
SAINTS EXPERIENCE AND EMULATE

Faith Formation Series Additional Text

STD VI

1. **Bl. Mariam Thressia**
2. **Bl. Kunjachan**
3. **St. Ignatius Layola**
4. **St. Pius X**



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MESSAGE

I am very happy to know that the Catechism Department of the Delhi Syro Malabar Mission publishes the life histories of saints as a supplementary to the catechism regular texts.

Saints are our life models. Their life histories are inspiring forces to all who like to grow in faith. The lives of saints teach us how they experienced God in their lives. Study of these life histories enables us to be faithful to the Word of God as well as to the teachings of the Catholic Church which we transmit to the next generation through catechism books. I pray that all who read these lives of saints may be inspired to follow them in their footsteps aspiring for sanctity of life to which every Christian is called by God.

I congratulate all who worked to bring out these books and pray that their efforts may bear fruits of holiness in the lives of many.

+ Varkey Vithayathil

Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil
Major Archbishop of the Syro Malabar Church



Date : June 19, 2012

MESSAGE

I am pleased to learn that our Catechism Department is preparing a new edition of the life histories of saints as a supplement syllabus to the catechism text books. This is all the more pertinent as the first version after the erection of the new Diocese of Faridabad. First of all, I congratulate our Director of Catechism, his team and all who cooperated in this venture.

Role models are necessary in our life, especially for those who are trying to give shape to the foundation of their religious life. Saints are those inspiring personalities who practiced the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity in a heroic manner. Their examples of deep faith and selfless love teach us how to give witness to gospel values in modern times. Saints are not extraordinary men and women, but who lived an ordinary life, but practiced these virtues in an extraordinary manner. Already in their childhood, saints were exemplary and it goes without saying that our boys and girls can take them as role models in Christian life.

Parents, grandparents as well as elder members of the family should foster devotion to saints in the children and try to introduce their inspiring stories to them. Teachers of catechism have a special responsibility to inculcate devotion to saints to the pupils and the current publication will be a useful instrument in that attempt. May the contents of this book inspire the readers and enable them to practice faith, hope and charity in their daily life.

The quintessence of sainthood is the attempt “to become perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect”. May this booklet facilitate forming little saints among the catechism boys and girls of newly erected Diocese of Faridabad.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "K. Bharanikulangara". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara
Bishop of Faridabad

GREETINGS

Faith formation of the People of God is an important ministry of the Church. It is through faith education the young generation is integrated into the faith and faith life of the Church. In such an education the introduction of the life histories of saints who lived the Christian faith is very important. Such an introduction will help them to personalize the values and models of the saints. It is with this objective the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamally had published the life-history series of the saints named, *Vishudhare Ariyan Anukarickan*, as subsidiary textbooks for faith formation from Std. IV to IX. Now I am happy to know that the Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical Centre is publishing an English edition of these textbooks. I am sure that this will benefit the children to know the saints, to love them and to imitate them in their lives. I appreciate this venture and congratulate all who contributed to the publication of these text books. I wish and pray that let the publication of these books help to inspire our children to lead a model Christian life.

Once again wishing every success,

Kochi
3.7.2006

Fr. Jose Puthiyedath
Secretary, Syro-Malabar Catechetical Commission



Catechesis is the primary duty of the Church. It is the process by which church permeates its life to the generations to come. The child initiated to the church by baptism always looks for role models in their spiritual and social life. They get enough role models in politics, social work, films, sports, music, arts etc. Church has to be genuinely serious about presenting role models so that the children may be enabled to take Christian life as a big challenge. Individuals who have responded to the invitation of Jesus and spent their life as a sacrifice are presented as saints to be loved, admired and imitated. So we have selected a few of them for our young children to love, appreciate and imitate. This is a beautiful step in the modern times and I do advise the teachers to learn about the saints seriously and present them as role models for the children.

Wishing every success in this beautiful mission,

New Delhi
4. 7. 2006

Fr. Jose Edassery
Coordinator, Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission

P R E F A C E

Saints are the guiding lights of Christian life. Their way of life stands as sign and motivation to us. Their intercession gives us strength. Learning more about the life and history of saints encourages us to follow their example. Children have a tendency to imitate others. Learning about saints at an early age will help the children to emulate the saints.

The Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical centre is publishing the English Edition of “*Visudhare Ariyan, Anukarikan,*” an additional catechism text for use in the Personal Parishes under the Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission. This is to help children learn and adapt the lifestyle of these venerable persons, who are shining examples of Christian life. The life story of 24 holy persons is included in six books, which are meant for the children of classes IV to IX. For each class, the life stories of four saints are included. I have no doubt these books will have a lasting impact on the faith formation of children. Catechism teachers are requested to understand the usefulness and importance of the short biography of these blessed saints in the faith formation of children. You are requested to take extra care to introduce these books to children to achieve the desired result.

This Additional Text book, *Saints - Experience and Emulate* - was originally written in Malayalam by a catechism teacher Shri Shaji Malippara and was published by the Catechetical department of Ernakulam-Angamally Archdiocese. I express my wholehearted thanks to Shri Shaji and Fr. Jose Puthiyedath, Director, Department of Catechesis, Archdiocese of Ernakulam – Angamally, for permitting us to publish its English edition. I extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Mathew K, Mr. Jose Kaviyil and Mrs. Marys Antony for their sincere support in publishing this book. I also remember with gratitude each and every person who have extended their help and support in many ways in brining out this book. I wish that by using this book, children will know about saints and will get motivated to adapt their lifestyles. I dedicate these books to the children of the Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission and pray that the almighty God may help us to succeed in all our endeavors.

BLESSED MARIAM THRESIA



The Beginning of a Story :

Can anyone become a saint? Does the luck for the same belong to only those in Europe? Can those who have not attained higher education and high positions rise to holiness? Even if you are born and brought up in India, in Kerala, you can still live according to the will of God. We are aware of Blessed Fr Chavara and Bl Alphonsamma. Mariam Thresia is the next Malayali, who led a holy life after them. The story of this blessed, who lived in our land, is very encouraging and surprising.

