



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

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31 January 2025

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

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

As we continue our pastoral ministry in service of God's people, I write to address a pressing concern that affects many families in our Eparchy – the growing challenge of alcohol and drug addiction. Through this circular, I want to provide guidance and direction for our pastoral response to this critical issue that touches the lives of many of our faithful.

The Reality in Our Eparchy

In recent pastoral visits across our parishes, I have witnessed first-hand the harmful impact of addiction on our communities. Today, not only adults and youth are affected by this problem, but even school-going children are becoming victims of addiction. Our region has seen a concerning rise in substance abuse cases, particularly among our youth and working-class populations. Families are torn apart, children suffer in silence, and the economic stability of households is severely compromised. As shepherds of Christ's flock, we cannot remain passive observers of this growing crisis.

The Church's Call to Response

The Catholic Church has consistently emphasised the dignity of every human person, created in God's image and likeness. Pope Francis reminds us that "the Church's pastoral care of those who have an addiction is an expression of God's mercy and a witness to the hope that comes from the Gospel." Our mission as priests is to embody this merciful approach while actively addressing addiction's root causes and consequences.

Understanding Addiction as a Disease

It is crucial to recognise that addiction is a complex disease that affects both the body and the soul. The Catechism of the Catholic Church acknowledges that while the initial decision to use drugs or alcohol may be voluntary, the disease of addiction impairs both judgment and freedom. This understanding should shape our pastoral approach – combining compassion, clear guidance, and mercy with the call to transformation in Christ.

Training and Resources for Priests

To serve better those affected by addiction, as priests, we need to become aware of the gravity of the issue, have the know-how and make ourselves competent. I am sure we will have opportunities to have training programmes on this delicate issue during this year. We will make use of our monthly meetings, update

programmes, retreats, etc., to enhance our confidence and accrue skills in dealing with the issues connected with addiction. If we are not careful, we ourselves can, at times, fall victim to some of these addictions.

Practical Guidelines for Parish-Based Ministry

Formation of Parish Support Groups: Each parish should establish a support group for those affected by addiction and their families. These groups should meet regularly and offer spiritual support and practical guidance. Consider partnering with professional counsellors and addiction specialists who share our Catholic values.

Sacramental Support: The sacraments, particularly Reconciliation and the Eucharist, play a vital role in recovery. Make these sacraments readily available and ensure that those struggling with addiction feel welcomed rather than judged when approaching them. Special care should be taken during confession to offer spiritual guidance and practical support.

Family Support Systems: We can establish support systems for families affected by addiction. These include counselling services, prayer groups, and practical assistance when needed. Remember that addiction affects not just the individual but the entire family unit. Regular and effective family visits by priests, Sisters, and lay leaders can help identify the victims and undertake appropriate remedial measures.

Prevention Programmes: We should implement prevention programmes in our parish schools and youth groups. These programmes should include age-appropriate education about addiction, emphasising both the medical and spiritual aspects of the issue. We should also involve parents and teachers in these initiatives.

Our Family Apostolate and Health Commissions are vibrant and active. They can greatly help implement some of these guidelines in our parishes. For many years, the Family Apostolate department has been organising a de-addiction ministry in Kalluvilai. Unfortunately, not many from our diocese have profited from it. Let us make good use of their expertise to address these issues. If you come across anyone struggling with addiction and in need of personal attention and treatment at a rehabilitation centre, we are more than willing to assist. Please feel free to reach out to the Director of the Family Apostolate for guidance, support, and necessary arrangements to ensure they receive the care they need.

The Role of Prayer and Spiritual Direction

The spiritual dimension of recovery from addiction cannot be overstated, as it touches the deepest longings of the human heart, where true healing begins. While we fully embrace the vital role of medical and psychological interventions, our distinct contribution as priests is nurturing the soul's journey toward healing through prayer and spiritual direction. This aspect of ministry requires particular attention and careful cultivation, as it often becomes the foundational support upon which other therapeutic interventions can effectively build.

