



HUMAN DIGNITY AND THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF ENCYCLICAL *MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS*



Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil

The global community today stands at the summit of an unprecedented digital revolution. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and new media continue to transform the possibilities of communication, these developments cannot be viewed merely as technological progress. Even a digital gathering bringing together nearly a thousand participants from around the world is itself a defining characteristic of our age. It is within this context that the first encyclical of **Pope Leo XIV**, *Magnifica Humanitas*, assumes particular significance. Anyone seeking to understand the innovations of the present technological era will discover in this document profound reflections on how Artificial Intelligence should be approached with discernment. Beyond technology itself, the Holy Father presents a comprehensive vision centred on **human dignity**, which today faces threats in many different forms.

Catholic Social Teaching: A Historical Continuum

The Holy Father's encyclical did not emerge in isolation; rather, it is the latest development in the Church's long and rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. Beginning with **Pope Leo XIII's** *Rerum Novarum*, the Church has consistently defended the dignity of labour and the rights of workers. Throughout history, the Church has opposed the concentration of wealth in the hands of a privileged few while poverty continues to increase. Successive Popes affirmed religious freedom as a fundamental human right.

Pope Francis, through his social teaching, courageously raised his voice against environmental exploitation and invited humanity to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. By reaffirming the principle of the universal destination of goods and responding to the challenges of the present age, Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas* becomes the newest expression of this living tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

The encyclical clearly states that technology is never morally neutral. Instead, it proposes three fundamental principles



Human limitations are not obstacles but opportunities for God's mercy to be revealed and for authentic love to flourish. For this reason, genuine human relationships and physical presence must once again be restored beyond the confines of the digital world. Pope Leo XIV neither rejects technology nor views it as inherently negative. Rather, he calls for the formation of a new counterculture that confronts the challenges of the digital age while steadfastly upholding the dignity of the human person.

of Catholic Social Teaching for evaluating technological development.

The first principle affirms that every human person is created in the image and likeness of the Triune God. Since the Trinity itself is a communion of Persons united in perfect relationship, the human person is by nature relational and cannot be understood in isolation.

The second principle is the equal dignity of every human being. Because God's love is limitless, the able and the disabled, the healthy and the sick, the rich and the poor all possess the same intrinsic human worth.

The third principle concerns human rights. Human rights are an expression of human dignity. Significantly, it was **Tertullian**, one of the Fathers of the Church in the second century, who first employed the expression "human rights," demonstrating that this concept has deep roots within the Christian tradition.

Human Dignity Under Threat: War and Modern Slavery

The threats confronting humanity today extend far beyond technology. Ongoing wars across the globe and the many forms of modern slavery continue to undermine human dignity. The Holy Father observes that even as technology advances, increasing numbers of people become marginalized. Calling for the emergence of a new culture of love, the encyclical strongly criticizes contemporary developments in which technological progress reduces the human person to a mere instrument or victim of machines.

Artificial Intelligence and the Crisis of Employment

The rapid expansion of technology is producing profound consequences in the world of work and the economy. *Outlook* magazine's cover story, "**The Slow Death of IT Sector Jobs**," vividly illustrates this reality. Nearly six million people in India depend upon the information technology sector for their livelihood, yet approximately 150,000 jobs were lost in the past year alone. Major corporations such as Microsoft, which laid off around 15,000 employees, and Amazon, which dismissed nearly 30,000 workers, continue large-scale workforce reductions. The principal reason is that Artificial Intelligence can perform many tasks more quickly and efficiently than human workers, prompting companies to replace human labour with automated systems.

Human dignity and self-worth are intimately connected with meaningful work and creative labour. Employment is not merely an economic necessity; it enables the human person to realize his or her vocation through productive activity. However, as Artificial Intelligence increasingly replaces human workers, individuals lose not only employment but also the dignity and self-respect that meaningful work provides. Pope Leo XIV expresses deep concern over this disturbing consequence of technological advancement in *Magnifica Humanitas*.

Modern Warfare and the Moral Failure of Artificial Intelligence

The recent conflict between Iran and

Israel has been described by many observers as the world's first full-scale "AI war." Human intelligence alone could scarcely have coordinated attacks against nearly two thousand different targets within just ninety-six hours. Such military operations became possible through sophisticated Artificial Intelligence algorithms. Yet behind this extraordinary efficiency lay a profound moral failure.

During the early stages of the conflict, a school in Minab, Iran, was mistakenly bombed, resulting in the tragic deaths of approximately 180 schoolgirls. The building had once served as a base of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard but had later been converted into a school. Because the AI algorithms had not been updated with this crucial information, the system identified the location based on outdated military data. Consequently, innocent children lost their lives. This tragedy demonstrates the grave danger posed by technological systems that pursue efficiency while lacking moral judgment and human compassion.

Babel or Jerusalem: Two Contrasting Visions

To evaluate the world that humanity is constructing through Artificial Intelligence and modern technology, Pope Leo XIV poses a profoundly biblical question: **Are we building a new Tower of Babel, or are we rebuilding the city of Jerusalem as Nehemiah did?**

The story of the Tower of Babel reveals humanity's attempt to build a monument reaching the heavens for the sake of pride, fame, and domination. Although technological expertise and human ingenuity were abundant, God had no place in the project. Babel therefore symbolizes self-sufficiency, arrogance, and the illusion of absolute human autonomy. It represents a civilization that sacrifices human dignity on the altar of efficiency and achievement.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem under **Nehemiah** presents a striking contrast. Before undertaking the reconstruction of the city's walls, Nehemiah fasted and prayed, placing God at the centre of his plans. At the same time, he never overlooked the human person or human weakness. Before rebuilding walls of stone, he first united the people, encouraged their participation, and strengthened the bonds of community. His achievement was therefore not merely the reconstruction of physical structures but the restoration of authentic human relationships founded upon faith, cooperation, shared responsibility, and trust in God.

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EDITORIAL



MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS: CELEBRATING THE GRANDEUR OF HUMAN DIGNITY

The Church has always proclaimed that the human person is the greatest masterpiece of God's creation. Created in the image and likeness of God, every person possesses an inviolable dignity that no circumstance, social status, or human judgment can diminish. It is this timeless truth that is beautifully expressed in the first encyclical of Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*: a call to rediscover and celebrate the grandeur of our common humanity.

In an age marked by rapid technological advances, unprecedented scientific achievements, and increasing global interconnectedness, humanity also faces profound challenges. Wars, poverty, forced migration, environmental degradation, loneliness, discrimination, and the erosion of moral values continue to wound the human family. While society often measures success by wealth, power, and efficiency, the Gospel reminds us that the true measure of civilization lies in the way we treat the weakest, the poorest, and the most vulnerable among us.

For Christians, human dignity is not merely a philosophical principle or a constitutional right; it is rooted in the mystery of creation and redemption. God created every person out of love, and in Jesus Christ He embraced our humanity, sanctified it, and redeemed it through His Cross and Resurrection. Thus, every human life, from conception to natural death, is sacred and worthy of reverence.

The Syro-Malabar Church, nourished by the apostolic faith handed down through St. Thomas the Apostle, has always understood evangelization and human promotion as inseparable dimensions of her mission. Our educational institutions, healthcare ministries, charitable services, and missionary activities are all expressions of our commitment to uphold human dignity. Every act of compassion, every effort to educate a child, every initiative to care for the sick, and every gesture of reconciliation bears witness to the Gospel of life that proclaims the dignity of every human person.

Magnifica Humanitas also challenges us to examine our personal and communal lives. Do our families foster respect, forgiveness, and mutual care? Do our parishes welcome every person without prejudice? Are we forming young people to become responsible disciples who value truth, justice, and compassion over selfish ambition? These are not merely pastoral questions but essential expressions of Christian discipleship. Only when we honour humanity do we truly glorify God. In serving the human person with love and truth, the Church fulfils her mission and reveals the radiant face of Christ to the world.

As we reflect on the message of *Magnifica Humanitas* in this edition, let us renew our commitment to building communities where every person is respected, every life is protected, every family is strengthened, and every culture is enriched by the love of Christ. May our witness as the Syro-Malabar Church continue to proclaim not only the greatness of God but also the magnificent dignity bestowed upon every human being by the Creator!

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A DAY TO REMEMBER

July 1: Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath (2001)

July 3: Dukhrana of St. Thomas, the Apostle
Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Mar Vijayanand Nedumpuram (1990)

July 10: Feast of the Seventy Disciples, Death Anniversary of Bishop Mar James Pazhayattil (2016)

July 11: Death Anniversary of Mar Charles Lavigne (1913), St. Benedict of Nursia

July 12: Feast of the Twelve Apostles (Nusardel)

July 15: St. Kuriakose, St. Julitta

July 16: Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 17: Mar Jacob of Nisibis

July 22: St. Mary Magdalene

July 24: Mar Mari, the Disciple of Mar Addai

July 25: St. James, the Apostle

July 26: St. Joachim and St. Anne
Death Anniversary of Bishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, former Bishop of the Kottayam Eparchy (1975)

July 28: St. Alphonsa

July 29: St. Martha

July 31: St. Ignatius of Loyola

FESTAL GREETINGS

July 3



Bishop Mar Thomas Elavanal



Bishop Mar Thomas Chakiath



Bishop Mar Thomas Thuruthimattam



Bishop Mar Thomas Tharayil



Bishop Mar Thomas Padiyath



Bishop Mar Alex Tharamangalam

July 15



Archbishop Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara

July 25



Bishop Mar Jacob Mananodath



Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath



Bishop Mar Jacob Muricken



Bishop Mar James Athikalam



Rev. Dr. Alex Sebastian Kollamkalam

Mar Mari, regarded as the first missionary to the Parthian Empire, was one of the Seventy Disciples of the Lord and a close disciple of his master, Mar Addai. The sixth-century Syriac work *The Acts of Mar Mari*, composed in Babylonia, provides a comprehensive account of his missionary labours. Having received the blessings of Mar Addai at Edessa, Mar Mari set out towards the East to proclaim the Gospel. His first destination was Nisibis, where he preached Christ with zeal. Destroying the pagan idols worshipped there, he established a church and monastic houses in their place. He also founded a renowned School of Theology at Nisibis and appointed competent teachers for its instruction (*Acts of Mar Mari*, 7).

From Nisibis, Mar Mari continued his missionary journey through Arzanene, Beth Zab-dai, and Beth Arabaye before reaching Erbil. There he miraculously cured the king of leprosy and delivered the son of the commander of the army from

MAR MARI



demonic possession. Through these extraordinary signs, the royal household embraced the Christian faith, followed in due course by the people of the entire region.

His missionary travels next brought him to Beth Garmai, a land described in *The Acts of Mar Mari* (12) as a place shrouded in darkness and evil. There he healed the king's daughter who had been afflicted with paralysis. At the village of Gel, he restored a dead child to life. Witnessing these manifestations of divine power, the inhabitants of the surrounding regions came to believe in Christ. After proclaiming the Gospel in Beth Armai, he proceeded to Seleucia (*Acts of Mar Mari*, 19-24).

The evangelization of Seleucia proved especially demanding. Its inhabitants, deeply attached to pagan beliefs, devoted themselves to feasting, drinking, and worldly pleasures. At one stage, Mar Mari even contemplated returning to Edessa to rejoin his fellow disciples. Nevertheless, persevering through numerous trials and fierce opposition from pagan priests, he eventually led many to the Christian faith. He dedicated an entire year to the evangelization of Seleucia and established a Christian church on the very site of a pagan temple that had been granted to him by the king. From there he carried the light of the Gospel to Kokhe, Shafi, Kashkar, Maishan, and the region of Ctesiphon.

Mar Mari carried out his apostolic ministry during the closing years of the first century and the beginning of the second century. Following his death, his mortal remains were interred in the church that he himself had founded at Deir Kuni (*Acts of Mar Mari*, 33).

Revered as the founder and first bishop of the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Mar Mari later came to be honoured as the Apostle of Babylonia. In the East Syriac liturgical tradition, his feast is celebrated on the Second Friday of *Kaitha*.



From the Heart of
the Father and Head

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



The world is passing through one of the most decisive moments in its history as a result of the revolutionary advances in science

and technology. Artificial Intelligence has become an integral part of our daily lives, challenging human creativity and intellectual capacity in unprecedented ways. Amid this rapid technological expansion, we must reflect not only on the immense possibilities opened by Artificial Intelligence but also on the vigilance and spiritual responsibility that Christians and the global community must exercise.

