



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/162/2024

30 September 2024

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes from Bishop's House, Thuckalay!

I write to you today with a heavy heart, yet with hope and determination, to address a concerning trend affecting our Eparchy and the universal Church. When I go for pastoral visits, I see a decline in the number of people attending the Church. While discussing the issue with the parish council members, they told me that some families left the Church and joined other denominations. Some of them leave the Church even after the intervention of their respective parish priests. I remember discussing this particular issue with you during the batch-wise priests' meeting. This exodus is not merely a matter of changing attendance numbers; it represents a profound challenge to our pastoral mission and the spiritual well-being of the flock entrusted to our care.

As shepherds of Christ's Church, we are called to feed his sheep and tend his lambs. Today, more than ever, this sacred duty requires our utmost attention and concerted effort. In this letter, I want to explore the reasons behind this phenomenon, suggest measures to prevent it, and discuss how we, as priests, can be more vigilant in nurturing and retaining our flock within the embrace of the Catholic Church. Let us approach this challenge with the wisdom of serpents and the innocence of doves, guided by the Holy Spirit and rooted in Christ's love for his Church.

What are the possible reasons for Catholics leaving the Church and joining other denominations? Let us pinpoint at least some of them.

Spiritual and Pastoral Factors

One of the primary reasons we see Catholics leaving for other denominations is a perceived lack of spiritual fulfilment within our parishes. Many of our faithful seek more engaging worship experiences that speak to their hearts and souls. They yearn for a deeper, more personal relationship with God that feels immediate and transformative. We must ask ourselves if our liturgies and pastoral approaches are truly meeting these spiritual needs or if they have become routine and disconnected from the lived experiences of our parishioners.

Moreover, inadequate pastoral care has left many isolated and unsupported, especially during critical life transitions or personal crises. When our faithful face challenges such as loss, illness, or major life decisions, they need to feel the embrace of their Church community and the guidance of their pastors. If they perceive a lack of support or understanding during these crucial moments, they may seek comfort elsewhere, often in communities offering more personalised attention and emotional support.

Doctrinal and Theological Issues

Disagreement with or misunderstanding Church teachings is another significant factor driving Catholics to other denominations. In an age of widespread information and diverse viewpoints, many of our faithful struggle to reconcile certain Catholic doctrines with their personal beliefs or societal norms. Some are attracted to denominations that offer simpler or more liberal theological interpretations, which they perceive as more aligned with their worldview or moral judgments.

A general lack of understanding of Catholic traditions and practices exacerbates this trend. Insufficient catechesis and faith formation have left many Catholics ill-equipped to appreciate the depth and richness of our faith. Without a solid foundation in Catholic theology and tradition, our faithful may find themselves swayed by arguments or interpretations that seem more accessible or appealing on the surface.

Social and Cultural Influences

The increasing secularisation of society presents a formidable challenge to our Church. As religious influence in public life declines, our faithful are constantly exposed to competing worldviews and value systems that often contradict Catholic teaching. This cultural shift can erode faith and make the Church's claims seem less relevant or credible in the eyes of some believers.

Furthermore, the influence of family and friends must be considered. Mixed-faith marriages or relationships can lead to a gradual drift away from Catholic practice, especially if the non-Catholic partners are more active in their faith community. Among youth and young adults, peer pressure and the desire to fit in with friends from other denominations or secular backgrounds can be a powerful force drawing them away from their Catholic roots.

Institutional Challenges

We must also confront the painful reality that Church scandals, particularly those involving abuse and subsequent coverups, have deeply shaken the faith of many Catholics. Needless to say, the ongoing disagreements about celebrating Holy Qurbana in our Syro-Malabar Church can cause scandal for our faithful. These events have led to a profound loss of trust in Church leadership and disillusionment with institutional structures. Many of our faithful struggle to reconcile their love for the Church with the human failings of some of its members and leaders.

Additionally, some perceive the Catholic Church as overly rigid or lacking adaptability in the face of changing social norms and cultural shifts. This view can lead people to seek out faith communities that they perceive as more flexible or in tune with contemporary issues and lifestyles.

Having identified some of the causes of the departures, let us consider some preventive measures that can arrest this trend in our Eparchy.