Thresia was born as the third child of Kunju Thomman and Thandamma couple, of Chirammel Mankidiyan family, in the village called Puthenchira, in Trissur district. She was born on April 26, 1876 and baptised on May 3. During that time, that wealthy family was loosing its wealth because of the lavish spending of Kunju Thomman. Thandamma had to face many difficulties in bringing up the children. She took special care to ensure that her children grow in God's love and goodness.

Sitting on the lap of her mother, little Thresia learned about Jesus and Mother Mary. She used to sit and watch her mother praying. Thandamma used to narrate the Bible stories and life histories of saints to the children. Thresia used to take the rosary in her hand and recite it during the evening prayers. When she was five years, she was admitted into a nursery school. She used to study the lessons very fast. She was very interested in telling stories to others. She liked to share her food with poor children. So she was nicknamed a 'saint'.

Marriage proposals were coming for Thresia as she reached her teenage. But she firmly denied them and said that she did not wish to get married. During this time her elder brother Porinju and elder sister Mariam got married. Due to a sudden illness, Thandamma died on March 2, 1892. Thresia was 16 years at that time.

Virgin Most Merciful

The sudden death of her mother was a shock to her. But she never felt weak. She accepted Blessed Mary as her mother and brought up the younger children. She took care of her father. Thresia, who was filled with the love of God, had three friends. They used to go to church and prayed together. They visited the sick people and took care of the old. One day, she decided to stay aloof and spend the time in prayer. Since everyone opposed it, that did not take place. Later she reached the Carmel convent in Ambazakad and expressed her desire to become a servant there. Seeing the earnestness of Thresia, they decided to accept her as a member of the convent. The donation was reduced to Rs 150. She approached her family for the amount, but they did not like her decision. At the end, with the permission of the parish priest, she wanted to collect the money from parishioners and go to convent. But, the parish priest did not grant her permission for this.

Even though the doors that were knocked never opened, she continued to live in hope. She along with her three friends went around consoling people in pain in their neighbourhood. They were the major consolers to the aged in their pain. They used to beg for food and medicines to be given to strangers. Along with their body, she took care to cure their souls. She found time to prepare them for sacraments. The virgins also expressed their interest in taking care of orphans. With good words, Thresia could change the naughty ones.

Thresia used to pray for the repentance of the sinners, and advised them and offered help. She used to pray for many sick people and they recovered. In the nearby places of Puthenchira, there were no families that had not received some help from her. While travelling, she used to recite the rosary which was her big strength. The source of strength of this association of virgins was the Blessed Sacrament. They were very particular to participate in Holy Qurbana and receive Holy Communion daily.

Thresia spent her day time in charity works and the night in long hours of prayer. She was a wonder for the family, as they used to see her standing still before a cross in a small room in their house. Meanwhile, she used to fulfill her household responsibilities also. In March 1902, a retreat was conducted in Puthenchira. She accepted Fr. Joseph Vithayathil, who had come to hear confession during the retreat, as her spiritual father. He was the support and strength of Thresia till her death. He led a holy life and was a scholar and knowledgeable. Fr. Vithayathil later reached the status of the Servant of God.

Thresia engaged herself in the repentance of the sinners, spreading peace in the family, helping the poor and preparing the dying for a peaceful death. In all sense she was a Virgin most merciful.

Temptations of Life :

Thresia, who used to meditate upon the crucifixion and death of Jesus, had a lot of pain, temptations and sufferings. She experienced many sufferings in her body. She felt pain in her head as if a crown of thorns has been placed on her head. She had a feeling of the whole body being burnt and bones being broken into pieces. She underwent deeply The mental tension of choosing good against evil. Several abnormal things happened to her. On many Fridays, she used to feel severe pain in her heart, legs and hands till the midnight. Blood oozed out from her body. Thresia was 28 years old at that time. Fr. Vithayathil desired to permit her to join the third order of Carmalites. He took a special permission from the Bishop and the headwear was given to Thresia on March 12, 1905. She wore the traditional dress of ladies in Kerala along with the headwear in her service. This was not be acceptable to the relatives and the local people. Thinking that she had been affected by evil spirits, the Bishop ordered to stamp a decree of prohibition of satan on the wall of her room. Even though it was insulting, she bore the same happily.

The period between 1906 and 1909 was filled with strong temptation and revelations. But Thresia continued her service. She used to pray day and night for the recovery of those affected by smallpox in Puthenchira in January 1909. As the years passed by, she intensely felt the need of an independent house to lead her prayer life. The Bishop sent her to the Carmel Convent in Ollur. Sr. Evuprasia taught her special prayers and psalms. (Evuprasiamma is now in the category of Venerable).

Thresia was not interested in the order of Carmelites. She wanted to come back to Puhtenchira. The Bishop allowed her to go back to her house. That is how, on January 27, 1913, she reached her house.

Very soon, she built a home for solitary prayer, in a land that was donated to her. The donations of the local people were not sufficient and so Thresia and her friends went around begging and collecting money. The house was blessed on September 23, 1913. Thresia, along with her friends, started to stay there.

Under the Protection of the Holy Family

Fr. Vithayathil used to inform the Bishop of all the activities of Thresia. In order to realize her desire, the Bishop agreed to make the house of solitary prayer into an Ashram. On May 14, 1914, the Bishop of Thrissur, Mar George Menacherry arrived Puthenchira. Mariam Thresia and friends stood near the altar. Accepting their way of life, the Bishop declared the small community to be the order of the Holy Family. Then Mariam Thresia was given the habits of the order. The perpetual vows were also taken. Others were accepted as Novices. That's how the dream of her holy life got fulfilled. Thus the Order of the Holy Family came into existence.