The possibilities of Artificial Intelligence are indeed immense. It has enormous potential to improve efficiency, foster innovation, and contribute to economic development. At the same time, however, it presents serious challenges that deserve careful attention. Today, AI has reached a stage where it can significantly influence democracy, truth, social relationships, human freedom, and the integral dignity of the human person. As Pope Francis observed, "Technology



has the power to heal, connect, educate, and protect our common home. Yet it can also divide, exclude, and create new forms of injustice." Pope Leo likewise reminds us that the proper response is not to reject technology but to use it with wisdom, prudence, justice, compassion for the marginalized, and responsibility toward creation.

In this rapidly changing technological age, it is essential that we remain deeply rooted as human beings. No machine can replace the inner freedom and moral conscience that God has bestowed upon every person. Human dignity is not something that machines can imitate, for it originates from the very breath of God. Sacred Scripture reminds us in the

risks weakening the natural intellectual capacities of the human person.

Moral Principles for the Common Good

The encyclical proposes several fundamental moral principles to guide the regulation of the digital world and address the challenges posed by technological development.

The **common good** must remain the ultimate goal of every human activity, since the whole is always greater than the sum of its individual parts.

The **universal destination of goods** must also be applied to the digital age. Just as land, water, and air belong to the common heritage of humanity, so too should the new resources of our time—including patents, algorithms, digital platforms, and data—not become the exclusive possession of a privileged few. In today's world, data has become a source of immense power, yet it must ultimately serve the good of all.

The **principle of subsidiarity** teaches that authority should not be concentrated exclusively in the hands of the State. Responsibilities that individuals, the Church, families, or other social institutions are capable of fulfilling should be entrusted to them rather than centralized.

The **principle of solidarity** reminds us that all people are created in the image of God and are therefore called to work together as members of one human family.

Finally, **social justice** demands that every person be guaranteed the opportunity to live a life worthy of human dignity.

THE HUMAN PERSON MUST REMAIN AT THE HEART OF THE AI REVOLUTION



The possibilities of Artificial Intelligence are indeed immense. It has enormous potential to improve efficiency, foster innovation, and contribute to economic development. At the same time, however, it presents serious challenges that deserve careful attention.

Book of Genesis: "God created mankind in His own image" (Genesis 1:27). Every human person bears this living image of God, and no material technology can ever replace that divine reality. The Psalmist marvels at this unique dignity: "You have made him little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:5). No algorithm or computer program can comprehend the spiritual greatness and dignity that God has entrusted to humanity.

The Fathers of the Church consistently affirmed this incomparable dignity of the human person. St. Leo the Great famously exhorted: "Christian, recognize your dignity; you have become a sharer in the divine nature; do not return to your former way of life." Humanity is not merely a material creation but a participant in the divine life, redeemed through the Blood of Christ. In the age of Artificial Intelligence, however, there is an increasing tendency to reduce the human person to digital information and data. St. Augustine reminds us: "Do not think little of yourself, for the Creator of the universe has valued you immensely." A machine can never occupy the place that belongs to the human person, who is treasured by God.

Therefore, we must remain convinced that technology can never recreate the human heart, its capacity for love, or its spiritual depth. Machines may analyse information more quickly than human beings, but as St. Anthony reminds us, "True wisdom consists in the fear of God and love for one's neighbour; it springs not from machines but from the depths of the human heart." Machines operate according to programmed instructions, and animals according to instinct; only the human person has received God's own breath and the moral conscience to distinguish between good and evil. No machine can ever replace the human heart.

In this modern world, we must ensure that technology is always used for the good of humanity and never becomes an instrument of exploitation or marginalisation. Even in the age of Artificial Intelligence, we must preserve our humanity, compassion, faith in God, inner freedom, and moral conscience. May God grant us the wisdom to become masters of technology rather than its slaves, and to shine as witnesses of love and justice in our society through a spirituality rooted in discernment.

Continuation of page 1

The Babel Syndrome and the Erosion of Human Personhood

The contemporary corporate world is increasingly afflicted by what may be described as the **"Babel Syndrome."** It is a culture that elevates profit to the status of an absolute value. If human beings are no longer required to generate profit, they are readily replaced by machines, while human suffering is regarded as irrelevant to business interests. This mindset is driven by the ambition to control the entire world through a single digital language and technological framework.

Within such a culture, the profound mystery of the human person is reduced to mere **data** and **performance**. Individuals are evaluated solely on the basis of their productivity and utility, while the weak, the disabled, and the vulnerable are viewed as burdens upon society and consequently marginalized. In such an environment, grave moral violations such as abortion gradually cease to be regarded as ethical concerns.

The growing dependence on Artificial Intelligence in education further illustrates this danger. Students are now able to generate assignments and essays within minutes through AI tools, but this convenience comes at the cost of diminishing critical thinking, creativity, and the discipline of hard work. Although AI's ability to solve mathematical problems that have remained unsolved for decades demonstrates its remarkable computational power, it simultaneously

Disarming Artificial Intelligence and Building a Counterculture

When decisions are driven solely by profit and efficiency, both humanity and creation inevitably become victims of exploitation. Today, the control of major digital platforms rests not primarily with democratic governments but with powerful multinational corporations. Their guiding principle is often not Christian morality or the common good, but commercial profit. In such a context, human intelligence, conscience, and freedom risk becoming subordinate to Artificial Intelligence itself.

Artificial Intelligence possesses neither a body nor lived experience. It knows neither joy nor sorrow, neither love nor suffering, and it has no moral conscience. Human beings, however, are far more than rational intelligence; they are persons who live through emotions, relationships, and moral responsibility. At a time when technological competition among corporations such as Google and NVIDIA increasingly resembles an arms race, Pope Leo XIV offers the compelling appeal to **"Disarm AI."** Technology, he insists, must never become an instrument of rivalry, domination, or destruction.

Human dignity is not only a gift received from God but also a mission entrusted to humanity. We are called to cultivate and protect that dignity by disarming our speech and training ourselves for the work of peace. It is here that education assumes a decisive role.

Through sound education, hearts must be formed to love truth and to seek wisdom. The Holy Father offers a striking new understanding of spirituality when he describes it as **"being, becoming a wise architect"**—that is, becoming a person prepared to build a world founded upon the common good.

Human limitations are not obstacles but opportunities for God's mercy to be revealed and for authentic love to flourish. For this reason, genuine human relationships and physical presence must once again be restored beyond the confines of the digital world. Pope Leo XIV neither rejects technology nor views it as inherently negative. Rather, he calls for the formation of a new **counterculture** that confronts the challenges of the digital age while steadfastly upholding the dignity of the human person.

As the most recent contribution to the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, *Magnifica Humanitas* provides the contemporary world with a compelling moral vision. Rather than allowing technology to dominate humanity, it challenges us to ensure that every technological advancement remains at the service of the human person, the common good, and the civilization of love. The encyclical thus offers not merely an ethical critique of Artificial Intelligence but a hopeful roadmap for building a future in which technological innovation and authentic human flourishing advance together under the guidance of wisdom, justice, and the Gospel.

AI MORALITY AND THE VISION OF *MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS*



Rev. Dr. Saji Mathew Kanayankal, CST

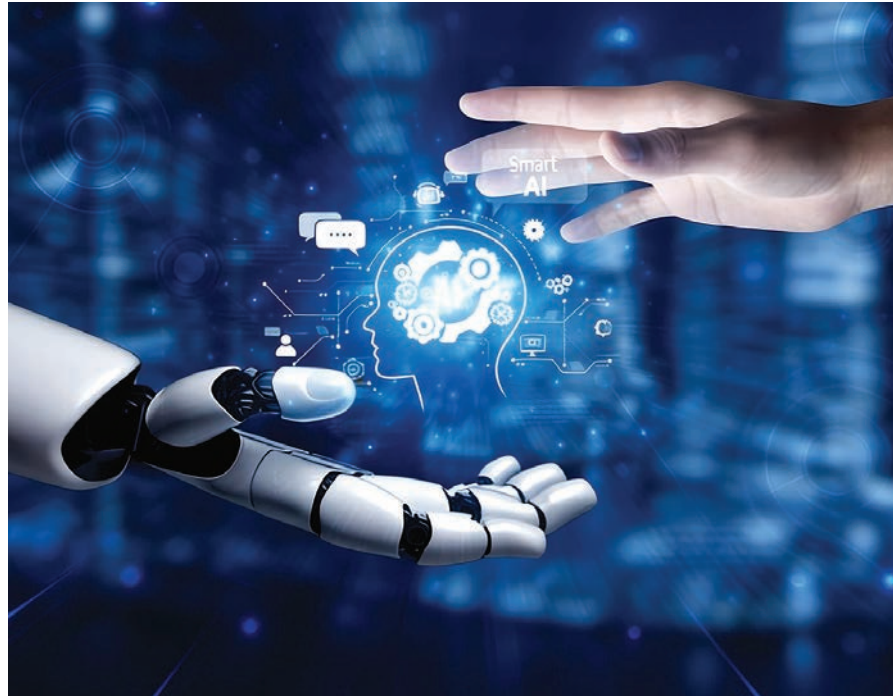
Introduction

The first encyclical of **Pope Leo XIV**, *Magnifica Humanitas* (*Magnificent Humanity*), is a timely teaching that addresses the challenges confronting humanity in the age of artificial intelligence. While acknowledging the opportunities and crises arising from rapid technological advancement, the encyclical proclaims the unique dignity of the human person. It further emphasizes that the challenges posed by artificial intelligence are not merely ethical or technological, but fundamentally **theological** and **anthropological**. This article reflects on the moral vigilance proposed by the Holy Father in response to these emerging challenges.

Some regard artificial intelligence as the solution to virtually every problem confronting the modern world. Its applications are sought not only in education and healthcare but also as remedies for many social problems such as loneliness, alienation, and the growing absence of authentic human relationships. It is within this context that the significance of this encyclical, which proposes clear moral principles for the responsible use of artificial intelligence, becomes particularly evident.

In one sense, the possibilities of artificial intelligence appear limitless. It can enhance efficiency, facilitate new discoveries, and contribute significantly to economic development. At the same time, however, its risks cannot be ignored. Artificial intelligence has already begun to influence the world in ways that can threaten democracy, truth, social relationships, human freedom, and personal integrity. As the Holy Father observes: “Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home. Yet it also has the power to divide, exclude, and create new forms of injustice” (#9).

Rather than rejecting technology, Pope Leo calls upon humanity to use it with prudence, wisdom, justice, concern for the marginalized, and a profound commitment to the care of creation (#85). In a world where technology evolves with extraordinary speed, it is essential that human beings remain firmly rooted interiorly. No machine, however sophisticated, can replace the inner freedom and moral conscience that God has bestowed upon every human person (#233).



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Moral Challenges

This encyclical offers an important response to the question of whether the use of artificial intelligence is morally acceptable. According to the Holy Father, technology is neither inherently good nor evil. Its moral value depends upon the manner in which it is used. The decisive question is not simply whether artificial intelligence is technologically advanced, but whether it genuinely promotes human flourishing and the common good.

Artificial intelligence becomes dangerous when it neglects the moral, spiritual, and relational dimensions of human life. Whenever its use threatens human dignity, human rights, freedom, equal opportunity, or the very nature of the human person, its ethical implications demand serious consideration (#102).

The encyclical identifies several areas of concern affecting human life, including employment insecurity and growing inequality (#151), the misuse of personal data and violations of privacy (#102), ideological biases embedded within technological systems (#102), the development of autonomous weapons capable of making lethal decisions (#197), and transhumanist attempts to enhance human beings through technology (#115). The fundamental question that must guide every application of artificial intelligence is whether it truly serves humanity and safeguards authentic human dignity (#85, 112).

Two Symbols: Two Approaches

To illustrate the moral principles governing the use of artificial intelligence,

the Holy Father employs two powerful biblical images: the **Tower of Babel** (Gen. 11:1–9) and the **Rebuilding of Jerusalem** under **Nehemiah**. These represent two radically different approaches to technological progress.

The Tower of Babel symbolizes a culture driven by power, the thirst for domination, excessive self-confidence, and technological arrogance. Those who built the tower shared one language, one technology, and one common objective. Yet they deliberately excluded God and sought uniformity by suppressing diversity.

By contrast, the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah offers a model of responsible technological leadership. Rather than acting as an authoritarian ruler, Nehemiah listened to the people, shared responsibilities, encouraged participation, and fostered collaborative leadership. The reconstruction of Jerusalem stands as a model of prayer, sacrifice, mutual cooperation, and dependence upon God. Likewise, Pope Leo teaches that technology must be developed through dialogue, participation, and shared responsibility. Rather than being imposed from above, technological development should respect every person and promote collaborative participation (#7, 8, 90).