Enhancing Spiritual Life and Worship

To address the spiritual hunger of our faithful, we must commit ourselves to revitalising our liturgical celebrations. This involves fostering active participation and deeper engagement in the Holy Qurbana and other sacraments. We should strive to improve the quality of our sermons, ensuring that they address our parishioners' real-life concerns and spiritual needs. The homilies should connect the Word of God to our life situations. Enhancing our music ministry can also contribute significantly to creating a more engaging and uplifting worship experience.

Beyond the liturgy, we must promote a culture of prayer and contemplative practices within our parishes. Offering retreats, establishing prayer groups, and providing opportunities for spiritual direction can help our faithful develop a richer interior life. Encouraging Eucharistic adoration and Marian devotions can also deepen their connection to Catholic spirituality and traditions.

Strengthening Catechesis and Faith Formation

We must develop comprehensive, age-appropriate faith education programmes to combat confusion and strengthen faith. These should focus not only on explaining Catholic doctrine but also on addressing common misconceptions and questions. Our catechesis should equip the faithful to understand and articulate their faith in the face of challenges from secular society and other religious perspectives.

In this digital age, we must use modern media and technology for faith formation. Creating online resources, podcasts, and engaging social media content can reach our faithful where they are, especially the younger generations. Virtual faith-sharing groups and online Bible studies can provide additional learning and community building avenues.

Building Vibrant Parish Communities

Our parishes must become beacons of welcome and inclusion. We should develop ministries catering to various life stages and needs, ensuring every community member feels, seen and valued. Encouraging the active participation of small faith communities (Uraviam) and support groups within the parish can provide the sense of belonging and personal connection many seek.

Promoting active lay participation is crucial in building a vibrant parish life. We must empower lay leaders and volunteers, recognising their gifts and allowing them to take ownership of various aspects of parish life. Developing strong parish councils and ministry teams can create a sense of shared responsibility and mission among our faithful.

Addressing Social and Cultural Challenges

To counter the effects of secularisation, we must engage in meaningful dialogue with the broader culture. Organising forums on faith and contemporary issues can help our faithful see the relevance of Catholic teaching to modern life. Participating in interfaith and ecumenical activities can broaden understanding and strengthen our Catholic identity through respectful engagement with others.

Supporting families in faith transmission is vital. We should offer robust marriage preparation and enrichment programs that emphasise the role of faith in family life. Providing resources and guidance for parents to nurture faith at home can ensure that Catholic values and practices are reinforced in daily life.

Improving Institutional Transparency and Accountability

To rebuild trust, we must implement best practices in church governance. This includes ensuring financial transparency and ethical management at all levels of the Church. Involving the laity in decision-making processes can also help restore confidence in our institutions.

We must continue to address scandals and misconduct proactively and with utmost seriousness. Establishing clear protocols for reporting and investigation and providing compassionate pastoral care for those affected by abuse are essential steps in healing wounds and preventing future transgressions.

The priests are crucial in preventing departures as they live closer to the people in the different parishes and institutions. As pastors of souls, they have a bounden duty to be watchful and alert in identifying such occurrences and taking proactive measures to block them.

Pastoral Vigilance

As priests, our role in preventing the exodus of our faithful is crucial and multifaceted. First and foremost, we must cultivate personal relationships with our parishioners. Regular home visits and one-on-one conversations allow us to know our flock intimately, to understand their joys and struggles, and to be attuned to signs of disengagement or doubt. Being present and accessible, we can address concerns before they lead to alienation from the Church.

Providing compassionate spiritual guidance is at the heart of our priestly ministry. We must be ready to offer counselling and support during life challenges, addressing doubts and questions with patience and wisdom. Our role is to accompany our faithful through the complexities of life, helping them to see how their faith can be a source of strength and guidance in all circumstances.

Leading by Example

Our personal witness is perhaps our most powerful tool in retaining and inspiring our flock. Maintaining a strong personal prayer life and spiritual discipline is essential. When our parishioners see in us the joy and fulfilment that comes from deep Catholic faith, it can be a compelling argument against leaving the Church. Sharing our faith journeys, including our struggles and moments of grace, can help others navigate their spiritual paths.