Thresia, who had been suffering due to temptations allthrough her life, had the vision of Holy Family which was a big comfort to her. Mother Mary, Joseph and Child Jesus used to take care of her. She used to feel as if Jesus appearing before her when she received Holy Communion. Once Thresia had a vision that Jesus was giving her his sacred heart and she heard a voice, "I am taking your heart". Mariam Thresia lived in the special protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Family. This was the spiritual wealth of the Order of Holy Family.

The newly formed Order of these sisters had a lot of requirements. Many people came forward to help them. Even in nothingness, they had specially kept their belongings to be shared for the poor.

Saint of the Families

The holy life of Mariam Thesia and other sisters attracted many. Many young women were ready to join them. The Order of Holy Family began to grow. They started building a new convent keeping their trust in God. Very soon, they started a school and completed its building. As the members increased, there was need for more convent buildings. It was then that she received eight acres of land at Kuzhikattusserry and Rs 1000 as donations. It was during the time of First World War, and the country was facing financial constraints. But God led them in their struggles. Mariam Thesia used to come from Puthenchira to Kuzhikattusserry to oversee the construction works. Construction of the convent building started in 1917 and was completed in the 1922.

In order to continue the mission she started with a special focus on family, she realized that a strong and binding religious community was the need of the hour. That's why, with lot of difficulties, she tried to complete the mother house. Mariam Thesia had known that the best way for the sanctification of the family was the devotion to the Holy Family. Mariam Thesia found that through prayers and penance she would be able to convert the sinners and save the families.

Mariam Thesia had exhorted that the penance and sacrificial life of the members of the Holy Family religious members would help in sanctification of families. No religious community till then had focused on family and had gone into families to lead those in sin to holiness and to remove the hardships in the families. But the Holy family community of sisters emphasized on the renewal of family. Mariam Thesia prepared her religious members to solve problems related to broken families due to drunkenness, property disputes, distance between the couple and hardships to families due to financial indebtedness.

Mariam Thresia started her mission, living in a family and did the same through visits to families. As a virgin, she completed her own household duties and helped other families. She accepted the life in the ‘ashram’ and made other sisters to join her to continue the mission. During her life time itself, she was known as the “saint of the family”. Eventhough scientific counselling and psychiatric practices were not developed at that time, Mariam Thresia was given special graces by God to advise and lead family members.

The Signs of Sufferings

Whoever loves Jesus more are given several special blessings. St. Francis Assisi, known as ‘Second Christ’ was given the special experience of the five wounds of Jesus. Mariam Thresia also received the same experience. It was the highest sign of the many sufferings she endured all through out her life. When she was living in the family, these wounds used to appear on her chest, legs and hands. During Fridays and the feast days of Jesus, blood flew from those wounds. The dress used to be wet with blood that flew from the wound in her heart. She never wanted to show these wounds to others. But these wounds began to be known. Many did not believe, some of them even ridiculed her. Priests and nuns waited eagerly to see Mariam Thresia with the five wounds. These five wounds were a major urge for those who wanted to meet Mariam Thresia. These wounds were the gift of God to this holy virgin for accepting sufferings happily. For the world it was a sign of her sufferings.

Showers of Blessings

The thought of death was intensified in Mariam Thresia by the year 1926 and she began to spend most of her time in her room praying and withdrawing from outside activities. On May 10, the first election in the congregation of Holy Family was conducted. The

responsibilities were handed over to others. During this time, a small wound on the leg began to be infectious. An operation was conducted in a hospital in Chalakudy. But the condition deteriorated. On June 7, at the hospital itself, she was given the last sacrament. Mariam Thresia was brought to Kuzhikkattusserry. The local people gathered around to see the Mother. To enable them to see, she was laid at the Sankeerthi of the convent chapel. By the next day, Mother became more restless. The spiritual father, Fr. Vithayathil, recited the prayer “Jesus, Mary and Joseph”. That day at 10⁰ clock in the night, the soul of Mariam Thresia left her mortal body.

The people gathered together in the early morning itself and tried to touch with things on her holy body and preserve it as a relic. The burial took place the same day. Mother loved Jasmine flowers specially and as if to decorate the entire coffin, all the jasmine plants in the convent flowered. After 55 years when the tomb was opened, the wreath that was placed on her head had certain Jasmine buds still fresh.

Necessary steps were taken to venerate Mother Mariam Thressia at the Altar, who lived spreading holy fragrance. On June 28, 1999 this God’s servant was declared ‘Venerable’. Later on April 9, 2000, Pope John Paul II declared Mother Mariam Thresia as ‘Blessed’.

The tomb at Kuzhikkattusserry is a place of pilgrimage. Many come for the intercession of the mother. Are we not lucky that there is a mother to help the helpless and hopeless families? Let us thank God for giving us Mother Thresia, who lived and died in Kerala in the last century.

LIFE AT A GLANCE

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Birth | : April 26, 1876 |
| Mother's Death | : March 2, 1892 |
| Joins Carmelite Third Order | : March 12, 1905 |
| Blessing of Solitude Home | : September 23, 1913 |
| Founding of the congregation of Holy Family | : May 14, 1914 |
| Death | : June 8, 1926 |
| Blessed | : June 28, 1999 |
| Beatification | : April 9, 2000 |

FEAST DAY: JUNE - 08

GEMS

“God rewards abundantly those who help the poor and destitute.”

MESSAGE

A life molded through suffering and pain will share charity and love.

BI. THEVARPARAMBIL KUNJACHAN



The Apostle of the Oppressed

The Syro-Malabar Church, founded by St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, is blessed with a number of blessed like Sr. Alphonsa, Chavara Kuriakose Elias and Mariam Thressia.

With Kunjachan's elevation to the rank of Blessed, the Syro-Malabar Church has got another patron saint. The patron of Dalits and the oppressed lived a simple life throughout his priesthood. He fully devoted his life for the upliftment of the Dalits and the downtrodden.