Discernment in the Digital Age

The moral principle proposed by Pope Leo for evaluating the use of technology is the Christian virtue of **discernment**. Although artificial intelligence is an immensely valuable tool, it is not morally neutral (#100). Those who de-

sign, finance, regulate, and use artificial intelligence inevitably shape it according to their own intentions and priorities. Therefore, understanding its objectives and underlying assumptions is indispensable for its ethical use (#9, 104).

However advanced artificial intelligence may become, it lacks genuinely human experience, emotional relationships, and interior consciousness. Its responses do not arise from lived experience. Nor does it possess a moral conscience capable of understanding the deeper meaning of situations or distinguishing between good and evil.

The Holy Father warns that excessive dependence on artificial intelligence can weaken human creativity, critical thinking, and moral judgment (#99). He also proposes several practical questions to guide ethical discernment in the digital age. Is the artificial intelligence we use committed to truth? Are the sources on which it relies trustworthy? Does it strengthen human relationships and genuinely serve others? Does it promote justice and peace? Ultimately, does it contribute to the authentic good of the human family? (#237–240).

Honest reflection on these questions enables individuals and societies to employ artificial intelligence both effectively and responsibly. Prudence, careful evaluation, and, where necessary, restraint will help humanity to use this powerful technology with greater responsibility and deeper commitment to the welfare of the entire human family (#106).

The Pride of Power and the Civilization of Love

Pope Leo XIV concludes the encyclical by presenting the vision of a **civilization of love**. The arrogance and pride that characterized the construction of the Tower of Babel continue to manifest themselves in many forms throughout the contemporary world. According to the Holy Father, many of today's conflicts are ultimately rooted in this same spirit of pride (#285).

As an alternative, he proposes the cultivation of a civilization shaped by the culture of love (#185). Such a civilization seeks an economic vision and a political culture founded upon justice and the common good. Mutual solidarity, fraternity, and shared responsibility constitute its essential foundations (#185).

By encouraging humanity to understand one another, to seek the common good, and to acknowledge the limits of human power, this vision offers new horizons of hope to a world deeply wounded by pride, conflict, and division. ■

PASTORAL LETTER

DUKRANA – SABHADINAM 2026

Raphael Thattil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, to the Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Men and Women and Lay Persons of the Syro-Malabar Church.

May the Grace of the Lord be with you all!

Dearest beloved brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

Once again, we celebrate the *Dukrana* of our Father in Faith, St. Thomas, the Apostle. Thomas, who encouraged his fellow disciples who were overcome by fear, saying, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (Jn. 11:16), came to India to proclaim the Gospel and suffered martyrdom at Chinnamalai, near Madras, in A.D. 72. One of the greatest testimonies to the missionary activities and martyrdom of St. Thomas is the living community of St. Thomas Christians in India who continue to cherish and live according to the tradition handed down to them by the Apostle. For the Syro-Malabar Church, the 3rd of July is a day of profound spiritual and ecclesial identity. It is for this reason that we celebrate the feast of the martyrdom of St. Thomas as the *Sabhadinam* of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Gospel account in which the Apostle Thomas insists on seeing the Risen Lord for himself, refusing to rely solely on the testimony of the other Apostles, is deeply moving. The doubt of Thomas was not an expression of disbelief in the negative sense. The one who initially doubted was ultimately transformed into a courageous witness to the faith. The journey of Thomas - from doubt to faith, from inquiry to witnessing, from discipleship to martyrdom - is to be the spiritual journey of every Christian. It is for this reason that St. Gregory the Great remarked that “the unbelief of Thomas has been more beneficial to our faith than the faith of the other disciples” (*Homiliae in Evangelia*, 26, 7).

The present generation lives amid doubts and uncertainties. This age of artificial intelligence and the information revolution presents numerous challenges. The first encyclical letter of the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, to the Universal Church, entitled *Magnifica Humanitas*, has drawn the attention of people throughout the world and has been widely received with interest and reflection. The central vision of this encyclical is that technology must serve the human person, who bears the image and glory of God, and that humanity must never be reduced to servitude under its own technological creations. The Holy Father states: “Human dignity does not depend on a person’s abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love” (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 50). The

encyclical further reminds us that every generation has the responsibility to build a world marked by justice and fraternity while safeguarding the dignity and greatness of the human person.

In today’s digital media culture, which often causes polarization and hostility, the Holy Father reminds us that Christians have an urgent duty to seek the truth and arrive at wise and responsible decisions. In an age when rumours spread rapidly and truth is frequently obscured, we must become seekers of truth like St. Thomas. There is no doubt that social media is beneficial in many aspects of life. Yet it has also become a platform where falsehood, hatred, and defamation are deliberately disseminated. When messages that malign others, harm the innocent, and spread falsehood are created or shared indiscriminately, the fifth commandment, “You shall not kill,” is violated, for such actions can wound a person’s dignity, reputation, and well-being. Today, more than ever, we need the prudence and vigilance to examine carefully what we encounter, to verify what we do not know, to refrain from promoting what is untrue, and to courageously oppose falsehood wherever it appears.

Today, our society often neglects the poor and the powerless. Elderly parents frequently become victims of the indifference or cruelty of their own children. When relationships break down within families and at various levels of society, it is often those who stand for justice and fairness who suffer most. The growing incidence of violence among school and college students is a cause for serious concern. The abuse of drugs and the violence associated with it threaten the well-being of society. Situations that undermine and destroy human dignity are found in many places. As the Holy Father urges, each of us must remain vigilant within our own sphere of responsibility so as to dismantle the towers of Babel, the symbol of human pride and self-sufficiency, and to build the City in which God and humanity dwell together, where justice and peace prevail (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 1).

The family is the first school of faith. Praying together, sharing meals together, and participating together in the responsibilities of family life are among the cherished traditions that have long nurtured and strengthened our families. At a time when each person in the family is occupied with personal schedules and professional commitments, we need

to examine ourselves and ask whether we are failing to preserve the shared spirituality of family life. Parents must transmit human and Christian values to their children alongside the proper use of technology. In his encyclical, Pope Leo XIV specifically warns against the danger of digital slavery. Excessive use of mobile phones, diminished communication among family members, growing dependence on screens among children, and the neglect of prayer are among the challenges confronting families today. It is beyond doubt that the family environment exercises a profound and decisive influence on the spiritual and human formation of a person. Therefore, I urge all families to observe regular periods of ‘digital fasting’, to refrain from using mobile phones during meals, and to set aside time each day for family prayer.

Communion is at the very heart of the Church’s nature. Therefore, all the members of the Church are called to live and work in communion and to foster communion. Differences of opinion may naturally arise within the Church. However, factional or sectarian attitudes are contrary to the spirit of the Church. The Church is a big family that embraces us all. Hence, everyone has the responsibility to work in harmony with the institutions of the Church. The words of St. Cyprian remain relevant: “One cannot have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother” (*Habere non potest Deum Patrem qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem, De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*, 6).

The year 2026 is being observed in our Church as the Year of Community Empowerment. All concerned should ensure the effective implementation, at the various levels of the Church, of the various programmes designed by the Commission for Public Affairs and approved by the Synod for the observance of this special year. As a community of believers, while firmly upholding our legitimate rights, we must also cultivate respect for others, cooperate in matters of public concern, and join hands with others wherever possible. The Church remains committed to dialogue and collaboration with all people for the common good of society and for the building of a just world. We must move forward as a Church that reaches out to all with love and truth, excluding no one and unafraid of differences.

We have the duty to follow the courageous example of our Father in Faith

and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ without fear. We thank God that members of our Church are serving in various parts of the world as ministers of the Gospel. On this occasion, we gratefully recall the significant advances our Church has recently made in the field of evangelization. I consider it a blessing that many lay missionaries, together with priests and religious, are actively engaged in this mission. I am happy to announce the inauguration of the *Jeevan Jyothi*, a movement at the Major Archiepiscopal level, intended to coordinate and empower the evangelizing efforts of the lay missionaries of our Church. Let us support all missionary endeavours in every way possible and pray earnestly for their success.

It is a matter of great joy that, under the leadership of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Hosur, a pilgrimage centre is being established near the Santhome Cathedral in Mylapore, where the sacred tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle is located. I would like to congratulate Mar Sebastian Pozholidiparambil, Bishop of Hosur, and the entire Eparchy for taking the initiative in this noble and historic undertaking. I gratefully remember all those who have generously supported the Eparchy in bringing this project to fruition. I also take this opportunity to appeal to all our parishes to extend their wholehearted cooperation in whatever way possible, so that this cherished dream of establishing a worthy place of worship and pilgrimage near the tomb of our Father in Faith, St. Thomas the Apostle, may be fully realized for the spiritual benefit of future generations.

Dearly beloved in Christ, in this age, we are called to bear witness to the faith in Jesus Christ that has been handed down to us through St. Thomas, the Apostle. Not all are called to shed their blood physically in witness to the Lord in our times. Nevertheless, our times demand from us a daily martyrdom of truth, justice, faith and patience in the Church, in society, in our families, and in every circumstance of life. Let us not be builders of the Tower of Babel; rather, let us become builders of the Kingdom of God, constructing communities where God and humanity dwell together in harmony within the Church, society, and family.

I extend the greetings of the Feast of *Dukrana* and the *Sabhadinam* to all. May the intercession and blessings of our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Thomas the Apostle, and all the saints and blessed be with us and all our endeavours!

THE SISTERS OF THE DESTITUTE: A STORY OF GOD'S MERCY



A century ago, in the remote village of Mottakunnu at Chunangamveli, Aluva, where jackals once roamed and howled, Rev. Fr. Varghese Payyappilly sowed the seed of a new religious congregation with an indomitable desire to found a community dedicated to the service of the poor. That seed has since germinated, grown, and flourished into the Congregation of the Sisters of the Destitute (SD), which today bears abundant fruit in the Church through its apostolate of mercy.

With the paternal blessing of Archbishop Mar Augustine Kandathil, Metropolitan of the Ernakulam Archeparchy, Rev. Fr. Varghese Payyappilly, then Manager of St. Mary's School, Aluva, founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Destitute on 2 February 1926. The congregation also fulfilled the fervent aspirations and spiritual quest of Sr. Josephine, Sr. Cecily, Sr. Geltrude, and Sr. Kochuthresia. The early years of the congregation were marked by hardship. The Sisters sustained themselves through

hard labour, begging, and depending upon charity. Their sole objective was to serve the poor. On 19 March 1927, the congregation was officially established at Chunangamveli in the Ernakulam Archeparchy. It was subsequently given the name Congregation of the Sisters of the Destitute. As he bid farewell to this world on 5 October 1929, Fr. Payyappilly left only one final spiritual exhortation to the first members of the congregation: "Ask for nothing else; pray only that the will of God may be fulfilled." As the congregation celebrates its centenary, the elevation of Blessed Fr. Varghese Payyappilly is yet another story of God's mercy towards this religious family. Fifteen days after the founder's death, Mons. George Valiyarambath assumed responsibility as Director and Spiritual Father of the congregation, guiding it faithfully for the next forty-one years.

The ministries of the congregation expanded significantly when its missionary activities began in the capital city of India in 1958. Thereafter, the Sisters ex-

tended their works of mercy to foreign missions as well, becoming active participants in the Church's universal mission of evangelization. In 1964, through the special intervention of Cardinal Joseph Parecattil, the congregation commenced its ministry in Germany. During the 1970s, it expanded further into Italy and Switzerland. In 1985, the congregation was reorganized into three provinces: St. Mary's Province, Ernakulam; St. Vincent Province, Kothamangalam; and St. Joseph Province, Changanacherry. In 1989, the congregation was elevated to the status of a Pontifical Religious Institute. The establishment of a mission house in Madagascar in 1993 marked the beginning of the congregation's apostolate on the African continent.

In 2000, three additional mission provinces were established: **Shanthidham – Ghaziabad, Pushpadham – Delhi, and Krupadham – Wardha**. Subsequently, a region was also established with its centre in Tamil Nadu. During the same year, the congregation expanded its missionary presence to the United States, followed later by Peru, Nepal, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. Today, the congregation has Sisters and candidates from various African countries. At present, **1,423 Sisters and 211 candidates**, serving in **238 communities** across **thirteen countries on five continents**, continue their ministry of mercy. Through social apostolate, healthcare ministry, educational apostolate, and pastoral ministry, the Sisters proclaim

the Gospel by becoming mothers of compassion, loving companions, and sisters to those in need.