In providing spiritual direction to those struggling with addiction, we must first recognise that feelings of shame, abandonment, or unworthiness may complicate their relationship with God. We gently guide them toward experiencing God's unconditional love and mercy. Through regular spiritual direction sessions, help them discover or rediscover their fundamental identity as beloved children of God. This recognition often becomes a powerful catalyst for healing and transformation.

The integration of prayer into the recovery process should be thoughtfully structured yet flexible enough to meet individuals where they are in their spiritual journey. Begin by introducing simple prayer practices that

can be easily incorporated into daily life. Teach them the practice of sacred reading (Lectio Divina) with carefully selected Scripture passages that speak to God's mercy, healing, and restoration. With their raw honesty and deep emotional resonance, the Psalms often provide particular comfort and expression for those in recovery.

Eucharistic Adoration holds a special place in addiction recovery ministry. Encourage regular periods of silent presence before the Blessed Sacrament, where individuals can profoundly experience Christ's healing presence. Many in recovery have found that time spent in Adoration helps reduce anxiety, strengthen resolve, and provide peaceful clarity in times of temptation. Consider establishing specific hours of Adoration in your parishes dedicated to praying for those struggling with addiction and their families.

With its contemplative rhythm and focus on the mysteries of Christ's life, the Rosary can become a powerful tool for maintaining spiritual and emotional stability. Teach those in recovery to use the Rosary not just as a prayer but as a practical means of managing stress and cravings. The physical aspect of holding the beads, combined with the meditative prayers, can provide comfort and focus during difficult moments.

Create opportunities for community prayer that bring together those in recovery with their families and support systems. Monthly healing services, incorporating the Sacrament of Anointing when appropriate, can provide powerful moments of grace and community support. These services should be carefully planned to maintain appropriate confidentiality while fostering a sense of belonging within the parish community.

Spiritual direction sessions should also address the practical integration of Catholic social teaching and moral principles into recovery. They should help individuals develop a spiritual framework for making decisions, managing relationships, and rebuilding trust. They should also guide them in understanding how the virtues, particularly prudence and temperance, can be practically developed and applied in their journey of recovery.

As spiritual directors, we must also be attentive to the tendency to use spiritual practices to avoid dealing with psychological or emotional issues. While emphasizing the spiritual dimension, we encourage a holistic approach, acknowledging the need for professional counselling and medical support when appropriate. We help those in recovery understand that seeking professional help is not a lack of faith but rather responsible stewardship of their God-given gift of life.

Remember that the family members of those struggling with addiction also need spiritual direction and support. Offer them guidance in maintaining their spiritual well-being while supporting their loved ones. Help them develop a spirituality of hope and perseverance, drawing strength from the communion of saints and the witness of those who have experienced healing through faith.

Conclusion

Dear Fathers, this ministry requires patience, perseverance, and deep faith. Remember that Christ himself showed special care for the suffering and marginalised. Let us approach this ministry with hope, knowing that, through God's grace, recovery and healing are possible.

I encourage you to implement these guidelines immediately while being sensitive to local needs and circumstances. May Our Lady of Good Health intercede for all those struggling with addiction and for us as we minister to them.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Priestly Ordination of Dn. Amanto Edakkoottathil: Every priest is a blessing to the Church, and we have every reason to rejoice and thank God for the gift of a new priest — Fr. Varghese (Amanto) Edakkoottathil. On 2 January 2025, at St. Mary's Church, Thannikandam, Idukki, Deacon Amanto Edakkoottathil was ordained to the priesthood by me. The liturgical procession commenced at 9:15 a.m. Alongside Deacon Amanto, his brother, Deacon Paul (Robin) Edakkoottathil, was also ordained a priest by Mar Joseph Kollampampil CMI, Bishop of the Diocese of Jagdalpur. The solemn ceremony was a testament to the meticulous planning and dedication of the parishioners, family members, and parish priests. Bishop Joseph Kollampampil CMI served as the main celebrant and delivered a homily. Following the ordination, the newly ordained priests celebrated their First Holy Qurbana, with Fr. Amanto as the main celebrant. As a diocese, we extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to Rev. Fr. Amanto Edakkoottathil and pray that he may receive God's choicest blessings in his pastoral ministry.