Continual formation and education are also vital. We must stay informed on current theological and pastoral issues. Attend retreats and workshops to enhance our knowledge about the Church and grow spiritually. A priest who is actively growing in faith and knowledge is better equipped to guide others and address the complex questions of our time.

Collaborative Ministry

Effective ministry in today's Church requires collaboration. We must work closely with lay leaders and volunteers, delegating responsibilities and empowering others to serve. This approach lightens our load and fosters a sense of shared mission and ownership within the parish community. When people feel they have a stake in the Church, they are less likely to leave it.

Networking with other parishes and Eparchial offices can provide valuable resources and ideas. Sharing best practices and coordinating larger-scale initiatives can create a sense of unity and dynamism that extends beyond individual parish boundaries.

Outreach and Evangelization

We must be proactive in reaching out to lapsed Catholics. Organising "Come Home" or "Back to Church" campaigns and events can provide a welcoming pathway for those who have drifted away. It is important to create a non-judgmental process for returning Catholics, one that acknowledges their journey and warmly reintegrates them into the community.

Finally, we should equip our active parishioners for evangelisation. Offering training in sharing faith and answering common questions can turn our faithful into effective ambassadors for the Church. Encouraging and supporting lay-led outreach efforts can multiply our impact and create a culture of active faith-sharing within our communities.

Dear Fathers, the challenge before us is significant but not insurmountable. The exodus of Catholics to other denominations calls us to renew our commitment to vibrant, engaging, and deeply spiritual ministry. It is an opportunity for us to examine our practices, strengthen our communities, and deepen our own faith and that of our flock.

Let us approach this task with hope and determination, knowing Christ guides and strengthens his Church. I encourage you to reflect on the ideas presented in this letter and engage in ongoing dialogue with your brother priests, parishioners, and diocesan leadership as we address this challenge.

Remember, each soul in our care is precious to God. Let our every action and decision be guided by love - love for God, love for His Church, and love for the people entrusted to our care. Through our faithful service and the grace of God, may we not only stem the tide of Catholics leaving the Church but also ignite a renewal that draws many back to the fullness of faith in the Catholic tradition.

I assure you of my prayers and support as we undertake this important work together. May Our Lady, Mother of the Church, intercede for us and for all those we serve.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Priests' Conference at Kalluvilai: The Priests' Conference for the month was held at Kalluvilai on 3 September 2024, beginning at 9:30 am. The gathering commenced with adoration, led by Fr. Lijo Thekkel, and confessions, which set a prayerful atmosphere for the event. The meeting officially began at 11:15 am. In the absence of the Vicar General, Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, the Chancellor, coordinated the proceedings, while I presided over the conference. During the conference, a warm welcome was extended to Rev. Fr. Thomas Kanjirakkatt, the Mission Coordinator of the Cumbum–Theni Missions, who was participating in the Priests' Conference for the first time. A cordial welcome was also extended to Fr. Prince Maliyil and Fr. Shoji Puthenpurackal, the two overseas missionaries in Ireland, who were present on a one-month vacation. Special appreciation was expressed to Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil for his generous donation of land for TPWA situated at Kumarakovil, for which the entire presbyterium expressed their gratitude. Following the introductions, the heads of important departments and associations provided updates on their upcoming events. The Mission Coordinators from all the districts shared their mission experiences and highlighted the developments in their mission stations. Subsequently, Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal presented a summary of the Fifth Major Archiepiscopal Assembly, accompanied by a video presentation. In my address, I provided an overview of the Synodal news and shared the expectations of the Synodal Fathers regarding the ministry and life of the priests. The conference concluded with a festive Onam Sadhya organized at Aseer Auditorium, Kalluvilai. I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the Fathers who actively participated in the conference, contributing to its success through fruitful discussions and meaningful engagement. I extend special thanks to everyone for felicitating me on the 12th anniversary of my episcopal ordination and for the warm wishes conveyed by the entire presbyterium. Your presence and support are deeply appreciated as we continue to strengthen our communal bonds and serve our eparchy with renewed enthusiasm and dedication.