Birth of a Saint

Blessed Kunjachan was born as the third son of Mani and Elizabeth of Thevarparampil on April 1, 1891 at Ramapuram in the diocese of Palai, Kottayam District, Kerala. He was baptized and was given the name Augusthy, after St Augustine, in whose name the Ramapuram church is known. There is not much information about his early childhood.

The Student

After primary education at Ramapuram, he was admitted in St Ephrem's School, Mannanam, Kottayam, run by the CMI congregation of Blessed Chavara Kuriakose. As a boarder there, he is described as a shy and ordinary student.

Seminary Life

After completion of schooling he joined the seminary. There also he was a simple student who devoted his time for studies and prayers. His colleagues remember him as an ordinary person.

The Priest

Blessed Kunjachan was ordained priest on December 17, 1921. Initially he was appointed as assistant at St. Sebastian's Church, Kadanad, a place closer to his hometown Ramapuram. There itself he started showing some signs of his closeness to God. People used to go to him complaining of weeds and other problems in their fields. Kunjachan used to bless water and salt which they sprinkled in their fields and everything used to be alright. After an year, he got a transfer to St Augustine's Church, Ramapuram as one of the three assistants.

The Name

Fr. Augustine was short of stature and that was the reason for the origin of his pet name 'Kunjachan' (Little Priest) in Malayalam. He was just an ordinary priest who could not claim eminence in any field of human activity. But he was humble, kind, service-minded and charitably disposed to the poor and the downtrodden people. He stayed in his own parish, St. Augustine's Church Ramapuram for

more than 40 years, working specially for the upliftment of the Dalits and the oppressed.

The Missionary

Right from day one, he started his missionary work. His field of cultivation was the low castes like Pulayas and Parayas. They were in those times the slaves of the landlords, most of them high caste Brahmins like Namboodiris and Nairs. These low castes used to stay in small huts in their landlords land. Even Christians of those times considered them 'untouchables'. They had no right to enter the premises of an upper caste's household. They cultivated the lands and fields of their landlords but were not given enough rewards. They were in perpetual poverty and could not manage even a decent meal, and no proper clothing.

Kunjachan got pained to see the miseries of this poor lot. So he decided to work for the upliftment of these oppressed people. He started visiting their hutments and found what was lacking. He first educated them simple hygiene and manners. Many were helped with food and cloth. He was a one man army to help these people as the Christians of those times were not willing to visit the huts of these people.

The Teacher

Gradually, he started teaching them simple prayers and preached the word of God in simple language. Infinite patience and perseverance was needed to continue this activity for long. Some tried to avoid him; some hid themselves at his arrival in their humble huts; some excused themselves for not having maintained their promise. But nothing could dissuade him from his arduous mission. He wanted to bring them all to the lap of the Church. He used to say: "They are

simple people. They will become better”. His pastoral care for these poor souls can be compared to the zealous activities of St. John Maria Vianny (Curé de Ars), the patron saint of the parish priests.

Initially there was opposition from the very people whom he helped. But gradually they realized the path of salvation. Many of these people started coming to the fold of Christianity by getting baptized. It is the singular achievement of Kunjachan that he had been able to baptize by himself not less than 5000 Dalits (earlier the term ‘Harijan’ was used). He is to be counted as one of the foremost missionaries among the Dalits in India. In fact, he neither made use of eloquent sermons nor of any human techniques in order to give them ‘Christ’ of whom he was the herald. He preached with his works, practised charity, and was always sublime and fully dedicated.

The Vaidya (Doctor)

These low castes were out of bounds of any medical help. Kunjachan used to give them simple traditional medicines and they got immediate cure. At times when he had no medicines he used to give pure water which his patients used and got cured. People from far of places used to come to him seeking his spiritual and medical help.

Our ‘Father’

The sole concern of Kunjachan was apparently the well being of the Dalits. He led a life devoid of any rest. Imitating Our Lord, the Good Shepherd, he went after the sheep everywhere. Meeting them in their houses or fields of work was his daily programme. He could call each one by his/ her name and they rejoiced profusely when Kunjachan called them so. He addressed them ‘**My Children**’ and they in turn spoke about him, ‘**Our Father**’.

Spirituality

Kunjachan was a man of intense spiritual life. He was a man of prayer. He spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament early in the morning and in the evening when returned after the day's labour.

Kunjachan was fully aware of his limitations and shortcomings. He was neither an orator nor an organiser, writer nor scholar. He did not consider himself to have achieved anything in the eyes of the world. He thought of himself as a humble servant in the service of God, through the service of his poor brethren.

Kunjachan led a very simple life for the poor and wished to be with them even after death. He spent everything he had for the poor. The Blessed who was a priest for more than 50 years, wrote in his Testament: "I do not possess anything either as landed property or as cash account.... After my death, my funeral must be conducted in the simplest way. Ever since 1926, I had been staying with the Harijan (Dalit) Christians. Even after death, I would like to be with them. Therefore my dead body should be buried where the Harijan Christians are buried". (In those times there used to be a separate row in the cemetery for burying Dalit Christians. This was in the line of the caste system prevalent among the Hindus in those days. Kunjachan's clear message was that these dalit Christians also should be given an equal footing in the community.)

The End

After a brief period of serious illness Kunjachan passed away on 16th October 1973 at the age of 82. At his death the children and others told that 'a saint had passed away'. At his funeral the priest who preached the panegyric, spoke well of his holiness in life,

apostolic zeal, kindness of heart, love for the poor and other outstanding virtues. And towards the end of the speech he said to the surprise of all, “we are participating in the funeral of a saint. We have one more mediator in heaven.”

Beatification

Kunjachan had the reputation of a holy man even while he was alive. People irrespective of caste and religion, used to approach him in their manifold needs and they got favours through his prayers and blessings. Within a few days after his death his tomb at Ramapuram became a centre of pilgrimage for people from far and wide.

