

Sub: Participation in Missionary Appeal 2020

Dear Father, and the Parishinors of St.Thomas of Canterbury Parish.

Greetings and Blessings in the Lord from Diocese of Alleppey!

Kindly allow me to present myself as the newly installed as Bishop to serve the people of God in the Diocese Alleppey. Since 11 February 2018 I have been serving the diocese as coadjutor and following the retirement of Msgr. Stephen Athipozhiyil I am called into the office on 11 October 2019. I am seeking your prayers and support for our diocese, especially for me.

Diocese of Alleppey is situated in the southwest coast of India. We have a catholic population of 165,900 out of a total population of 1,260,970 in the area. Our parishes and missions are served by 110 native priests. 350 religious sisters from 54 convents lead various ministries in various parishes. Along with them, there are also a good number of lay volunteers give their time and talents for gospel mission. We are blessed with 70 of seminarians under formation to become priests.

Our area is densely populated, however with very limited resources. 75% of the populace are fishermen who still use traditional methods of fishing. They live on a meagre income from their daily catch. The area is often afflicted by sea erosion and severe seasonal and torrential rains. Last two years, torrential rains turned into devastating floods and we are still to recover from the aftermath. The parishes and diocesan institutions joined the local relief team in opening up temporary shelters and camps in our schools and churches.

Thank you so much for including our diocese in your Propagation of Faith and Mission undertaking for the year 2020. Kindly allot us a few parishes to make Mission appeal. The contribution from the Mission Appeal will add to the existing rehab projects to support the flood affected people and others for the uplift of the poor among us.

Novel Corona (COVID-19) pandemic has affected all over the world. While there are signs of hope and return to normalcy in some places the situation in India is moving from bad to worse. The latest statistics forecast a grim picture of soaring infected cases and death toll.

We are facing a completely altered life order. In Kerala, the first state to be affected with Covid 19 in India, the present rate is 3000+ new cases a day. People are suffering from multiple ills from the scarcity of amenities and adequate quarantine places, fast depletion of finance and ever increasing loss of employment.

The situation in my diocese having population of 1,65,000 Catholics is no different, if not worse. The breadwinners in the families of the diocese of Alleppey are 90% daily wagers and most of these are fishermen as the diocese is situated 90kms along the Arabian coast. The amenities in houses are so limited that the members are crammed into small spaces with no adequate care of sanitation and social distancing is almost impossible. The children and adults are forced to stay home and to while away the time with programs on the media. The excess time spent on these gadgets is a matter of concern and sclerosis of mental and spiritual energy. The coastal region of Alleppey district has been also experiencing a socio-economic stagnation for other reasons as well. The decline of coir industry, impoverished fishing, serious health problems, and increasing debt are impairing progress. The fisher folk who form the majority of our people are heavily in debt to money lenders.

Diocesan Response

With no immediate stop to the crisis in the purview, the diocese has been attempting to respond to the crisis in different phases. During the Covid 19 crisis, the diocese has undertaken the following projects.

Phase 1(March-April-May 2020)

Ever since the pandemic was reported the diocese has been reaching out to the people. The diocesan social service society and the various parishes of the diocese came forward to start off the "phase 1 project" covering three month period. Closely collaborating with the Governmental bodies the diocese was keen to disseminate knowledge and to distribute measures to arrest the community spreading. To a great level this has been successful. Our task force was in the field distributing masks, sanitation materials, and opening the spaces for public use. In the first phase of emergency relief from various parishes, institutions, and diocesan central fund, we have been able to spend ca. INR 20million (ca. USD 2,68,456) as charity both in cash and kind.

Our diocese, a non-profit organization registered under the government of India (12 A Reg. No. F. No. (15) D/73-74) can receive contributions. Once again requesting you to consider our willingness to participate in Missionary appeal, **Appeal 2020**.

Thanking you in anticipation for your good will and united in the one mission of Christ,

Yours Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop James Anaparambil,
Bishop of the Diocese of Alleppey, Kerala, India.

20th September 2020