Social Sensitization Programme at Cumbum: Under the leadership of Kuttikanam Marian College, 10 MBA students visited the Cumbum Mission for a social sensitization programme on 8 September 2024. During the meeting, the activities of the Cumbum Mission were shared by Fr. Thomas Kanjirakkatt, and

Sr. Elsy SH provided a demonstration of various projects, including hairband making and in-skirt production. In the afternoon, the students engaged in a case study on various issues and challenges prevalent in the Cumbum region. Dn. Amanto also assisted them throughout the programme. I extend my congratulations to Fr. Thomas Kanjirakkatt and the Rev. Sisters for their numerous initiatives aimed at the evangelization and social welfare of the people.

Blessing of a new Grotto at Minor Seminary: A new Grotto of Mother Mary in front of St. Mary's Minor Seminary, Mukkoottukal, was inaugurated and blessed by me on 13 September 2024 at 4:00 pm in the presence of Curia members, priests, and sisters from Manjalumoodu Forane. The parents of the minor seminarians were also present for the occasion. Fr. George Kandathil extended a warm welcome to everyone present, and Fr. Augustine Thalodil, the Rector, expressed his gratitude, especially to all those who provided financial support for the construction of the grotto. In my felicitation address following the blessing, I emphasized the purpose of the grotto, which is to enhance the spiritual well-being of both our formators and seminarians. I extend my sincere thanks to Fr. Augustine Thalodil for his efforts in constructing such a beautiful grotto at the Minor Seminary, and to all who contributed towards its completion.

Silver Jubilee of CMC Convent, Kalluvilai: The CMC Convent, Kalluvilai, celebrated its Silver Jubilee on 14 September 2024. The first house was established at Arasuvilai on 12 June 1999, and the Sisters moved to a rented house at Kalluvilai in 2006. The present convent was blessed in 2013. The Silver Jubilee Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana was celebrated by me at 11:00 am, with Forane Vicar Fr. Joshy Thevalakkara CMI and Vicar Fr. Aby Poovathummoottil as concelebrants. After the Holy Qurbana, the Superior of the convent, Sr. Maria Mathew, expressed her gratitude to all those present for their participation in the celebration. The event concluded with an agape meal.

Tenkasi Mission Meet: A meeting of the Fathers and Sisters from the Tenkasi Mission was held on 14 September 2024 at Holy Cross Convent, Mekkarai. It began with a thoughtful reflection by Fr. Alphonse, followed by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Sacrament of Confession. The meeting commenced thereafter, with Fr. Dency Mundunadackal extending a warm welcome to Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, the Curia representative for the mission meet, and to all those gathered. Fr. Dency also offered special greetings to the Holy Cross Sisters who were celebrating their feast day. Representatives from various missions and centres then shared their experiences, challenges, and opportunities encountered in their respective fields. The meeting concluded with an agape meal, fostering fellowship among all participants. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Fr. Dency for the coordination of the entire programme.

Parish-Wise Leadership Training by KKSSS: KKSSS started to provide leadership training in the Parishes. It was conducted at Paraicode Parish on 01 September 2024, at Marappady on 15 September and at Mukkoottukal on 19 September. This training focused on enhancing the parish council leaders' effectiveness, particularly in supporting economically weaker and vulnerable families. The meeting emphasized parishioners' role in empowering these families and preventing children from entering childcare institutions due to family issues.

An attitude of Gratitude on the completion of 12th year of my Episcopal ministry in the diocese: I thank and praise our Lord Almighty for the blessings and graces that I have received in the last 12 years of my episcopacy and ministry in the Diocese of Thuckalay. My motto has been – **With God All Things are Possible** – and God has been very benevolent to me since my calling to catholic faith, the gift of priestly vocation with the Salesians of Don Bosco and choosing me to lead the Diocese of Thuckalay. I gratefully acknowledge that the priests and religious serving in the diocese have been walking with me in the fulfilment of my mission as the second bishop of the diocese. Every encounter with you has taught me lessons to be faithful to the mission. I have learnt a lot from your love for the Church and the people and I

continue to learn from your life and works. All of you have effectively shared the mission of the diocese with dedicated service. I implore every one of you to continue your selfless assistance in carrying forward the mission that has been entrusted to us by Our Lord Jesus in our diocese. Your support has been immense and is highly appreciated by me. Thank you for your wishes and prayers of the day, on 16 September 2024.