The process of Beatification and Canonization started on 11th August 1987 at Ramapuram, bestowing upon him the title, ‘Servant of God’. The ‘Positio super vita et virtutibus’ was completed after ten years and was submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on 12th February 1997. The ‘Positio’ on the heroic practice of virtues of the saintly priest was approved by Pope John Paul II on 22nd June 2004 and he was declared ‘Venerable’.

Meanwhile the process of the miraculous cure of the clubfoot of a boy had undertaken, and the findings were sent to Rome for consideration. After a thorough investigation of the miraculous nature of the cure, made by competent personnel in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI approved it, opening the way for Beatification. Venerable Kunjachan was beatified by His Eminence Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil, Major Arch bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church on 30th April 2006 at the very same village Ramapuram where he was born, worked, died and buried.

Miracles

It is mandatory to have at least one miracle to have happened through the intercession of the person after death for declaring him/her a saint. Kunjachan, even while alive, was a saint and did many miracles like curing the diseases of animals and human beings alike. Students used to go to him for getting their books and pens blessed before exams. They believed that this will get them good marks. When domestic animals got ill people used to go to him with a pinch of salt and a foot-long thin rope for blessing. Once the cow was fed the salt and tied the rope around its neck, it gets cured. Hundreds and thousands of such miracles have happened during his lifetime and afterwards. In fact there won't be a single household in Ramapuram and its neighbourhood which has not received the blessings of the great soul.

But the one which was crucial in the process was that of Gilson Varghese, a boy from Adimaly, who was born of clubfoot, got cured by the heavenly intercession of the servant of God. He had been advised by doctors to undergo three operations consecutively. As they were poor people, his parents could not afford to meet the huge expenses of the surgical intervention and so the treatment was not carried out. The boy visited the tomb of the servant of God and prayed for the cure. On returning home, he continued his prayers. After a few days, when he woke up in the morning he found it to be a normal foot. It happened in 1991 and Gilson was then ten years old. A detailed enquiry about this extraordinary cure was conducted under specialised doctors and other people concerned and the report has been submitted to the Congregation for the cause of Saints, Rome. This is the main evidence on which Kunjachan was beatified.

LIFE AT A GLANCE

| | | |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Birth | : | April 1, 1891 |
| Ordained Priest | : | December 17, 1921 |
| Death | : | October 16, 1973 |
| Servant of God | : | August 11, 1987 |
| Venerable | : | June 22, 2004 |
| Blessed | : | April 30, 2006 |

FEAST DAY: OCTOBER - 16

GEMS

“Do not keep any possession on this earth either as landed property or cash account, after death we will receive everything from the Lord”.

MESSAGE

Practicing Christian life with dedication is a means to attract others.

ST. IGNATIUS LAYOLA



Diamond in the Bungalow

Who is the owner of heaven? Is he the person born in a bungalow or the one born in a mud hut? The answer is: Heaven is for both. It is not important where we are born, but how we lived. It is not by birth, but by deeds that we reach holiness. There are several sacred souls in the Church, who were born in different circumstances and lived a life pleasing to God. Among them, St. Ignatius Layola, the founder of the ‘society of Jesus’ is an important person.

Inigo, known as Ignatious, was born in a rich family in the town of Aspacia, near the Piranees mountain of Spain. He was the youngest son of a big family that consisted of eight sons and four daughters. The big house similar to a palatial bungalow was known as Layola. The very devoted mother of Ignatious had died in his early age and the boy was brought up by his aunt. He was brought up in devotion to God by that woman who was rich in her good qualities. His father gave him training to be a young prince. His uncle taught him to read

and write. Thus in his early age itself, he had the abilities to fight a battle with sword and do good writing.

Those days the neighbouring countries of France and Spain were enemies. By the year 1515, the French had started attacking the northern side of Spain. After conquering many cities, they reached a town called Pambalooa. The Spanish soldiers stood in the fort that was at the city centre. But the expert French soldiers used ladders to climb the fort walls. At that time, Ignatius who was the officer of the Spanish army came forward to send them back. The co-soldiers became enthusiastic. They joined together and rolled down big stones at the enemy. Many French soldiers died there. But they were not willing to withdraw. The French army men brought tanks all round the fort and started firing. Then also Ignatius fought with all energy to protect the fort. Ignatius who has strengthening others was shot at both his legs. The injury on his right leg was grievous.

In the hospital, the bones of Ignatius were plastered. He recovered within few weeks. But the length of his right leg was shorter. In order make the length same another operation was conducted. He had to suffer enormous pains and had to spend long time in the hospital.

Reading that Changed the Way

Ignatius desired to read books to obtain little happiness and solace at his life in hospital. He had decided to read thrilling stories to forget his pain. However, he got only religious books to read. The books that reached his hands were 'The History of Jesus' and 'Life Stories of Saints'. He did not like to read them and threw them away. However, since he had nothing else, he was compelled to read them. Lying in the sick bed, unable to do anything, Ignatius found time to read and that was a turning point in his life.

The life stories of saints, who followed Jesus, touched the heart of Ignatius. If he and she became saints, why can't I? This question resounded in him. He felt that the life till then was meaningless. Ignatius left the hospital with a wish to become a saint and abandoned all his army dreams.

On the way he met a person who was speaking against God. He advised him but had no result. He wanted to teach him a lesson and if he did not obey he wished to kill him with a spear. Suddenly a question raised within him. Will God like it? He understood that it was not God's wish.

Ignatius went away straight to an Ashram. He made a good confession there. Through that, he received the strength to bring about a real change. After that he travelled to a church situated on Mountserrat at about 1200 metres height. He spent the entire night in prayer before a statue in the church that was named after Blessed Virgin Mary. He surrendered his life to Mother Mary. As a sign of becoming the soldier of Mother Mary, the sword and the club were offered at the altar of Our Lady. In the morning, Ignatius who left the church after receiving Holy Communion gave his smooth and costly dress to a beggar. Instead he started wearing a rough jute cassock like dress. It was a sign of withdrawal from all the worldly pleasures.