Parish level Inauguration of *Iubilaeum* 2025: Together with our Holy Mother Church, we have joyfully started the Christ Jubilee Year 2025 in our parishes, marking 2025 years since the birth of Jesus. On 5 January 2025, the Jubilee Year was solemnly inaugurated in all our parishes. The inaugural liturgical ceremony began at a designated location, where the Jubilee Cross was blessed. In a solemn procession, the faithful carried the cross to their respective churches. The Jubilee Candle was then lit, symbolizing the beginning of this sacred year, followed by the celebration of the Solemn Holy Qurbana. At the conclusion of the liturgy, the Jubilee Prayer was recited, and the Jubilee Anthem was sung, marking a beautiful and meaningful start to the celebrations. I urge all Fathers to prepare the faithful for active and enthusiastic participation in the Jubilee programmes organized by the diocese. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all parish priests for their initiative and dedication in solemnly celebrating the inauguration of the Jubilee Year in their respective parishes. Special thanks to the Jubilee Committee for ensuring that all materials were provided to the parishes on time. A special word of appreciation goes to Fr. Antony Madapurackal for composing the diocesan Jubilee Anthem, and to Mr. John Kumarithozhan and Fr. Robins Kuzhikodiyil for their work on the lyrics.

Feast of Denha: Denha is the feast of the great revelation of Jesus as the light of the world. Jesus is the real *Sun* that dawned in the world through Incarnation. During the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth, the public did not recognize him as the real *Sun* who illuminates the whole of humanity. He was manifested to the public by God the Father at his *baptism*. In our Diocese, the great feast of Denha was celebrated on 6 January in all our parishes. Taking inspiration from the Northern Kerala, some of the parishes observed as *Pindiperunnal* by decorating the plantain trunk with lighted lamps. It was encouraging to see that it was celebrated even in the extended Mission territories with great enthusiasm.

Syro Malabar Bishops' Synod at Kakkanad: The First Session of the XXXIII Synod of the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church was held at the Major Archiepiscopal Curia at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, from 6 to 11 January 2025. The Synod addressed the concerns and struggles of those dependent on agriculture, as well as the challenges faced by communities living near forest borders. The Fathers also deliberated on necessary changes to the Church's operational style and structure in light of the Holy Father's final document. Despite sincere efforts spanning many years, the crisis in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy remains unresolved. Following the resignation of Mar Bosco Puthur, the Apostolic Administration has concluded. The Synod appointed Mar Joseph Pamplany as the Vicar of the Major Archbishop, tasked with resolving the issue without delay. The Synod concluded by inviting all to journey together with Jesus as pilgrims of hope during this Jubilee Year.

SMYM Leaders' Training and Pongal celebration: Leaders' Training and Pongal celebration were conducted on 15 January 2025 at SMYM Kalluvilai office. The morning session was animated by the central team of SMYM. At 2.00 pm, Pongal, the Tamil Cultural Festival was celebrated with *Kolam*, sweet and other team building competitions and cultural programme. Around 45 members took part in it. I thank the organizers for animating the youth of the Diocese to witness the love of Jesus.

Bible Fest Diocesan level competition for Students: The Diocesan-level Bible Fest competition was held on 16 January 2025 at Sacred Heart Forane Church, Padanthalumoodu. Registration began at 9:30 a.m., and the event was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil. The competitions were conducted across six stages and featured various events, including One-Act Play, Speech, Solo Song, Group Song, Bible Reading, and Bible Recitation. The Tenkasi mission students also participated and secured four prizes. A total of 452 students showcased their talents in various events. The concluding meeting was presided over by me, in the presence of Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal and Fr. Printo Kurias. Congratulations to all the winners, participants, and organizers for their dedication and spirited involvement. The list of overall champions is provided below.