New Office for Laity Council at Kalluvilai: A new office for the Laity Council was inaugurated and blessed by me on 16 September 2024 at 10:00 am at Kalluvilai, within the existing building of the Catechism Department. Around 15 members of the Laity Council were present for the function. Fr. Vinu D. Joseph, the Director, extended a warm welcome to all. The office will have a full-time assistant available on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. This office aims to provide support and guidance to our people in understanding and accessing various government welfare schemes. I encourage all Fathers to inform our people about this facility and to assist them in utilizing these government schemes effectively. I extend my sincere thanks to Fr. Vinu, the Director, for spearheading these new initiatives.

Interdepartmental Meeting: A meeting for the directors of various departments and pious associations was held on 18-19 September 2024 at the Bishop's House. On the first day, I met with the directors of the KII, SMYM, and Catechism Departments, evaluated the activities of each, and provided necessary guidelines to strengthen them. On the second day, I met with the directors of the Vocation Department, Family Apostolate, Uravians, Vincent de Paul Society, Mariyayin Senai, Laity Council, Ecumenism, and Health Commission. A common sharing session was held, during which many valuable suggestions were offered for better coordination of departmental activities. The meeting report has already been shared with the directors for further study and implementation. I extend my sincere thanks to all the directors for their active participation in the meetings.

Golden Jubilee of ASMI in Changanacherry: The Apostolic Sisters of Mary Immaculate (ASMI) celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their congregation on 21 September 2024 at their Generalate House in Cheeranchira, Changanacherry. The congregation was founded by Cardinal Mar Antony Padiyara on 21 September 1974 and currently has 100 sisters serving in various ministries. The ASMI Sisters began their mission in the Kanyakumari region on 26 January 1978. They are rendering excellent ministry in the parishes of Nithiravilai, Annikkarai, Vayalankarai, and Cheenivilai. Their selfless service at Karunayillam is particularly commendable. The sisters focus on serving the mentally and physically differently-abled, providing palliative care, social services, conducting house visits, and offering counselling support. The Thanksgiving Holy Qurbana began at 3:30 pm, with Mar Joseph Perumthottam as the main celebrant, and I concelebrated along with him. It was followed by a Jubilee public meeting, which I presided over. In my presidential address, I expressed the gratitude of our diocese to the Superior General, Rev. Sr. Mercy Maria ASMI, and to the entire congregation for their invaluable service to our diocese and the Church as a whole. We extend our heartfelt wishes and pray for God's abundant blessings upon them on this joyous occasion.

SMYM Forane and Central Elections for 2024-2025: Forane and Central elections of SMYM leaders were held in the month of September. The Arukani forane election was held at Arukani on September 1, 2024 and Kaliyal Forane election was held at Marappady on September 8. The election for central team was held on September 22, 2024 at Kalluvilai. The forane executives from all the seven foranes participated. The following members were elected: President: Manoj (Munchirai), Deputy-President: Anjana M S (Vayalankarai), Vice- President: Subila (Paraicode), Secretary: Jino (Pilankalai), Joint-Secretary: Ebin Joseph (Arukanai), and Treasurer: Steffin Rex (Soosaipuram). Then the director nominated the following members as the councillors: Merin Sujith, Ajith K, Mary Jency, Aswin C R and Vijil. Mr. Jino from Manjalmoodu was nominated as lay animator along with Sr. Elysa FCC, the sister animator. I congratulate the newly elected members and wish them God's blessings in their new assignments.

CML Unit visits and Animators' Meet: The CML central team conducted unit visits across all units on 22 September 2024. On the same day, the Forane Directors of CML gathered to discuss the preparations for the upcoming CML Rally. Additionally, an animators' meeting was held on 5 September 2024. I extend my sincere gratitude to Fr. Printo Kurias for effectively coordinating all these meetings.