The congregation devoted the past ten years to a special period of preparation for its centenary. Along with intensive spiritual renewal programmes and apostolic initiatives, various projects were implemented to promote the holistic physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of its members. Today, the congregation has developed an effective system capable of responding promptly to emergencies and humanitarian needs. Thus, during the crises at **Munambam, Chooralmala, and Manipur**, the Sisters reached the affected areas and rendered timely assistance to those in distress. For those who could never dream of owning a home, the congregation has launched the **Dream Housing Project** in two districts. Under the **Cochin Dream Project**, seventy houses have been built in Gandhinagar Colony. Through the **Wayanad Dream Project**, nearly five hundred families without homes have received full or partial assistance for the construction of their own houses. Through **170 Home Mission centres** spread across Madagascar and different parts of India, the congregation has reached nearly **40,000 families**. During this centenary year alone, numerous rehabilitation and development projects have been undertaken for the benefit of the poor and the destitute.

The cause of **Servant of God Sr. Dr. Fidelis Thaliath**, who transformed the care of the sick into a path to holiness, is now progressing towards her inclusion among the saints of the Church. This too is another beautiful story of God's mercy as the Congregation of the Sisters of the Destitute celebrates the fulfilment of its centenary.

ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE: SYMPTOMS AND CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES



Rev. Dr. Sijo Kuzhikkattumyalil

When can a person be considered alcohol dependent? A diagnosis of alcohol dependence can confidently be made when an individual exhibits at least **three** of the following symptoms: an intense craving or compulsion to consume alcohol; an inability to stop drinking or reduce alcohol intake despite personal efforts; the development of physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms when alcohol is unavailable; the need to consume progressively larger quantities of alcohol to achieve the same intoxicating effect (tolerance); finding pleasure exclusively in drinking while losing interest in other activities that once brought happiness; and the inability to stop drinking even after experiencing the harmful consequences of alcohol consumption.



Withdrawal Symptoms Following Alcohol Cessation

The nature and severity of withdrawal symptoms vary according to the duration of alcohol use, the quantity consumed, and the individual's physical and psychological condition. In those who consume large amounts of alcohol regularly, even a sudden reduction in alcohol intake may precipitate withdrawal symptoms.

The earliest manifestations generally include tremors, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, headache, irritability, and insomnia. In some individuals, sleep disturbances may persist for several months after alcohol cessation.

Alcohol Withdrawal Hallucinations

Approximately **25%** of individuals undergoing alcohol withdrawal experience hallucinations. These symptoms typically develop within **48 hours** of discontinuing alcohol consumption. Patients most commonly hear voices that have no external source. These auditory hallucinations are often threatening, accusatory, or frightening in nature.

Withdrawal-related seizures may also occur, usually between **6 and 48 hours** after the last alcoholic drink. Such seizures may recur repeatedly if appropriate medical treatment is not provided.

Delirium Tremens

Delirium tremens (DT) is one of the most serious and potentially life-threatening complications of alcohol withdrawal. Patients may experience disorientation with respect to time and place, severe tremors, excessive sweating, nausea, vomiting, vivid visual hallucinations, frightening auditory hallucinations, and marked confusion. Incoherent speech and severe agitation are also common clinical features.

Among individuals who abruptly discontinue heavy alcohol consumption without medical supervision, approximately **10%** develop delirium tremens. The most severe symptoms generally appear within the first three days of withdrawal and usually begin to subside within a week. Nevertheless, the condition carries a mortality rate of approximately **5%** if left untreated. Consequently, delirium tremens constitutes a **medical emergency** requiring immediate professional intervention.

Several psychiatric disorders are significantly more prevalent among individuals with alcohol dependence than in the general population. **Depressive disorders** are particularly common. Temporary depressive symptoms may also emerge during the withdrawal phase. It is estimated that the lifetime risk of suicide among individuals with alcohol dependence is approximately **15%**, a figure substantially higher than that observed among non-drinkers.

Similarly, **anxiety disorders** affect nearly **30%** of individuals with alcohol dependence. Heavy alcohol consumption is also frequently associated with increased tobacco use and a greater likelihood of abusing other psychoactive substances.

KAIKKARANS IN PARISH ADMINISTRATION



CANON LAW

Rev. Dr. Matthew Souriamkuzhi

A *kaikkaran* (trustee) is a member of the parish who is elected by the *potuyogam* or *pratinidhiyogam* and confirmed and appointed by the local hierarchy, or directly appointed by him in exceptional circumstances. The trustee assists the parish priest in safeguarding and administering the parish properties and income in accordance with the norms of ecclesiastical and civil law, carrying out the programmes and affairs of the parish, cooperating with the parish priest in pastoral ministry, and assisting in the administration of the financial affairs of the parish. The election is conducted by the *potuyogam* or *pratinidhiyogam* in accordance with the eparchial statutes. Once elected and confirmed by the local hierarchy, the trustees assume office by taking the prescribed oath and receiving the keys from the parish priest at the entrance to the sanctuary. At the conclusion of their term of office, they are required to render a complete account of their administration, settle all financial matters, and return the keys to the parish priest at the same place before relinquishing office.

The *potuyogam* determines the number of trustees required in a parish, taking into account the size of the parish, provided that the number is never fewer than two. Trustees are elected for a term of one year and may be re-elected for the following year. However, without the explicit permission of the local hierarchy, no person may be elected for three consecutive terms. Where there are several trustees, they may divide the service year into equal periods, with each trustee assuming primary responsibility during one peri-

od according to age or convenience. The trustee exercising the principal responsibility during a particular period is known as the *nadathukaikkaran*, while the others are called *koottukaikkarans*.

To be eligible for election, a trustee must be at least twenty-one years of age, faithful to the Church, trustworthy, efficient, service-minded, and free from parish arrears. He must also possess the other qualifications prescribed by the eparchial statutes. A person cannot be elected as a trustee if he publicly opposes the faith or teachings of the Church, lives under ecclesiastical censures, is a public sinner, has been convicted of offences involving moral turpitude without subsequent reform, has failed to fulfil the annual Paschal obligations, lacks sound judgment, deliberately violates Church laws, is a habitual drunkard, or is addicted to intoxicants. Likewise, the parish accountant, the sacristan, and any other persons specifically excluded by the eparchial statutes are ineligible for election as trustees.

Trustees serve the parish without remuneration or allowance. Nevertheless, when their presence is required for prolonged periods in connection with parish duties, they are entitled to reimbursement of their daily expenses from parish funds, provided that suitable provision has been made for this purpose in the parish budget. The eparchial bishop has the authority to accept the resignation of a trustee and may also remove a trustee from office for negligence of duty, dishonesty, incapacity, financial misconduct, or offences involving moral turpitude, after giving the trustee an opportunity to present his defence. In ordinary circumstances, complaints against trustees may be submitted to the eparchial curia or the eparchial administrative tribunal, where they will be dealt with according to the prescribed canonical procedures.

Every trustee is automatically a member of the *potuyogam* and an *ex officio*

member of the *pratinidhiyogam*. A trustee has no authority to act independently on behalf of the Church by making decisions, alienating parish property, or entering into contracts. The parish priest remains the lawful administrator of the parish, while the trustee's responsibility is to assist and cooperate with him. In fulfilling their responsibilities, trustees are expected to act in collaboration with the parish priest, respecting the interests of the *potuyogam* and *pratinidhiyogam* and observing both ecclesiastical and civil law.

The responsibilities of trustees are extensive and include assisting the parish priest in arranging the facilities necessary for divine worship and catechetical formation, implementing the decisions of the *palliyogam*, maintaining parish buildings and other properties, supervising parish income, expenditure, and financial transactions in accordance with ecclesiastical and civil law, and ensuring that all bills, vouchers, receipts, and financial records are properly maintained. The *nadathukaikkaran* and the parish priest are jointly responsible for maintaining these records, and the trustees must produce the accounts whenever required by the parish priest. If discrepancies in the accounts or shortages of money causing loss to the parish are established, the responsible trustee or parish priest must reimburse the loss.

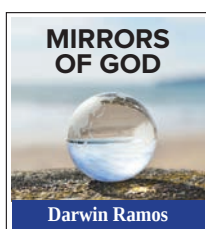
The trustees are also responsible for maintaining the parish registers, including the *Nalvazhy* (Journal), *Peredu* (Ledger), and *Anduthirattu* (Annual Register), together with the *Masathirattu* (Monthly Register), *Kurumthirattu*, and *Ardhavarshikathirattu* wherever these are required by the eparchial statutes. They must prepare and preserve the *Muricharthu* (inventory) of all movable and immovable parish properties and ensure the safe custody of title deeds, agreements, legal documents, and other civil records.

Another important responsibility of

the trustees is the supervision of the parish treasury. The *nadathukaikkaran* opens the *bhandaram* (treasury) and offering boxes in the presence of the parish priest, another trustee, or a person authorised by the parish priest. The offerings are counted jointly, and a written record signed by both parties is maintained. Trustees also provide leadership in organising parish feasts, celebrations, construction works, and the cultivation of parish lands in consultation with the parish priest. They arrange the necessary facilities in the presbytery for the parish priest and assistant priests and may represent the parish or its institutions before civil courts or tribunals in specific legal matters if authorised by the parish priest and approved by the local hierarchy.

When a parish priest is transferred, all financial records, passbooks, official documents, cash balances, and inventories of movable and immovable properties are to be handed over to the *nadathukaikkaran*, subject to the particular customs or statutes of the eparchy. As soon as the new parish priest assumes office, the *nadathukaikkaran* hands over all these records and properties to him. However, if an assistant parish priest is serving in the parish, the outgoing parish priest entrusts the entire administrative responsibility to the assistant parish priest, who in turn coordinates with the *nadathukaikkaran* until the new parish priest takes charge.

The governance of the Church is not the responsibility of bishops and clergy alone but also involves the co-responsibility of the lay faithful. The institution of trustees provides an effective structure through which the laity actively participate in the administration of parish life. When trustees faithfully fulfil their responsibilities in collaboration with the parish priest, in accordance with ecclesiastical and civil law, they promote accountability, transparency, and shared responsibility in the spiritual, pastoral, administrative, and temporal affairs of the parish. ■



Few things distress a father more than seeing his child suffer from even a minor illness. Yet the father of **Darwin Ramos** was different. When his six-year-old son was diagnosed with a congenital disorder, he saw it not as a cause for compassion but as an opportunity to earn money. He took the little boy to the streets and made him beg for alms. Poor Darwin! For him, it was a profound humiliation. Yet he knew there was no other way to help support his mother and siblings. What grieved him even more was that much of the money he collected through begging was taken by his father to finance his alcoholism.

Darwin was born on **17 December 1994** in a slum area of **Pasay City, Philippines**. He was the second of nine children born to an alcoholic father and a

FROM A STREET CHILD TO THE ALTAR



mother who earned a living as a laundry worker. While his father squandered his days in drunkenness, it was his mother who struggled to feed the family. The growing size of the household instilled in Darwin a deep sense of responsibility even in his childhood. Together with one of his sisters, he began collecting plastic from the city's garbage dumps and selling it to help support the family. During this period, however, he began to experience weakness in his legs. He was diagnosed

with **Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy**, a genetic disorder that progressively weakens the muscles. Before long, Darwin lost the ability to stand and walk.

It was under these circumstances that his father turned him into a street beggar. The decisive turning point in Darwin's life came in **2006**, when workers from an organization serving street children found him begging and brought him to one of their care centres. There he received food, education, and medical care. Yet the greatest gift he received there was something far more precious: **the gift of the Christian faith**. He came to know and experience Christ personally. Soon he received **Baptism**, followed by **First Holy Communion** and the **Sacrament of Confirmation**. From then on, he grew steadily into a deep and intimate friendship with Jesus.

By this time, however, his illness had reached an advanced stage. The pain became constant, and medical treatment no longer brought relief. Yet Darwin never complained. Instead, he embraced his

illness as his personal mission. Even amid intense suffering, he learned the remarkable art of smiling. His radiant smile amazed everyone who met him. People often wondered how a young boy enduring such severe pain could remain so cheerful. It was for this reason that many affectionately called him the **"Master of Joy."** Even when confined to bed with a high fever, he never neglected his evening prayers. Difficulty in breathing became a constant companion, as did repeated hospitalizations. In the midst of excruciating pain, he continued to pray for others, never once asking God to lessen his own suffering.

