

Prot. No. 1823/2019

## **Circular -Year of St. Chavara**

**GEORGE CARDINAL ALENCHERRY, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, to the Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Men and Women and Lay Faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church.**

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord,

The year 2020 is a holy year of commemoration of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara in the Syro-Malabar Church. After an active and saintly life, St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, an illustrious son of our Church, was called for his eternal rewards on 3 January 1871. We are entering the sesquicentennial (150<sup>th</sup>) year of this great event. This Jubilee Year is an occasion to commemorate this saintly life of St. Kuriakose Chavara, canonized by the Holy Catholic Church, to be inspired by his holy life and to seek the blessings of the Almighty through his intercession.

All the saints have lived the truth of the Gospel in its purity, professed it, and witnessed to Christ Jesus in their varied life situations. Moreover, their lives motivate the faithful forever. The life and the message of St. Chavara underscore these facts. Not only has he enlightened the nineteenth century, a very turbulent and critical period for the Church and the society of his times, but also remains as a beacon of light for the Church for all times.

That he stood relentlessly faithful to the Holy See and to the legitimate episcopal authorities and worked for the unity and integrity of the Church, is his greatest contribution as noted by Pope St. John Paul II. Not only did he strive to save his people from schism and damnation, but also dared to ask for a bishop of his own church community. Hence, he was the first Vicar General who dedicated his life for the growth and unity of the Syro-Malabar Church and the spiritual head who guided and led the people of God in faith, holiness and fidelity.

St. Chavara visualized God as his "Daddy" (*Appan*), and prayed to Him with the personal intimacy and innocence of an infant, saying that, "My daddy, I cannot address you by any other name." He was a spiritual progenitor who saw himself as a child of God, loving and serving others who were all the children of God and his own brethren. He imbibed the vision of Jesus Himself with regard to the Kingdom of God and spent his life for the welfare of humankind, burning with zeal so that "Not even a single soul

that was redeemed by Jesus Christ with his blood should face damnation and that all souls should be attracted to His Father.”

Ordained a priest, on 29 November 1829, St. Chavara had to confront the difficulties and privations of his own church and community. He sought, in the presence of God, for the ways and means to unite and revitalize a people that was scattered like the sheep devoid of a shepherd, not even having a native bishop to guide and instruct them. Imitating Jesus Christ who started public life proclaiming the Good News and calling for repentance, St. Chavara also approached the people as a preacher of the Word of God. At a time when there was no preaching during the Sunday celebrations and no renewal retreats, what he initiated had a great impact and facilitated spiritual progress among the people of God. In order to have good shepherds, preachers of the Word of God and good teachers, he started seminaries as well. To help people grow in holiness and to carry on the mission entrusted to the Church by the Lord, he realized the need for a consecrated life. Hence he founded CMI and CMC religious congregations and through them, a number of monasteries, convents and a group of dedicated religious also emerged.

As a visionary, he got himself immersed in activities aimed at the integral growth of the faithful entrusted to him. In order to remove the intellectual blindness due to ignorance and to help the growth of a spiritual way of life, he started schools attached to churches. To impart knowledge through books, he started a printing press. For the sake of the destitute, he started charity homes. He accomplished all these, despite many hurdles and oppositions. The motivating force behind all these signature endeavours of the saint was “salvation of the souls and the integral growth of the people of God.” What made him a social reformer were his deep-rooted faith, proactive style, indefatigable efforts to eradicate discriminations in the society, and above all, his firm footing in solid spirituality.

The stability of our families is praised all over the world. *The Chavarul* of St. Chavara (*Oru Nalla Appante Chavarul*) exerted immense and timeless influence on our families in shaping them based on faith, fidelity and holiness. An antidote to most of the ills faced by modern families could be found in this little book. St. Chavara taught us that a Christian family is like the kingdom of heaven. With that he wanted each family in the Christian community to grow to the heights of heaven. He held that a family could grow only with order and discipline and instructed that the children should be brought up with care and with this noble ideal in mind. Here, we gratefully acknowledge that St. Chavara, in the nineteenth century, imparted us a vision for the family that was founded on love of God, love of others, and of a caring nature.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let this sesquicentennial commemoration lead us to closely understand and follow the life of this saint who led our Church heroically. I earnestly appeal to the whole Church to wholeheartedly join in the activities planned for the occasion of Chavara Jubilee Year and to reap spiritual benefits. Like St. Chavara, let all the children of the Church lead a life committed to the Church and fulfil the

mission of Christ entrusted to them. This is my earnest prayer and wish during this commemorative year.

May the intercession of Blessed Virgin Mary our Mother, St. Thomas our Apostle, and St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara be our help.

Cardinal George Alencherry  
Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church

Given from the Major Archiepiscopal Curia at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, on 11 December 2019.

**N.B.** This circular is to be read in all churches and institutions where Sunday Mass is celebrated on 29 December 2019.