Medical and awareness camps by Health Commission: A free medical camp was conducted by the Health Commission in collaboration with Helson Healthcare, Melppuram, at the Mukkoottukal Holy Family Church campus on September 29, 2024. The camp benefited 75 people. On September 29, 2024, the Health Commission organized an awareness camp at Vayalinkarai, focusing on addiction and parenting. Fr. Subin, Director of the Health Commission, led the session. The programme drew 25 mothers from the parish, fostering a supportive community and empowering them with valuable insights. On September 3, 2024, the Health care commission in collaboration with Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC) team from Kanyakumari Social Service Society (KKSSS) organized a parents-teachers awareness meeting at Karunalayam, Kalluvalai, a school dedicated to the care and education of children with intellectual disabilities. The session saw active participation from 33 parents and 11 teachers, all eager to enhance their understanding of child-rearing in the context of mental health and family values.

Altar Boys Seminar at Soosaipuram: The Forane-level Altar Boys Seminar began on 30 September 2024, with the first session held at Soosaipuram for the Thuckalay-Pilankalai and Soosaipuram Foranes. The seminar started at 9:30 am and concluded at 4:00 pm. The focus was on three main themes: vocation, social media and drug addiction, and liturgical services. The resource persons for the seminar were Fr. Mijo Puthenpurackal, Fr. George Kandathil, and Dn. Amanto, while Dn. Anoop animated the group activities. Around 69 altar boys (61 boys and 8 girls) participated in the seminar. The day concluded with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. I extend my sincere thanks to Fr. George Kandathil, the Vocation Director, and to all the Forane Directors involved in organizing this seminar. I pray for God's abundant blessings on them for the successful and fruitful conduction of the upcoming seminars in other foranes.

INFORMATION

- **Pastoral Visit to St. Paul's Church, Thettiyode** was conducted on 08 September 2024.
- **Fr. Shoji** went back to Ireland after his annual vacation on 10 September 2024. We wish him a good continuation of the ministry.
- **Mrs. Saramma Thomas (95)**, the beloved mother of Sr. Listom Vettuparampil SABS, was called to the eternal abode on 17 September 2024. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Sr. Listom and her family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Mr. Appachan Anithottam (88)**, the beloved father of Fr. Joseph Anithottam CMI, was called to the eternal abode on 21 September 2024. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr. Joseph and his family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Pastoral Visit to Christuraja Church, Christurajapuram** was conducted on 22 September 2024.
- **Mrs. Mariakutty Thomas (90)**, the grandmother of Fr. Thomas Souriyamkuzhy, was called to the eternal abode on 23 September 2024. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr. Shinto and his family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Mrs. Mary Joseph (82)**, the beloved mother of Sr. Lysa FCC, was called to the eternal abode on 24 September 2024. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Sr. Lysa and her family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Three cents of land** is registered for the Vayalinkarai Parish on 24 September 2024. I congratulate Fr. Ajeesh Attiyil for the efforts taken for it.
- **Half day recollection** and a get together with me were organized for priests from 11 to 20 years of ordination at Bishop's House on 24 September 2024.