Rank List	Forane	Parish (Centre)
I	Manjalumoodu	Manjalumoodu
II	Nithiravilai	Varuthattu
III	Thuckalay-Pilankalai	Pilankalai

First Death Anniversary of Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam: The first death anniversary of Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam was commemorated on 17 January 2025 at Jayamatha Forane Church, Nithiravilai. I celebrated the remembrance Holy Qurbana at 6:00 p.m., with Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam and Fr. Lijo Thekkel as concelebrants. Following the Holy Qurbana, the Office for the Dead was recited in the church. On the same day, Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil celebrated the remembrance Holy Qurbana at St. Athanasius Church, Mallappally, and recited the Office for the Dead at Fr. Sebastian's tomb. At Nithiravilai, sisters from the parishes where Fr. Sebastian had served were present for the Holy Qurbana. An agape meal was arranged for all those in attendance after the prayer service. I extend my sincere gratitude to Fr. Jose Muttathupadam for organizing the event. The Diocese of Thuckalay once again remembers with gratitude the selfless dedication of Fr. Sebastian Mancherikalam and prays for his eternal reward.

Inter-Eparchial Meet at Changanacherry: The first inter-eparchial meeting of 2025 was held on 20 January at St. Thomas Hospital, Chethipuzha, Changanacherry. Bishops from three eparchies — Palai, Kanjirappally, and Thuckalay — gathered under the presidency of Mar Thomas Tharayil, the Archbishop of Changanacherry. Archbishop Emeritus Mar Joseph Perumthottam graced the occasion with his presence. Priestly representatives from all four eparchies participated in the meeting. From our eparchy, Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil, Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal, Fr. Johnsilal Arackaparampil, Fr. Dency Mundunadackal, Fr. Tobin Alapurackal, Fr. Justin Sutheesh, Fr. Abilash Xavier, Fr. Linto Thakidiyel, and Fr. Liju Marattukalam were present. The meeting commenced at 10:00 a.m., with discussions focusing on social, educational, and liturgical matters. On behalf of all four eparchies, I felicitated Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, who presided over the inter-eparchial meeting for the first time. The gathering concluded with an agape meal at 1:30 p.m.

TNBC at Madurai: The TNBC meeting was held on 21 January 2025 at Pillar, Madurai, hosted by the Archdiocese of Madurai. The gathering began with a concelebrated Holy Qurbana presided over by Most Rev. Lawrence Pius. The inaugural address was delivered by Most Rev. George Antonysamy, President of TNBC. Key discussions focused on topics such as the Synodal Church, the rights and challenges faced by

minority communities, and the adaptation of the CBCI's pastoral plan. The meeting also provided an opportunity for regional commissions to share their activities.

Feast of Don Bosco: St. John Bosco, father and teacher of youth, when he was only nine years old, learned through a dream that he was called to dedicate his life for the education of the young. Through his style of education based on reason, religion and loving kindness (which he called Preventive System), Don Bosco helped the young people to think seriously about their lives, to encounter Christ, to learn about their faith, to receive the sacraments, to accept their companions, and to involve themselves in apostolic and professional activities. Among the finest fruits of his pedagogy was the 15-year-old St Dominic Savio.

The Feast of Don Bosco was celebrated at Sangamam on 31 January 2025. Forane Vicars, Fathers from Thuckalay-Pilankalai Forane, Provincial Superiors, and representatives from neighbouring religious communities of the Bishop's House were invited to the event. The programme began with a prayer session led by Fr. George Kalangara SDB and Fr. Michael Arockiyasamy SDB, during which they shared brief but inspiring messages on Don Bosco. Rev. Fr. Thomas Powathuparampil welcomed the invitees, and the CMC Sisters presented a meaningful song honouring Don Bosco. The new Provincial, Rev. Sr. Jessy Therese CMC, offered felicitations. Representing the Fathers, Fr. Mathew Kuzhinjalil shared reflections highlighting the life and legacy of St. Don Bosco. Fr. Amanto served as the Master of Ceremonies. The gathering concluded with a community meal. I extend my sincere gratitude to all who organized the event so well and offered your prayers and good wishes to me.