"I think Jesus wants me to persevere until the end, just as He did," Darwin once shared these words with a priest.

On **23 September 2012**, Darwin departed for a world free from pain. He was only **seventeen years old**. His death deeply moved countless people. Few doubted the holiness of his life. Consequently, the diocesan process for his canonization was initiated. With the opening of the Cause for Canonization in **2019**, Darwin Ramos was officially declared a **Servant of God**. ■

NEW FCRA AMENDMENTS ARE RESTRICTIVE TO NGOS: CBCI

FCRA FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) ACT



New Delhi: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) has criticised the recent amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), stating that they are

designed to restrict the functioning of non-governmental organisations in the country.

Addressing a press conference at the CBCI headquarters, Rev. Fr. Mathew Koickal, Dep-

uty Secretary General of the CBCI, alleged that the continual amendments to the regulations have made it increasingly difficult for NGOs to continue their activities effectively.

Under the amended regulations, organisations wishing to operate in more than one state are now required to obtain separate registration. According to the CBCI, such provisions create unnecessary obstacles rather than facilitating charitable service. Instead of imposing increasingly restrictive regula-

tions, the Government should enact laws consistent with the Constitution that enable NGOs serving the poor and marginalised to function more effectively.

The revised regulations also include provisions relating to religious conversion. The CBCI expressed concern that these provisions are framed so broadly that the Government could interpret almost any activity undertaken by minority organisations as religious conversion. The amended rules merely refer to the "avoidance of religious

conversion," leaving significant ambiguity in their interpretation.

The CBCI further observed that restricting the utilisation of FCRA funds to only 105 specified categories significantly limits the scope of charitable activities. Several important areas of service, including healthcare and other humanitarian ministries commonly undertaken by NGOs, have not been included in the approved list, thereby placing severe constraints on their mission.

KCBC DELEGATION SUBMITS MEMORANDUM TO CHIEF MINISTER



Thiruvananthapuram: A high-level delegation from the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC), led by its President, Archbishop Dr. Varghese Chakkalakal, met with Chief Minister Adv. V.D. Satheesan to hold

key discussions. Conveying the KCBC's official congratulations to the newly formed state cabinet, the delegation brought several pressing issues faced by the public and the Church to the Chief Minister's attention.

The delegation deliberated on the ongoing survival crises faced by hill-area farmers and coastal residents, current challenges in the education sector, the severe hardships encountered by care homes and

orphanages, and the anxieties surrounding the Munambam land issue. Furthermore, the KCBC President handed over a detailed memorandum urging the implementation of the Justice J.B. Koshy Commission Report recommendations, addressing the denial of rights to Dalit Christians, and tackling the social crises stemming from the increasing prevalence of alcohol in the state.

In addition to the Chief

Minister, Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala, Minister for Electricity Sunny Joseph, and Deputy Speaker Shanimol Usman were present during the discussion. The Chief Minister and the accompanying ministers assured the delegation that the concerns raised by the KCBC would be treated with the utmost seriousness and that just, immediate interventions would be made to resolve them.

ST. MARIAM THRESIA, A GREAT REMINDER OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION TO FAMILIES: MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL

Kuzhikkattussery: St. Mariam Thresia is a saint who reminded the world of the enduring importance of the Church's mission to families in every age, said His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. He noted that, despite facing numerous personal trials, the Saint became a source of hope for the abandoned and suffering through her family visits and prayer ministry. Her life continues to serve as an inspiring model for missionaries today. The Major Archbishop added

that the life of St. Mariam Thresia points to the urgent need to restore spirituality and mutual love within families in this rapidly changing world.

He was delivering the homily while celebrating the solemn Feast Day Holy Qurbana at the St. Mariam Thresia Pilgrim Centre, Kuzhikkattussery, in connection with the annual feast of the Saint. Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Bishop of Irinjalakuda, and more than one hundred priests concelebrated the liturgical celebration.

The faithful celebration of



the centenary of the heavenly birth of St. Mariam Thresia coincided with the annual feast, drawing tens of thousands of pilgrims from across the country to seek her intercession and blessings. Thousands also participated in the devotional procession carrying the relic of the

Saint through the streets. Nearly 45,000 faithful attended the traditional festive community meal that followed.

The celebrations were coordinated under the leadership of Mother Annie Kuryakose, Superior General of the Holy Family Congregation; Msgr. Antu

Alappadan, Vicar General of the Diocese of Irinjalakuda and Chairman of the Organising Committee; Fr. John Kavalakat, Rector; Fr. Sebastian Arickat, Promoter; Sr. Elsy Xavier; Vice Postulator Sr. Vinaya; and General Convener Ajish Chakkalamattath Pallan.

POPE LEO RELEASES CARDINAL GEORGE ALENCHERRY'S NEW BOOK 'CHRISTIAN WITNESS'



Vatican City: 'Christian Witness', an anthology of essays chronicling the profound experiences of the 54-year-long illustrious ministry of Mar George Alencherry, Major Archbishop

Emeritus of the Syro-Malabar Church, has been officially released in Vatican City. The book was released by the Holy Father during a ceremony held on the sidelines of the Extraordinary

Consistory of Cardinals at the Vatican. The launch was graced by the august presence of senior hierarchy, including Cardinal Anthony Poola (President of the CBCI), Cardinal Mar Basilio Cleemis (Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Church), and Cardinal George Koovakad (Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue).

Through this book, Mar George Alencherry shares notable experiences and pastoral insights from his life as a priest,

bishop, and the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Moving beyond a simple memoir, 'Christian Witness' offers readers a vivid glimpse into a spiritual journey spanning over five decades. The text documents his initial pastoral years as a priest in the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, the myriad challenges he faced in building a new diocese from the grassroots upon his appointment as the first Bishop of the Eparchy of Thuckalay, and the

providential paths that facilitated evangelization within the cultural fabric of Tamil Nadu. It further records the decisive moments that unfolded as divine providence subsequently guided him to lead the Syro-Malabar Church as its Major Archbishop and Cardinal. Holding immense significance for both church history and spiritual introspection, this volume promises to be highly inspiring for faithful and general readers alike.

CATHOLIC CONGRESS GLOBAL MEET: INTERNATIONAL FLAG RELAY COMMENCES



Kakkanad: The Catholic Congress Global Meet is scheduled to be held from October 19 to 23 in Rome, Italy. Officials announced that the summit, which will see participation

tries, commenced at Mount St. Thomas, the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Mar Raphael Thattil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, inaugurated the relay by handing over the official flag to Adv. Rajiv Kochuparambil, the Global President of the Catholic Congress. Rev. Fr. Dr. Philip Kaviyil (Glob-

al Director), Dr. Josekutty J. Ozhukayil (General Secretary), Benny Mathew Pulickakara (General Convenor), and Vice Presidents Chevalier Davis Edakalathur, Benny Antony, Treesa Lise Sebastian, and Rajesh John spoke on the occasion.

Charles Alukka, the President of the Catholic Congress Bahrain Chapter, received the flag designated for the Middle East region. The relay, which will journey through various

countries across continents including Canada, the USA, Australia, and Europe, will subsequently tour different dioceses within India. The flag relay is set to reach the convention city of Rome on October 19.

Organized under the theme “One Faith, One Community, Across All Continents,” the global summit will feature presentations, discussions, and debates on contemporary issues, according to the organizing committee.



Kakkanad: The Media Commission and the Doctrinal Commission of the Syro-Mal-

abar Church jointly organized a webinar based on *Magnifica Humanitas*, the first encyclical of Pope Leo XIV, which addresses the challenges facing humanity in the age of Artificial Intelligence and modern technologies. The inaugural session, held on **20 June**, was inaugurated by Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.

WEBINAR ON MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS

The webinar featured extensive discussions on the need to uphold human dignity and moral values in the digital age and on the Holy Father’s teachings regarding the responsible use of technology for the service of humanity rather than mere profit. Bishops, theologians, lay faithful, seminarians, religious, and professionals from the technology sector participated

in the programme. Mar Thomas Tharayil, Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, and Rev. Dr. Saji Kanayankal CST, Professor at Mary Matha Major Seminary, Thrissur, delivered the keynote presentations, analysing various dimensions of the encyclical. Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, Bishop of Pala, and Mar Thomas Padiyath, Auxiliary Bishop of the

Archeparchy of Shamshabad, also addressed the gathering.

The webinar was organized to help the faithful and the wider public gain a deeper understanding of the contemporary teachings of the universal Church. Rev. Fr. Sebastian Chackalal, Secretary of the Doctrinal Commission, and Rev. Fr. Tom Olikkarott, Secretary of the Media Commission, coordinated the programme.

“VALUE-BASED POLITICAL FORMATION IS ESSENTIAL”: MAJOR ARCHBISHOP



Kochi: Value-based formation and social awareness are indispensable for nurturing responsible political leadership, said Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, while inaugurating the Political Academy established by the Catholic Congress

at the POC, Ernakulam.

He expressed the hope that the Academy’s continuing formation programmes would shape a new generation of political leaders capable of making a decisive contribution to the nation’s development. He also stressed the need to foster

a political culture that embraces people of every section of society. The Major Archbishop further wished that this significant initiative of the Catholic Congress would help form a generation capable of progressing in step with the development of the modern world. During the function, he also released the poster of the Catholic Congress National Conference to be held in Mumbai on 1–2 August.

Delivering the keynote address, Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil stated that the Cath-

olic Congress has commendably demonstrated its ability to defend the legitimate rights of the Christian community and to resist various forms of injustice and discrimination. Presiding over the meeting, Catholic Congress President Rajeev Kochuparambil affirmed that the organisation would continue to adopt an uncompromising stand on issues affecting farmers and minority communities.

A study session on the J. B. Koshy Commission Report and a meeting of the Central Rep-

resentative Council were also held in connection with the conference. The gathering adopted resolutions calling for the withdrawal of the amendments to the FCRA and expressing concern over what it described as hidden agendas behind the protests relating to Jubilee and Amala Hospitals in Thrissur.

Among those who addressed the gathering were Dr. Josekutty J. Ozhukayil, Adv. Tony Punchakkunnel, Chevalier Prof. K. M. Francis, Benny Pulikkakkara, Treesa Liz Sebastian, Benny Antony, Rajesh John, Thomas Antony, Thampi Erumelikkara, Charles Alukka, and George V. George.

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE, A SYMBOL OF DEDICATION AND UNWAVERING FAITH: CHIEF MINISTER



Thiruvananthapuram: St. Thomas the Apostle is a symbol of dedication and unwavering faith, said Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan while delivering the keynote address at the *Dukrana* Friendship Gathering held at the Lourdes Forane APJM Hall. The gathering was officially inaugurated by His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Chief Minister recalled that, among the disciples of

Jesus Christ, St. Thomas the Apostle has always been the personality he admired the most. He described the Apostle as one who stood firmly for the truths he believed in and dedicated his entire life to proclaiming that message throughout the world. It was through arduous journeys and great sacrifice that St. Thomas sowed the seeds of faith in India. Since he sought evidence before professing his faith, the Apostle may also be regarded as the patron of scien-

tists. The Chief Minister further remarked that he considers his own service as Chief Minister to be a divine mission to stand with ordinary people and those who suffer.

In his inaugural address, His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil reminded the gathering that the greatest gift St. Thomas the Apostle brought to India was the message of goodness and compassion. The Apostle planted in this land a spirituality rooted in humanity and free from divisions. Through St. Thomas, the light of Christ’s love became an integral part of India’s cultural heritage. The Major Archbishop further noted that the Christian community’s centuries-long contributions to the nation’s so-

cial, cultural, and educational development are a continuation of this rich Thomine heritage.

Mar Thomas Tharayil, Archbishop of Changanacherry, welcomed the gathering. The event was attended by several distinguished personalities from different walks of life. Among the special guests were Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala, Ministers Sunny Joseph, Anoop Jacob, Roji M. John, and John Brittas, MP. Prominent religious and community leaders present

included Archbishop Varghese Chakkalal, President of the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council (KCBC); Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of Kanjirapally; Samuel Mar Irenios, Bishop of Pathanamthitta; Dr. Antony Mar Silvanos, Curia Bishop of the Malankara Catholic Church; Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Bishop of the Thiruvananthapuram–Kollam Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church; Dr. V.P. Suhaib Moulavi, Imam of Palayam; and Swami Gururatnam Jnanathapaswi, Organising Secretary of the Santhigiri Ashram, along with several other prominent spiritual and social leaders.





Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil

Located about six miles from **Fort St. George** in Chennai and four miles southwest of **Mylapore**, **Chinnamalai** or **Little Mount** is a small hill rising approximately 80 feet above the surrounding landscape. The Portuguese called it **Monte Pequeno**. It is one of the three principal sites in Chennai traditionally associated with **St. Thomas the Apostle**. During the first century, when the region was covered with shrubs and dense woodland, the Apostle frequently withdrew to this secluded hill for prayer.

The second site in Chennai associated with St. Thomas is **Periyamalai**, better known today as **St. Thomas Mount**. This hill has often been described by historians as **the Calvary of St. Thomas**, for it was here that the Apostle, like his Divine Master, endured suffering and shed his blood in martyrdom. To distinguish it from Chinnamalai, it came to be known as **Periyamalai** (Tamil for “Great Hill”), while the Portuguese referred to it as **Monte Grande**. Historians and geogra-

PERIYAMALAI (ST. THOMAS MOUNT): THE SACRED HILL OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE



phers alike commonly identify the site as **St. Thomas Mount**, a name that reflects its intimate association with the Apostle. The historic importance of these two hills is further emphasized by the famous **Mount Road**, which links them with the city of Chennai.

According to tradition, when the soldiers of the local ruler came in search of Thomas at Chinnamalai, he escaped to Periyamalai. It was while he was absorbed in prayer on this hill that the king's attendants found him and pierced

him from behind with a spear, bringing about his martyrdom. Thus, like the other Apostles, St. Thomas bore witness to his Lord by shedding his blood.

The disciples of the Apostle reverently carried his mortal remains from the hill to the nearby seashore, to the place that was first known as **Beththuma** and later as **San Thome**, where the present **St. Thomas Basilica** now stands, and there they buried him. According to the local tradition, the martyrdom of St. Thomas took place in A.D. 72.

From the earliest centuries, this sacred site has been regarded as a place of extraordinary spiritual grace, where pilgrims experienced the powerful presence of God. Historical records testify that Christians from **Persia**, **Syria**, **Armenia**, and other regions made pilgrimages to this holy place. The inscriptions found on the ancient tombstones at the foot of **St. Thomas Mount** continue to bear witness to this long-standing tradition of pilgrimage.

The tomb of St. Thomas and the place where it is situated occupy a unique and unparalleled position in Christian history. Moreover, the Apostle's martyrdom at Mylapore and his tomb constitute the most compelling historical evidence for his apostolic mission in India. They remain enduring and irrefutable witnesses that cannot be erased or denied. Indeed, several foreign historians have argued that no further evidence is required to establish the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, for his martyrdom and tomb themselves provide historical testimony of the highest credibility and authority.

WHY IS ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CALLED THE “TWIN” OR “DIDYMUS”?



EXPLORING BIBLE QUESTIONS

Rev. Dr. Tom Olikkarott

The title “Twin” or “Didymus” (Greek: *Didymus*) attributed to **St. Thomas the Apostle** has profound historical, linguistic, and theological significance. A careful study of Sacred Scripture, the apocryphal writings, and the testimonies of the early Church Fathers offers valuable insights into this distinctive designation.

1. The Linguistic and Biblical Foundation

The Gospel according to John refers to St. Thomas as “**Didymus**” on three significant occasions:

- **John 11:16** – At the time of Lazarus' death: “*Thomas, who was called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’*”
- **John 20:24** – Before encountering the Risen Lord: “*Thomas, one of the Twelve, who was called Didymus...*”
- **John 21:2** – During the appearance of the Risen Christ by the Sea of Tiberias.

Although the term *Didymus* itself does not appear in **John 14:5**, this passage offers one of the clearest revelations of Thomas' personality. During His Farewell Discourse, when Jesus spoke of His return to the Father, Thomas, with characteristic honesty and simplicity, asked: “*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we*

know the way?” (Jn 14:5). It is through this sincere questioning—this searching disposition—that Christ reveals one of the greatest truths of Christian theology: “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*” (Jn 14:6).

According to biblical linguists, the name **Thomas** is derived from the Aramaic word **Te'oma**, meaning “**twin**.” The Greek word **Didymus** is simply the direct translation of the Aramaic term. Since St. John composed his Gospel in Greek, he explicitly used the expression “**Thomas, called Didymus**” so that Greek-speaking readers would readily understand the meaning of the Apostle's name.

2. The Background in the Acts of Thomas

The apocryphal work **The Acts of Thomas**, composed toward the end of the second century or the beginning of the third century, offers a remarkable interpretation of Thomas' title as the “Twin.”

The Spiritual Twin of Christ

According to this work, Thomas bore a striking physical resemblance to Jesus Himself. It recounts that, upon arriving in India, many people mistakenly believed Thomas to be Jesus because of this resemblance. The narrative presents Thomas as the spiritual image and representative of Christ.

The Wedding Feast at Andrapolis

During his journey to India, St. Thomas, accompanied by the merchant Habban, who had purchased him as a skilled craftsman, arrived at the city of **Andrapolis**. On that very day, the king's only daughter was celebrating her wedding. As strangers, Thomas

and Habban were invited to the royal banquet.

Thomas, however, showed no interest in worldly pleasures. He refrained from eating and remained absorbed in prayer. At the king's request, he blessed the bride and groom and prayed for them before they entered the bridal chamber.

After the wedding celebrations, when the newly married couple entered the chamber alone, they saw a man standing there. By his appearance and clothing, they believed him to be the same holy foreigner who had blessed them only moments earlier. Filled with amazement, they asked:

“*Man of God, how did you come here? Everyone had already left and the doors were shut. How did you enter?*”

Smiling, the man replied:

“*I am not Thomas. I am his Twin. I am Jesus Christ, the Lord whom Thomas proclaims.*”

3. The Witness of the Early Church Fathers

The early Church Fathers interpreted the title “**Didymus**” from both spiritual and pastoral perspectives.

St. John Chrysostom

Reflecting on Thomas' doubt and the faith that followed, St. John Chrysostom explains that Thomas' “dual nature” symbolizes the tension between ordinary human weakness and the extraordinary spiritual courage bestowed by divine grace. His journey from doubt to faith mirrors the pilgrimage of every believer.

St. Ephrem the Syrian

St. Ephrem, one of the greatest Fathers of the Syriac tradition, describes Thomas as the “**begetter of faith**.” By

touching the wounds of the Risen Christ, Thomas became the “**twin reflecting the faith of the whole Church**.” His personal encounter with the Risen Lord strengthened not only his own faith but also the faith of generations of Christians who would come to believe without seeing.

Conclusion

From a historical perspective, it is possible that Thomas may indeed have had a biological twin sibling. Certain traditions even mention a sister named **Lysia**. However, the theological meaning attributed to the title by St. John the Evangelist and the Fathers of the Church is far more profound.

Thomas is the “**twin**” of both doubt and faith. He represents the believer who sincerely questions, seeks understanding through reason, and yet ultimately surrenders completely to the grace of God.

He also stands as the representative of every Christian. All who believe without seeing become, in a spiritual sense, Thomas' “twins.” When his fingers touched the wounds of the Risen Lord, it was not merely his own doubts that were dispelled but the doubts of the entire Christian community throughout history.

Having overcome uncertainty through faith, St. Thomas journeyed to India, proclaimed the Gospel with unwavering conviction, and ultimately sealed his witness through martyrdom. He remains the spiritual twin of every ordinary believer who struggles with questions and human weakness, yet steadfastly clings to God in faith.

WELCOME



Rev. Fr. Jomy Kumbuckattu, a priest belonging to the Eparchy of Kanjirapally, has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the Internet Mission of the Syro-Malabar Church. Prior

to this appointment, he was serving as the Program Director of 'Amal Jyothi Voice', a community radio station operating under the Kanjirapally Diocese at Amal Jyothi College. He holds a Master's degree in Communication and Media Science from Mahatma Gandhi University.

The new appointment was made by the Chairman of the Internet Mission, Most Rev. Mar Joseph Pandarasseril, with the approval of the Permanent Synod of the Church. The appointment officially came into effect on July 1, 2026.

THANKS



Kakkanad: Rev. Fr. Sebi Kollangara, who successfully completed his six-year tenure as the Executive Director of the Internet Mission at the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, is returning to his home Eparchy of Irinjalakuda. Serving from July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2026,

his visionary leadership provided a definitive new direction and momentum to the operations of the Internet Mission.

As Executive Director, Fr. Sebi played a pivotal role in modernizing the Syro-Malabar Matrimony system, effectively leveraging modern technology to make it highly efficient and user-friendly. He also spearheaded the comprehensive redesign of the official website of the Syro-Malabar Church, transforming it into a state-of-the-art, accurate, and central digital repository for all church-related information.

Furthermore, in his ca-

capacity as the Managing Editor of 'Syro-Malabar Vision', the official publication of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, he paid meticulous attention to elevating the magazine's standard. Under his guidance, the publication became highly engaging, featuring attractive layouts and well-curated columns that significantly enhanced its readership. As Fr. Sebi Kollangara steps into his new pastoral responsibilities in his home diocese, the Mount St. Thomas Community, along with the Editorial Board of Syro-Malabar Vision, extends its deepest gratitude and prayerful best wishes for his future ministry.

CATHOLIC ADVOCATES GATHERING



Thalassery: A gathering of advocates belonging to the Thalassery Archeparchy

was held at St. Mary's Forane Church. The meeting, held after the celebration of the Holy Qur-

bana, was presided over by Adv. Sajeev Joseph, MLA for Irikkur.

The programme was inau-

gurated by Mar Joseph Pamplany, Archbishop of Thalassery. In his inaugural address, he spoke about the vital role advocates play in the administration of justice and reminded them that lawyers who live by Christian values have a unique opportunity to bear witness to Christ in the legal profession.

Mons. Antony Muthukunnel, Proto-Syncellus, Mons. Sebastian Palakkuzhy, Vicar General, Rev. Fr. Joseph Mutathukunnel, Chancellor, and

Rev. Fr. Philip Kaviyil, Global Director of Catholic Congress, also addressed the gathering. Adv. Sunny Augustine Vellakkad conducted a session on establishing a Legal Cell. The meeting resolved to establish legal aid forums at both the Archeparchial and Forane regional levels by bringing together advocates from across the Archeparchy. Around 125 advocates, including practitioners before the Supreme Court of India and the Kerala High Court, participated.

BCM COLLEGE GRANTED AUTONOMOUS STATUS

Kottayam: The official declaration of the autonomous status conferred on BCM College, Kottayam, along with the inauguration of various infrastructure development projects, was held with great solemnity at the college auditorium.

The official inauguration of the College's autonomous status was performed by Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan. In his inaugural address, he observed that the institution's next milestone should be its progression from autonomous status to that of a deemed university. The function was presided over by Mar Mathew Moolakkatt,

Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Kottayam and Patron of the College, who expressed the hope that this new status would greatly contribute to the growth and welfare of both individuals and society.

The inauguration of the **BCM Evening Academy** and the keynote address were delivered by Roji M. John, Minister for Higher Education, Government of Kerala. He remarked that the autonomous status was a fitting recognition of the College's academic excellence, rich heritage, and invaluable contribution to society. He further expressed the hope that the in-



stitution would continue to provide the high-quality education expected by the younger generation.

In his presidential address, Mar Joseph Pandarasseril, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archeparchy of Kottayam and Chairman of the College Governing Body, recalled that the autonomous status represented the fulfilment

of a beautiful dream envisioned decades ago. Geevarghese Mar Aprem observed that BCM College should aspire not merely to academic autonomy but to become an international centre of academic excellence.

The **BCM Research Consortium** was inaugurated by Francis George, Member of Parliament, who encouraged

educational institutions and students in Kerala to make significant contributions to the field of research. Syndicate Member Adv. Reji Zacharia, College Manager Rev. Fr. Abraham Parambeth, Principal Prof. Dr. Thomas K. V., Bursar Rev. Fr. Philmon Kalathra, and others offered felicitations during the function.

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR KCMS



Kacherippady: The 55th General Body Meeting of the **Kerala Conference of Major Superiors (KCMS)** was held at Ashirbhavan, Kacherippady, Ernakulam. During the meeting, a new Executive Committee was elected for the 2026-2029 term.

The General Body Meeting was inaugurated by Bishop Samuel Mar Irenios, Chairman of the KCBC Commission for Religious. The meeting was pre-

sided over by KCMS President Rev. Mother Ardra SIC.