- **Fr. Prince Maliyil** went back to Ireland after his annual vacation on 26 September 2024. We wish him a fruitful ministry ahead.
- **Mr. Thomas Chacko (94)**, the grandfather of Fr. Thomas Souriyamkuzhy, was called to the eternal abode on 26 September 2024. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr. Shinto and his family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Fr. Thomas Thekkekkottaram (89)** was called to the eternal abode on 26 September 2024. He served as the Parish Priest of Holy Family Forane Church, Arukani during the period 1980 – 1981. Let us thank God for his service in our diocese and pray that the Risen Lord may grant him eternal joy.
- **One Day Special Retreat** was conducted at Sinai Retreat Centre, Kalluvilai on 28 September 2024.
- **Pastoral Visit to St. Thomas Church, Marappady** was conducted on 29 September 2024.
- **KII Forane level singing competition:** In connection with the feast of St. Euphrasia, the KII organized a forane level singing competition in the month of September. Majority of the parishes took part in it. Congratulations to the coordinators and participants!
- **Submission of Collections 2024:** I appreciate the Fathers who have settled all collections (Irai Arul, 5 % of income, Preshitha Varam, Good Friday, Undiyal and Sabha dinam) for the year 2024 and request others to settle the dues as soon as possible.
- **Core Team for Diocesan Bible Convention:** Following is the updated list of the core team members for the Diocesan Bible Convention: Fr. Jose Muttathupadam (convener), Fr. Antony Jose, Fr. Sajan Nettaponghu, Fr. Printo Kurias and Fr. Anil Raj.
- **Diocesan Bible Convention 2024:** As part of the preparations for the Diocesan Bible Convention, it has been decided that in each of our parishes, a one-hour adoration should be held along with the proclamation of the Gospel to prepare all the faithful. To facilitate this, the committee has organized five teams consisting of priests and lay people. This programme is scheduled to be conducted every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday in the month of October (excluding the priests' retreat week) and also during the first week of November. Since there are five teams, the committee can send a team to your parish on the date you request. Therefore, I kindly ask all parish priests to inform the committee convener the date on which you would like to hold the programme in your parish.
- **Chain Adoration in preparation for Diocesan Day:** As you are already informed through my letter, in preparation for the 28th Diocesan Day celebration a chain of Eucharistic adoration is organized in every parish and convent. This will begin on 14 October 2024 and conclude on 09 November 2024. Each parish and convent have been assigned a specific date for one hour of adoration. The finalised list for the Parishes will be published in the first week of October. I request the Parish Priests to conduct it with the participation of maximum faithful.
- **Jubilee 2025:** I request all the Fathers to make use of the leaflets on Gaudium et Spes (Vatican II document on Church in the Modern World) in the Uraviyams, prepared by Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil.
- **Year Plan 2025:** Directors of departments and Pious Associations are requested to submit the Year Plan of your respective department/pious association for the year 2025 to the Chancery on or before 30 October 2024.
- **Mission Sunday Collection:** The Church, by its very nature, is missionary (AG 2). As a true missionary, the Church always prioritizes mission work worldwide. Mission Sunday is an opportunity for all believers to show solidarity with the universal Church in her evangelization efforts. The celebration allows people to express their desire to become missionaries through prayers and financial support. This year, the Church will celebrate Mission Sunday on October 20, 2024. The collection on that day will be sent to Rome to support mission work globally. Therefore, I kindly request all the Fathers to raise awareness among the faithful about mission work and encourage them to generously support the Church's missionary efforts. Please submit the Mission Sunday Collection immediately after the celebration to the Diocesan Procurator.
- **Rosary Procession:** The Rosary Procession will take place on October 27, 2024 at 02.00 pm, starting from Lourdes Matha Church, Chenamcode, and concluding at St. John Paul II Church,

Kulasekharam. The Marian Senai will organize this procession, which serves as a public demonstration of our Christian faith and our devotion to Blessed Mother. Please encourage parishioners, especially those from Kaliyal and Manjalumoodu Foranes, to participate in large numbers.

FORTHCOMING MAJOR EVENTS

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|---------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 06-11 October | - | Annual Retreat for Priests |
| 13 October | - | Rosary Procession at Tenkasi Mission |
| 20 October | - | Mission Sunday |
| 27 October | - | Diocesan Rosary Procession |

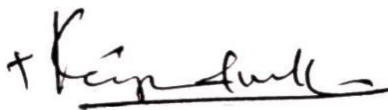
Priests' Annual Retreat
06 – 11 October 2024
@ Sangamam
Preacher: Rev. Fr. Jose Varickaserril SDB

CONCLUSION

October is the month of the mission, although our Syro-Malabar Church normally celebrates it at the beginning of every year. While praying for all the missionaries and financially supporting them through our collections, let us make ourselves worthy missionaries of Christ. We are entering the month of the holy rosary. The holy rosary holds significant importance in the lives of Catholic priests, serving as a powerful tool for prayer, meditation, and spiritual growth. This devotional practice centred around the life of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, provides a structured method to deepen our faith and strengthen our relationship with God. By regularly praying the rosary, we can reflect on the mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, which informs and enriches our pastoral ministry. The rosary also provides comfort and guidance during challenging times, offering a means to seek mediation from the Virgin Mary. As spiritual leaders, we need to encourage our parishioners to embrace this devotion, making it an essential aspect of their role in fostering the faith of their community. Let us solemnise the devotional practices we have chalked out for this month so that our people are spiritually enriched in praying for the rosary. May they come closer to Jesus and Mary!

May our Blessed Mother intercede for each one of us!

Yours in Christ Jesus,



† **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