Ignatius then left for Mantreesa. He found a cave in the hillside. There he spent his time in loneliness. That place enabled him to pray and do penance. He knelt before the cross and prayed and meditated. The life in the cave made him a new man. He wrote down the spiritual happiness he felt in the book called 'Spiritual Exercises' which became famous later on. The book contains his year-long experiences in the cave in solitary prayer and fasting. It explains how to pray and

reflect in silence.

Days of Tensions

Ignatius had to undergo severe temptation to live the life of a saint under the protection of Mother Mary. We see several instances of these in the life of saints. Once, as he was praying in the Villedorbis church, a doubt filled in his mind. He felt no interest in prayer and no belief in the devotions. He became disheartened. Advises from his spiritual father were of no use for him. He remained steadfast. 'Make me a firm believer', he prayed. His devotions were truly undertaken. The temptations of ten months ended and Ignatius became victorious.

After the life in the cave, he visited the holy places. Reaching Rome, he took the permission of the Pope to go on a pilgrimage. In August 1523, he reached Palastine. Ignatius was joyful when he saw the places where Jesus lived. He spent long time in prayers at Bathlehem where Jesus was born and at Calvary, where Jesus died on the cross. Then he reached the mount where Jesus ascended into heaven. After the visit of the holy places, Ignatius went back to his hometown. On his return, there were two ships at the dock. Even though one of the ships had added facilities, he did not enter that. He started his journey in the other ship. Miraculously that ship escaped and reached at its destination safely.

After reaching his homeland, he decided to become a priest. He joined a school and started to learn Latin along with small children. When he made mistakes, his colleagues used to laugh at him. He did not give heed to that. After studies at the school, he joined the University for Higher Studies. There was not much progress, eventhough he studied at Alakala and Salamanka. Later he continued his studies in the Paris University. Ignatious spent 11 long years in higher studies.

As he got spiritual strength through prayer and fasting, he attained worldly knowledge through disciplined study. The expenditure for his studies was collected from the houses. After using the money necessary for his studies the rest was distributed among the poor. Once the money of Ignatius was stolen by his friend. When he came to know that he was bed ridden he reached there walking long distances. He behaved with him benevolently and told him that he need not return the money.

Even before the completion of studies, Ignatius used to advise others and prompted them to lead a good life. Many ridiculed him as a senseless person and even was jailed twice saying that he was teaching wrong things. Even in these blockages, Ignatius continued his work. He understood that the remedy for this was to get education. In March 1534 he earned the highest degree from the university.

Missionary of Christ

After attaining strength in spirit and wisdom, he decided to establish a congregation to participate in the service work of Jesus. Very clever Peter Fabber was the first friend to come for that. Later Francis Xavier joined them. He was a famous young intellect. Francis, who liked the advice and simple life of Ignatius, was ready to accept the religious life. Ignatius used to tell Francis Xavier ‘Even if you attain the whole world, if your soul is lost what is the benefit’?

Many young persons slowly began to join the congregation of Ignatius. This little community of people who had left everything and had surrendered themselves to work for the kingdom of God was named as the ‘Society of Jesus’. One fine morning in that year, Ignatius along with his friends reached the Mount Fort church. They took the vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience. They took a pledge

before God that from now onwards they would have nothing of their own, would not marry and obey the authorities. They also decided to do the mission work as per the guidance of the Pope.

On June 24, 1537 Ignatius and six of his disciples received the sacrament of Holy Ordination and became priests. They preached the word of God in several cities. They attracted several thousand people. Many repented and began to lead a good life. He worked very hard for the repentance of sinners. He bore many sufferings for those who did not pay heed to the advices. He took special interest in taking care of the sick. He found time to work in the hospitals and provide relief to the sick. People called the members of this congregation named after Jesus as 'Jesuits'. Many accepted their services.

But they had to face many oppositions and allegations. The Ambassador of the Emperor criticized them while they were working in Rome. The members of the Society of Jesus who exhibited humility were condemned of their undue desire for power and position of the Bishop. Ignatius took a pledge when he came to know about this: He or anyone in his congregation will not accept any awards or positions. In the Society of Jesus virtue of obedience has a big importance. Ignatius used to narrate stories to clarify that obedience was a virtue in itself.

Everything for the Praise of God

Seeing the holy life of Ignatius and his co-priests, many youngsters joined the Society of Jesus. A new house was opened for them in Rome. The members of that house had to go to hospitals for the care of the sick on holidays.

Otherwise, he had to help the orphans who wandered on the streets. He always desired that his students should be happy and content. He used to tell them: “Whatever we do should be for the praise of God. Those who do it should be happy in soul”. He wanted to give happiness to others. Many used to laugh at his old clothes and large cap when he travelled. Then he used to tell those along with him: “Do not waste an opportunity that can make others laugh at least once”.

Ignatius was a saint who had a firm faith. He believed that God was a loving father, who would see the needs and get them done. There are many instances in his life that proved it. He sought the help of God in all losses and shortages.

The Society of Jesus was officially recognized in the year 1538. The rule book of the Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III. Ignatius took up the responsibility of the Superior General. He established many schools and colleges for the education of the young. This was the beginning of the establishment of schools and colleges by the Society of Jesus in other parts of the world. During that time, many came forward to join the Society of Jesus for studies. The patron saint of the young St. Alosious Gonsago died while he was a student at the Society of Jesus.

Ignatious was a person who hated idleness. Once he asked a person who was lazy: “For whom are you doing this job?” “For God and for his love” was the reply. Ignatius who heard this said “If you are doing for God, laziness cannot be forgiven”. The slogan of the Society of Jesus is “For God’s Highest Glory” (in short form it is known as AMDG). So the meaning of the service done by the members of the Society of Jesus should be for the praise of God.

