALAY
MISSION
DIOCESE OF THUCKALAY



For a synodal Church
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Syro-Malabar Synod in Session

January 7 - 15, 2022

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