Rev. Fr. Michael Vettikattu, Managing Director of *Deepika* Daily, and Rev. Fr. Jacob Mavunkal, who led the rehabilitation mission of the Catholic Church in Kerala in Wayanad and Vilangad, were honoured during the meeting. Bishop Antony Valunkal delivered the benedictory address, while

Johny Pallivathukkal and Rev. Dr. George Antony spoke on various topics.

The newly elected office-bearers are: Rev. Fr. Joby Kochumuttam as President, Sr. Annie Jose CSN as Vice-President, Rev. Fr. Pauly Antony OCD as Treasurer, and Sr. Maria Jasina AC, Sr. Marina Njarakkal SABS, and Rev. Fr. Simon Chiramel MCBS as Executive Members.

“CATECHISTS MUST SPEAK THROUGH THEIR LIVES”: MAJOR ARCHBISHOP



Thrissur: Catechists must proclaim the faith through the witness of their lives, and religious instruction without personal witness is merely an exercise in words, said Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. He further observed that catechesis should transform knowledge

into genuine understanding.

He was inaugurating **TED FEST 2026 (Teachers Empowering Day)**, a gathering of catechism teachers organised by the *Vidyajyothi* Faith Formation Unit of the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda at Sahyadri Engineering College, Kodakara. More than 3,000 catechism teachers from

the 141 parishes of the Eparchy participated in the event. On the occasion, the Major Archbishop also inaugurated the new official website of the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda. He was the principal celebrant of the Solemn Holy Qurbana offered as part of the programme.

The function was presid-

ed over by Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Bishop of Irinjalakuda. Vicar Generals Msgr. Jose Maliyekkal and Msgr. Antu Alappadan delivered messages. Rev. Fr. Dias Antony led the formation sessions. Renowned gynaecologist Dr. Fino Francis, Adv. Reenu Vimal, and Maria Alphonsa Reju were among the

distinguished guests.

During the concluding session, the special souvenir of the gathering was released by Rev. Fr. Anto Chunkath, Executive Director of Sahyadri Engineering College. Bishop Mar Pauly Kannookadan presented awards to the best catechetical units of the Eparchy and honoured catechists who had secured ‘O Grade’ certification. Musical performances, dance presentations, and other cultural programmes added colour to the gathering. The programme was coordinated by the Diocesan Director of Catechesis, Rev. Dr. Rijoy Pazhayattil, Associate Director Rev. Fr. Siby Kallaparambil, the Forane Vicars, Forane Directors, and Catechetical Animators.

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION OF SACRISTANS



Kanjirapally: As those chosen by God, we bear a profound duty to glorify Him through the specific ministries He entrusts to us, stated Mar Jose Pulickal, the Bishop of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally. He was delivering the inspirational address at

the Golden Jubilee Summit of Sacristans (Devalaya Shushrushikal), held at the Kanjirapally Pastoral Centre as part of the Eparchial Golden Jubilee celebrations. The Bishop reminded the gathering that a deep awareness of the nobility of their min-

istry-which directly assists the people of God in divine worship-will make them even more dedicated and active in their duties. Very Rev. Dr. Joseph Velamattam, the Eparchial Protosyncellus, delivered the message and moderated the subsequent

discussions.

Rev. Dr. Sebastian Palamoottil, Vicar of St. Thomas Forane Church, Velichiyani, led the prayer service and conducted a session on the mission and responsibilities of church sacristans. The event also honored and extended warm wishes to those celebrating their golden and silver jubilees of service in the church: Sabu Mathew Puthuparambil (Kanjirapally), Joy Francis Plathottathil (Kanjirapally), Tomy Thomas Mathempara (Cheruvally), Shins Sebastian Patrakkalayil (Chellar-

kovil), Binoy Pullannikavunkal (Amaravathi), Antony Methikalathil (Puttady), Peter Kutiplackal (Erumely), and John Villanpara (Kanchiyar).

The Golden Jubilee Summit, which drew church sacristans from various parishes across the Eparchy, was organized under the leadership of Fr. Philip Thadathil (Eparchial Procurator), Fr. Stanley Pullolickal (Pastoral Animation Director), Sister Celine Paravarakath FCC, Jessy Joseph Choolayackaparambil, Abin Abraham Alancheril, and Maymol Mathew Kariyi.

EPARCHIAL GRAND GATHERING OF CATECHISTS



Kumily: As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Kanjirapally Eparchy, the diocesan gathering of Faith Formation teachers, titled “**Vish-wasa Velicham**,” was held at St. Thomas Forane Church, Kumi-

ly. The gathering, attended by nearly 2,000 Faith Formation teachers from across the Eparchy, was inaugurated by Mar Jose Pulickal.

The Bishop said that Faith Formation teachers, who con-

tinue the mission entrusted to the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world, have the great responsibility of imparting authentic Christian values to children and society while responding to the chang-

ing realities of the times. The Holy *Qurbana* was celebrated by Mar Mathew Arackal, former Bishop of Kanjirapally, who highlighted the importance of Faith Formation in the growth of the Church.

The panel discussion featured Dr. Nirmal Ousephachan IAS, Additional Secretary, Government Coordination Department, Government of Punjab, and Soji and Maria, founders of Bethlehem School of Grace. The discussion was moderated by Harry C. Joseph.

Prizes were distributed to those who excelled in various

Faith Formation initiatives across the Eparchy. Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal also launched “**LIGHT**,” a mobile application designed to coordinate the activities of the diocesan Faith Formation forum. Dr. Juby Mathew presented its features. Rev. Dr. Jose Vellamattam and Rev. Dr. Sebastian Kollamkunel, Vicars General, Rev. Dr. Thomas Valanmanal, Director of Faith Formation, Rev. Dr. Mathew Kallarackal, Forane Vicar of Kumily, and Dr. Bino Perumthottam, Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, also addressed the gathering.

FAMILY UNITS LEADERS ANNUAL GATHERING



Birmingham: The Family Apostolate of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain held its Annual Family Gathering in

Birmingham, bringing together representatives from the Eparchy’s parishes, missions, and proposed missions.

The programme began with Praise and Worship led by Rev. Fr. Jebin Pathiparambil MCBS, followed by the *Khathwa* prayer service presided over by Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal.

The Holy *Qurbana* was celebrated by Archbishop Mar George Valiamattam, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archeparchy of Tellicherry, together with Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal and priests serving in various

parishes and missions of the Eparchy.

Archbishop Mar George Valiamattam inaugurated the gathering. In his homily, he reminded the faithful that the family is the foundation of the Church and an image of the Holy Trinity. Every Christian family, he said, is called to become a dwelling place of the Triune God, whose mission is to draw all its members into the

communion of divine love.

Following the Holy *Qurbana*, Georgekutty Augusty, former Secretary of the Pastoral Council of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally and a eparchial resource person, delivered a formation session. The programme was coordinated by Rev. Fr. Jibin Vamattathil, Jaini Chackochan, Jinu Paul, Sheeba Babu, Seena Thomas, regional presidents, and other office bearers.



DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

FROM 25 MAY - 21 JUNE

MAY

- **25 Monday:** Inaugurated the Silver Jubilarians' Meet of Religious Sisters at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad. Addressed the participants of the 100th *Abide Youth Retreat* and installed a relic of St. Carlo Acutis at the Chittoor Retreat Centre of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **30 Saturday:** Inaugurated the National Marian Pilgrimage of the Syro-Malabar Community of Switzerland and celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at the Einsiedeln Marian Shrine in Switzerland.

JUNE

- **2-4:** Attended the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) Meeting at the KCBC Secretariat, Palarivattom.
- **4 Thursday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* in the

Syro-Malabar Rite during the KCBC Meeting at the KCBC Secretariat, Palarivattom.

- **5 Friday:** Officiated the Final Profession ceremony of one religious and celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at the Mount Carmel Cloistered Monastery, Malayattoor. Officiated the final part of the funeral rites of Rev. Dr. Cherian Varicatt of the Eparchy of Kothamangalam at St. Mary's Forane Church, Karimannoor.
- **6 Saturday:** Released a book written by Rev. Dr. Sebastian Vadakkumpadan at the Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC), Palarivattom.
- **8 Monday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at the Shrine of St. Mariam Thresia, Kuzhikattussery, on the occasion of her Feast Day.
- **12 Friday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* for the minor seminary students at the Major

Archbishop's House of Ernakulam-Angamaly on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

- **13 Saturday:** Inaugurated the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Family Apostolate of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly at the Renewal Centre, Kaloor.
- **14 Sunday:** Inaugurated the Eparchial Faith Formators' Meet of the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda and celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at Sahrdaya College of Engineering, Irinjalakuda.
- **20 Saturday:** Inaugurated a webinar on the Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* of Pope Leo XIV, jointly organised by the Syro-Malabar Commissions for Doctrine and Media.
- **21 Sunday:** Inaugurated the webinar on the Ongoing Formation of Faith Formators, organised by the Syro-Malabar Commission for Catechesis.

SENIOR CITIZENS ARE THE WEALTH OF THE CHURCH: MAR JOSE PULICKAL



Ponkunnam: "Senior citizens are the wealth and hope of the Church," said Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of the Kanjirapally Eparchy, while inaugurating the Zacharias Convention held at the Holy Family Forane Church, Ponkunnam, as part of the Eparchy's Golden Jubilee celebrations.

The Bishop said that during this Jubilee Year, senior citizens should strive to make signifi-

cant contributions to both the Church and society through a profound experience of God. He also encouraged them to take pride in their families and children and to live lives filled with gratitude.

Mar Jose Pulickal was the principal celebrant of the Holy *Qurbana*. Rev. Fr. Mathew Ollickal, Director of the Family Apostolate, welcomed the gathering. The Christine Zacharias Mission Team led the conven-

tion sessions. Rev. Dr. Thomas Poovathanikunnel, Rev. Fr. Josukutty Edathinakam, members of the diocesan and forane executive committees of the *Pithruvedi* and *Mathruvedi*, and the leadership team of Ponkunnam Parish coordinated the various arrangements. More than 500 participants from different parishes of the forane attended the convention, which was organized by the Eparchial Family Apostolate.

KCSL KOTTAYAM ARCHEPARCHY INAUGURATES NEW ACADEMIC YEAR



Kottayam: The inauguration of the 2026-2027 activities of the Kerala Catholic Students League in the Archeparchy of Kottayam was held at Chaitanya Pastoral Centre, Thellakom. Rev. Fr. Mathew Manakkattu, Pastoral Coordinator of the Archeparchy, inaugurated the

programme. Sr. Mariesa SVM, Archeparchial President, presided over the meeting.

Rev. Fr. Chacko Vandankuzhiyil, Rector of the MSP Seminary, led the seminar. Sr. Sophia SVM, Rev. Fr. Jefin Ozhungalil, and Sr. Nisha Caritas also addressed the gathering.

32ND DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF MAR SEBASTIAN MANKUZHICARY



Thamarassery: The 32nd death anniversary of Mar Sebastian Mankuzhikary, the

first Bishop of the Eparchy of Thamarassery, was solemnly observed with deep devotion.

As part of the commemoration, special memorial services were held at Mary Matha Cathedral on the morning of June 11, the anniversary of his passing.

Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil was the chief celebrant of the liturgical services. Monsignor Abraham Vayalil, Vicar General of the Eparchy, and Rev. Fr. Benny Mundanattu, Eparchial Procurator, were the co-celebrants.

In his homily, Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil recalled the revered memory of Mar Sebastian Mankuzhikary and fondly remembered the spiritual and material growth the diocese achieved under his leadership during its foundational years. The Bishop specifically highlighted late prelate's visionary leadership, which was instrumental in strengthening the foundations of the Eparchy.

The memorial services witnessed a large turnout, with numerous priests, religious sisters, and lay faithful coming together to pay their prayerful respects.

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Kavalakkattu (Chancellery), Rev. Fr. Thomas Chilambikunnel (Cathedral Vicar), Rev. Fr. John Konukunnel (Assistant Vicar), and Mr. Benny Lukose (Secretary of the Pastoral Council) led the coordination of the anniversary services.