A Fulfilled Life :

Ignatius ruled the Society of Jesus for 15 years. During that time a constitution was prepared and was given to the members. Lessons on obedience were gifted to them. During that time Pope gave permission to publish the book ‘Spiritual Exercises’. He was satisfied with all these. He always had a prayer on his lips ‘cleanse me, the holy spirit of Jesus ‘.

At the age of 65, his life came to an end. It was an ordinary death. One day before his death, it was heard often shouting ‘Oh my God’! The doctors who came to treat him the next day asked his followers to give him food. But a priest who tested his pulses found him to be dying. Even before everyone could reach, Ignatius died. He left this world in 1556 without giving any special advice or last message to the members of the Society of Jesus that he had established.

By that time the Society of Jesus had one hundred houses and 1000 members. Ignatius tried to use the knowledge given by God to study well and do good service. He also trained others in the same manner. Ignatius Layola was a knowledgeable saint who used his wisdom to glorify God. He also was capable of creating missionaries like Francis Xavier.

The change in the life of Ignatius took place because of an accident at the battlefield, the reading at the hospital bed and the thoughts that touched his heart. It proves that the ways of God are so marvellous. Good God interferes in our life too. To tread in purity, let us seek the help of God.

LIFE AT A GLANCE

| | | |
|--|---|------|
| Birth | : | 1491 |
| Visit to Holy Lands | : | 1523 |
| Priestly Ordination | : | 1537 |
| Recognition to the society of Jesuits | : | 1538 |
| Death | : | 1556 |

FEAST DAY: JULY - 31

GEMS

“What do you gain ultimately if you gain the whole world and lose your soul?”

MESSAGE

Do everything for the greater glory of God.

ST. PIUS X



Good Smart Boy

It is the story of a poor small boy. He wanted to become a priest, but later on became a Priest, Bishop, Cardinal and at the end a Pope. Born in poverty, studied with difficulties and lived a simple life, St. Pius X was the church's guide. In the Catholic Church both the rich and the poor have reached the status of saints. There are laity, priests and Popes who have joined the chorus of saints. God had given St. Pius X big positions both on earth and in heaven. He was one of the eminent personalities who helped to raise the status of the Church. An understanding of his life would be a good inspiration for us.

The hero of the story Joseph Sartho, his baptismal name, was born in a small village called Reese in Italy. The baptism of Joseph Sartho took place the next day of his birth i.e., June 2, 1835. The boy's father, Giovanni Batheestha Sartho was a postman in Reece where many hardworking farmers lived. In order to feed the ten children of the family, his mother Margaret Sansan used to do tailoring. They had a very small house with least conveniences and a small piece of land. But they were rich in their Christian values.

Joseph was admitted in a neighbourhood school at a very early age. He studied well, participated in sports and shared jokes. Along with smartness, goodness also shined in him. He was an enthusiastic child and went to play only after studies. After the games, he used to go to a nearby church to pray for 10 minutes and then helped his mother at home. In his early age itself he used to be an altar boy in the church. That enabled him to take part in Qurbana everyday. He used to sit in the front row for the Sunday catechism classes and stood first in the monthly examinations. One day the parish priest said “I will give you an apple if you tell me where God is”.

Joseph replied, “I will give you two apples if you tell me where God is not present”. The school at Reece had only up to second standard. After completion of the second standard, Joseph began to study Latin from the parish priest. During this time, he also received confirmation. When the mother and son were alone, he used to tell his mother “Mother, I want to become a priest”. They could not think of it as they were very poor. But his mother supported him and got his father’s permission. The parish priest was also happy. That’s how he joined the school at Kastle Franco. Four years of studies went on happily. He went walking to the school even in the freezing temperatures and unbearable hot conditions and mostly bore the hunger. However, that poor boy stood first and completed his studies in that school in 1850.

He wanted to join a seminary but who would bear the expenses? The parish priest interfered and hoped the Cardinal at Venice could help him. By his efforts Joseph was granted a free stay at the seminary. The continuous prayers of the family of Sartho began to bear fruits. On November 13, 1850 Joseph joined the seminary at Padua. The authorities at the seminary understood very fast that he was a good, smart student.

At the Altar

As a first result, Joseph Sartho became the apple of the eyes of everyone. That village boy was the topper there also. The authorities said “Joseph was an example to all the others in the seminary with his studies, perseverance and devotion”. During holidays when he was at home, he used to actively involve himself in the programmes of the parish, paid special attention to teach children catechism and helped the priest. Eventhough the stay at the seminary was free, money for other expenses was given by people of Reece. The people of Reece were sure that Joseph was the right person to become a priest.

During this time Joseph’s father got sick and died on 4th May, 1852. That big family lost its head. Some advised him to go back from the seminary and look after his family. However, he could not refuse the call of God. His interest in studies and enthusiasm for God’s love continued to grow. He was also given the responsibility of the choir of the seminary. Joseph lived like an angel in the seminary. On September 18, 1858 Joseph Sartho received the sacrament of ordination at the Cathedral of Franco in the presence of his mother Margret Sansan and brothers and sisters. Next day, Fr. Joseph offered his first Eucharist at the parish church of Reece.

To Glow as a Candle

Fr. Joseph was appointed as an Assistant Priest at the parish of Thombolo. On November 29, 1858 he reached there. The parish priest was Fr. Constantini. He welcomed the young priest wholeheartedly and gave him advices. Both of them became very close friends within a short span of time. They worked together for a common goal. Fr. Sartho was ready to work very hard. He used to sleep just for four hours. The dress of the poor priest was very simple, but his Qurbana

and sermons attracted the people. The sermons that contained the real teachings of the Church got publicity. Within a short time, Fr. Sartho was known as a good preacher. He was invited to nearby areas for preaching.