INFORMATION

- **Fr. Vinod Kanakkalil** has completed his LLB studies and is being admitted as an advocate on 04 January 2025. We congratulate him for this achievement.
- **Syro Malabar Mission Week** was celebrated in our diocese under the directions given from the Syro Malabar Mission Office and the diocesan department of CML from 06 to 12 January 2025.
- **Mr. C. S. Mathew (80)**, the beloved father of Sr. Ann Maria CMC, was called to the eternal abode on 08 January 2025. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Sr. Ann Maria and her family members and pray for the departed soul.
- **Dn. Anoop Thathappally** has completed his diaconate ministry in Little Flower Forane Church, Manjalumoodu and began his ministry in St. Joseph's Forane Church, Soosaipuram on 13 January 2025.
- **Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil** is relieved from the office of the Parish Priest of Loretto Matha Church, Pilankarai on 19 January 2025. His present residence will be at Sangamam.
- **Fr. Vinu D Joseph** is appointed as Parochial Administrator of Loretto Matha Church, Pilankarai with effect from 19 January 2025.
- **Pulari Matriculation School, Pudur**, Tenkasi celebrated its 20th annual day on 20 January 2025.
- **Fr. Subin Puthenpurackal** attended the meeting of secretaries of TNBC Health care commission held at Infant Jesus Church, Trichy on 22 January 2025.
- **New Office bearers of CRI** of the Diocese of Thuckalay from 23 January 2025: Sr. Jessy Therese CMC (President), Fr. Mathew Arekalam CMI (Vice President), Sr. Valan Arasi SDS (Secretary), Sr. Lins SABS (Joint Secretary) and Sr. Ann Grace FCC (Treasurer). Congratulations and prayerful wishes to the newly elected office bearers of CRI!
- **Fr. Joshy Kulathumkal** went to Saudi Arabia on 25 January 2025.
- **Fr. Jinu Thekkethala** came back from Rome for one-month vacation on 25 January 2025. We wish him a blessed stay in the Diocese.
- **Fr. Seby Manimalakkandathil** has completed his overseas mission in Saudi Arabia and came back to the Diocese on 28 January 2025.

- **Alphonsa Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Nagercoil** celebrated its 35th annual day on 30 January 2025.
- **Seven Deacons** will be coming to our diocese from the diocese of Ramanathapuram for mission and pastoral experience. They will be in different parishes and mission places from 26 February – 13 March 2025.

The ongoing formation programme for all Fathers is scheduled for February 13 and 14, 2025. Please take note of these dates and make arrangements to be available. The venue for the programme will be Sangamam. As it is a two-day event, kindly come prepared to stay overnight at Sangamam.

FORTHCOMING MAJOR EVENTS

01 February	-	Jubilee of Minor Seminarians at Minor Seminary
02 February	-	Kulasekharam Church blessing
09 February	-	12 th Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Philip Kodiantara
09 February	-	Blessing of Marthandam Church
10 February	-	Jubilee of the Sick at Vayalinkarai
11 February	-	World Day of the Sick
13 February	-	Orientation Programme for Priests at Sangamam
14 February	-	Report Presentation by Departments & Pious Associations
16 February	-	Jubilee of the Youth
22 February	-	Jubilee of the differently abled at KKSSS
23 February	-	Blessing of Thettivilai Church

Ongoing Priestly Formation & Presentation of Annual Report by Departments & Pious Associations
Place: Sangamam
Dates: 13-14 February 2025

CONCLUSION

As I conclude my circular, I reflect with earnestness and hope on the solemn inauguration of the Christ Jubilee 2025 in all our parishes, under the theme "**Pilgrims of Hope.**" I strongly recommend that this Jubilee Year be an opportunity for all of us, especially priests, to celebrate Jesus, who has called us, and to rejoice in our priesthood with gratitude and joy.

I sincerely thank you for your dedicated ministry in the Eparchy on behalf of our people. I am confident that the good Lord will bless you abundantly. Let us continue to pray for the intentions of the Eparchy and re-dedicate ourselves to serving our people with even greater enthusiasm and commitment. May the Lord continue to bless you and your ministries! With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in Christ Jesus,



† **George Rajendran SDB**
Bishop of Thuckalay