INAUGURATED THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

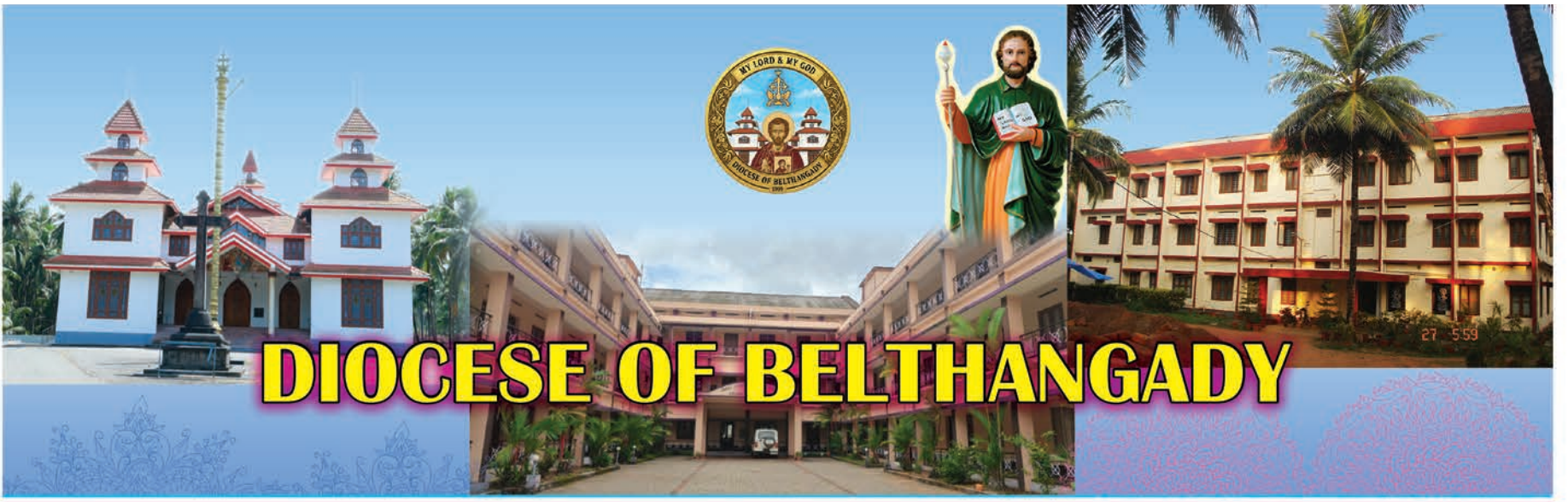


Kothanalloor: The joint inauguration of the 2026-2027 academic year of the Faith Formation Commission, the Cherupushpa Mission League, and *Thirubalasakhyam* of the Kottayam Archeparchy was held at St. Thwanes Prayer Centre, Kothanalloor. The programme was inaugurated by Mar Geevarghese Aphrem, Auxiliary Bishop of

the Archeparchy of Kottayam. Rev. Fr. Mathew Manakkattu, Pastoral Coordinator of the Archeparchy, presided over the meeting.

During the function, Bishop Geevarghese Mar Aphrem released the action plan for the 2026-2027 academic year, formally inaugurated the websites of the Faith Formation Commission and the Cherupushpa Mission League of the Archep-

archy, and distributed Faith Formation scholarships. Rev. Fr. Saiju Mekara, Chairman of the Faith Formation Commission, Suji Pullukattu, National President of the Cherupushpa Mission League, and Rev. Fr. Jefin Ozhungalil, Archeparchial Director of the Cherupushpa Mission League, addressed the gathering. More than 500 members participated in the programme.

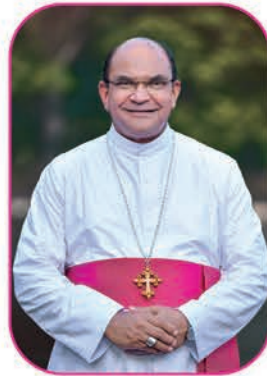


The history of the South Canara Mission began with the migration of people to the region during the late 1960s. In 1979, the Most Rev. Dr. Sebastian Valloppilly, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Thalassery, established the South Kanara Mission under the Diocese of Thalassery with the aim of providing spiritual and material care to the migrants and settlers living in South Canara. Despite limited resources and difficult circumstances, the faithful preserved and strengthened their Christian faith through unity and mutual support. Rev. Fr. Peter Koottiyani was appointed as the Episcopal Vicar to lead the mission, and later Rev. Fr. Lawrence Mukkuzhy succeeded him as Episcopal Vicar. On 24 April 1999, Pope Saint John Paul II, through the Papal Bull *Cum Ampla*, erected the Diocese of Belthangady for the Syro-Malabar faithful in Karnataka. On 4 August 1999, Most Rev. Mar Lawrence Mukkuzhy was consecrated and installed as the first Bishop, and the Diocese of Belthangady was formally inaugurated. After faithfully shepherding the Diocese for 26 years, Bishop Mar Lawrence Mukkuzhy retired. On 5 November 2025, at the Belthangady Cathedral, Most Rev. Mar James Patteril was ordained and installed as the new Bishop and assumed the pastoral governance of the Diocese. Today, the Diocese of Belthangady extends across the three districts of Kodagu, Udipi, and Dakshina Kannada. It continues to stand as a vibrant witness to faith and dedicated service. The details of the Diocese are given below.

Area	:	12,543 Sq.Kms
Catholic Population	:	30,000
Catholic Families	:	4790
Languages	:	Kannada,Tulu, Konkani, Malayalam, English, Coorgie
Forane Churches	:	9
Parishes	:	55
Mass Centres	:	10
Priests Incardinated	:	59
Religious Priests	:	26
Women Religious	:	186

Main Event of the Diocese

2000	–	Celebration of the 2000th Jubilee Year.
2002	–	Grand protest rally held at Belthangady against the eviction of settlers.
2004	–	Inauguration of the Jnananilaya (Eparchial Pastoral Center).
2007	–	Inauguration of the Diocesan Cathedral.
2009	–	Eparchial Assembly. 2009 – Pastoral visit of Major Archbishop Mar George Alencherry.
2017	–	Convention of the K.S.C.A. (Kerala Catholic Students' Association).
2018	–	National Convention of the Cherupushpa Mission League.
2022	–	State-level Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the Cherupushpa Mission League.
2023	–	Youth Convention.
2024	–	Silver Jubilee Celebration of the diocese, and on November 5, 2025, the Episcopal Consecration (Ordination as Bishop) of Fr. James Patteril.



Bishop
Mar James Patteril CMF
Bishop of Belthangady



Bishop Emeritus
Mar Lawrence Mukkuzhy

Curia Members



Proto Syncellus
Msgr. Mani Veluthedathparambil



Chancellor
Fr. Lawrence Poonolil



Finance Officer
Fr. Mathew Alappatt



Judicial Vicar
Fr. Kuriakose Vettuvazhy

Different Commissions of the Diocese

1. Basic Ecclesial Communities
2. Bible
3. Faith Formation
4. Ecumenism
5. Education
6. Environment
7. Family
8. Health
9. Inter-Religious Dialogue
10. Justice & Peace
11. Labour
12. Laity
13. Liturgical
14. Pastoral Care for the Differently Abled
15. Pastoral Care for Migrants & Itinerants
16. Proclamation & Evangelization
17. SC/ ST/BC
18. Social Communication
19. Social Concerns & Development
20. Vocation & Formation
21. Women
22. Youth
23. Prison Ministry
24. Charismatic Renewal



Minor Seminary



Episcopal Consecration



Episcopal Consecration



Episcopal Consecration



Episcopal Consecration



Episcopal Consecration



Episcopal Consecration



Sisters gathering



Sisters gathering



Newly Built Church Navoor



Angels Meet



Vianney Sadana



Priests of the Diocese



Minor Orders



Come & See 2026



Scriptura 2k25

POPE LEO XIV CONCLUDES APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SPAIN



Madrid: The fourth Apostolic Journey of Pope Leo XIV, Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, concluded successfully after a seven-day pastoral visit to Spain. The visit was histor-

ically significant, as it marked the first papal visit to Spain in fifteen years. Beginning on Saturday, 6 June, and concluding on Friday, 12 June, the Apostolic Journey unfolded in four principal stages.

The first stage of the visit, from 6 June until the morning of 9 June, took place in various parts of the capital city, Madrid. The programme included the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at Plaza de Cibeles, attended by hundreds of thousands of faithful, prayer gatherings, and encounters with young people. During this phase, Pope Leo

XIV also became the first Pope in history to address a joint session of the Spanish Parliament.

Following the Madrid engagements, the Holy Father travelled to Barcelona in Catalonia for the second stage of his journey. There, he presided over the dedication of the Jesus Christ Tower at the renowned Sagrada Família Basilica and celebrated a solemn Eucharistic liturgy commemorating the centenary of the death of the celebrated architect Antoni Gaudí.

On the sixth day of the Apostolic Journey, 11 June, the Holy Father proceeded to the island of Gran Canaria, marking the third stage of the visit. This was the first papal visit to

the Canary Islands in history. During his stay, Pope Leo XIV visited the port of Arguineguín, one of the principal reception centres for migrants arriving from Africa.

On the final day of the Apostolic Journey, Friday, 12 June, the Holy Father travelled to Tenerife. Giving particular attention to the plight of migrants, he visited the Las Raíces Reception Centre, where temporary shelter is provided for displaced persons. The Apostolic Journey officially concluded with the solemn celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart at the Port of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, after which Pope Leo XIV returned to the Vatican.

“WEAPONS CROSS BORDERS FASTER THAN FOOD”: POPE LEO XIV

Rome: Increasing distrust among nations and the diversion of resources towards military expenditure are weakening the global fight against hunger, Pope Leo XIV has warned.

The Holy Father made these remarks while addressing the annual meeting of the United Nations World Food Programme in Rome on 22 June. He described it as a “painful contradiction” that weapons reach across borders more quickly than food.



The Pope noted that the Gospel's call to uphold human dignity and to love one's neighbour is reflected equally in the mission of the Church and that of the World Food Programme.

He further stressed that eradicating poverty is a responsibility shared by the entire international community. Nations, he said, must work together not only to combat hunger and malnutrition but also to identify and address their root causes. Pope Leo XIV also

praised the humanitarian work of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in protecting human life amid armed conflicts and natural disasters.

Reiterating his appeal, the Holy Father urged the nations of the world to unite in confronting both hunger and its underlying causes. He warned that growing mistrust among nations and the increasing allocation of resources to military spending continue to undermine efforts to eliminate hunger.

EXTRAORDINARY CONSISTORY OF CARDINALS CONCLUDES AT THE VATICAN

Vatican City: The Extraordinary Consistory of Cardinals convoked by Pope Leo XIV to chart the future direction and pastoral mission of the universal Church concluded successfully at the Vatican.

The important gathering commenced on the morning of Friday, 26 June, in the Consistory Hall of the Paul VI Audience Hall.

In his inaugural address to the Cardinals from the Roman Curia and various parts of the

world, the Holy Father emphasised the need to strengthen dialogue within the Church and urged all members of the College of Cardinals to move forward together in unity in fulfilling the Church's missionary mandate.

The Pope stressed that every participant should contribute freely, openly, and honestly during the deliberations. He also encouraged the Cardinals to embrace a more synodal style

of collaboration in responding to the contemporary challenges facing the Church and to work together faithfully in advancing the Church's universal mission.

Among those participating from Kerala were Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Cardinal Mar George Koovakad, and Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis. The Cardinals from Kerala actively contributed to discussions on several issues of contemporary significance for the



universal Church. The Consistory concluded with decisions expected to provide renewed

direction for the Church's spiritual and pastoral engagement in the years ahead.

SISTERS OF MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY CLEARED IN ALLEGED CHILD TRAFFICKING CASE



Ranchi: After an eight-year legal battle, the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Saint Teresa of Calcutta, have been

cleared of allegations relating to the illegal transfer of children.

The accusations arose in 2018 following the alleged transfer of an infant from the Nirmal Hriday Shelter Home in Ranchi, Jharkhand. As a consequence, a Missionaries of Charity religious sister and two others faced prolonged criminal proceedings.

Sr. Consilia, who was among those accused, spent nearly three years in prison before obtaining bail. The case centred on

allegations that a fourteen-day-old infant had been unlawfully handed over from the Missionaries of Charity's Nirmal Hriday Home in Ranchi. Her arrest led to extensive investigations into several Missionaries of Charity institutions across Jharkhand and other Indian states.

Describing the verdict as a triumph of truth, perseverance, and faith, Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, former Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)

and Bishop of Dalton, observed that the allegations had caused far-reaching damage to the congregation's apostolic ministry.

Following Sr. Consilia's arrest, another Missionaries of Charity home at Hinoo, which was caring for twenty-four children, had also been shut down by the authorities. The judgment brings to an end one of the most painful legal battles faced by the Catholic Church in India in recent years.