In 1863, the parish priest got sick and was advised to rest. So Fr. Sartho took up his responsibilities also. He took special interest in teaching children catechism, to increase the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and finding candidates for priesthood and training them. He was solace for the sick and those dying. He started evening classes for those who did not know how to read and write. Those who spoke against God were invited to these classes, which enabled them to remove their evil concepts.

He used to receive stipend for preaching at different places. All these were donated to the needy. Even then he had no good dress, shoes or cap. Sartho who was born poor did not abandon poverty even in priesthood. When there was no money, he was willing to donate even his personal belongings. He served the parish of Thombola for nine years. By this time he was known as a very good priest. In 1867, Sartho was appointed as the parish priest of Salsano, the richest and biggest parish of the Diocese. Is it possible for a thirty two year old poor priest, the son of a postman, to rule the parish of Salsano inhabited by rich people? The elders complained to the Bishop against his appointment, but he was not ready to hear them. On July 14, 1867 when Fr. Sartho offered his mass at Salsano and preached, the prejudgment of the people was removed and they began to like the new parish priest. He began to know everyone through family visits. They met the parish priest among the poor, at the confession chair, before the Blessed Sacrament, the preacher's table and at the catechism classes. He designed new programmes for increasing the

devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. In 1873 when the disease of Cholera spread, he prepared the sick for their peaceful death, buried those who died and was a solace for others. After almost seven years of stay at the parish of Salsano, he left the place.

A Poor Authoritative Person

A new era started in the life of Fr. Sartho on November 28, 1875. He was appointed the Chancellor of the Diocese and spiritual advisor of the seminary. With lot of justice, commonsense and holiness, he was a big help to the bishop. Monsignor Sartho paid equal attention in the administration of the Diocese and in the spiritual nourishment of students at the seminary. He did not wear the official silk dress of Monsignor and its special signs. He had only a small red piece of cloth, that symbolized the position, on his black dress. The simplicity and the spirit of poverty were first misunderstood. But later others also imitated him.

There was a beautiful garden in front of the room of Msgr. Sartho. However, he did not find time to go and sit there and take some rest. He had the will and energy to work continuously without even wasting a minute. He worked with a lot of dedication. Within a few days he proved his ability in the administration of the Diocese. Authority and position never intoxicated him. As a humble man, this holy man served God and after nine years, on one morning, the Bishop handed over a letter appointing him as the Bishop of Mantua. He tried to excuse himself and wrote a letter to the Pope requesting him to be not appointed as a Bishop. He met the Pope directly and requested, but the decision was not changed.

The Leader (SARATHI) of the Diocese

Msgr. Sartho was elevated to the position of Bishop on November 15, 1884. During that time the Diocese of Mantua was in a dilapidated condition. He worked very hard to rejuvenate it. Very few priests were available and many parishes were orphaned. The urgent need was for dedicated priests and he requested the help of everyone to rebuild the seminary. It bore results and many students studied in the rebuilt seminary. Many expert teachers were appointed. Many priests came out of his seminary who maintained high quality in later days.

Bishop Sartho, the good shepherd, started visiting parishes. Within two years he visited the entire parishes in the Diocese. He kept up a personal relationship with 135 parishes. He called a diocesan synod on September 10, 1888 to think about the all round development of the diocese and to find solutions to the problems. He tried to implement the decisions taken in the synod. Understanding the high importance of catechism, the Bishop instructed all parishes and gave encouragement. The lazy people were awakened. He had laid a lot of emphasis on the model life of the priests and encouraged the children to receive Holy Communion often. He was in the forefront to show his concern for the poor. That good shepherd led his flock in goodness by ending the false traditions and brought them up in meaningful traditions.

Cardinal like a Diamond :

On June 12, 1893, Bishop Sartho was elevated to the position of Cardinal. After three days he was given the position of the Patriarch of Venice. However, Cardinal Sartho could not go to Venice immediately. The Government of Italy did not accept that

appointment. The authorities, refusing the orders of the Church, made the issue more complicated. However, Bishop Sartho led a simple life during this time and fulfilled his responsibilities. On September 5, 1894, when the Government withdrew its order, he bid Good Bye to the diocese of Mantua. On November 24, 1894 he reached the city of Venice and did the same reforms in Venice as in Mantua.

He called for teaching of truths of faith and laws of the Church during the sermons. Efforts were made to improve the seminary at Venice. The Church songs and music were renewed so that all the believers could sing together. Instructions were given so that only good mannered persons were allowed to join the choir. Holy Communion congress was conducted to increase the devotion to the Holy Qurbana. Many participated in the congress that started on August 9, 1897.

There were no changes in the behaviour of Sartho even after becoming a Cardinal. He was always in the forefront in case of charity. He used to give in kind if he didn't have money. People used to call him the poorest of the poor in Venice. He had very few servants and conveniences. Many were attracted to his life that was without sophistication. The Cardinal very rarely visited Rome, and Pope Leo XIII used to like his visits. The Pope used to call him the Diamond of the Congregation of Cardinals.

The Son of Reece in Rome

On July 20, 1903 Pope Leo XIII died. On 31st all the Cardinals assembled together to elect a new Pope. The 62-member Cardinal's team selected Cardinal Sartho as the Pope. Thinking of the responsibilities of the position of a Pope, Sartho was shaken. He wanted to be excused but nobody listened. At the end, the son of a farmer in the village of Reece reached the throne in Rome. He became

the 259th Pope of the Catholic Church on August 4, 1903. He accepted the name as Pius X. When he came before the people with the official dress, people welcomed him with loud shouts ‘Long live Pope PiusX’.

The slogan of the Pope was ‘Renew Everything in Christ’. His goal was to bring the world and the Church under Christ’s protection. He intensely desired to see God’s wish implemented on earth. Pius X can be called as the ‘Pope of Catechism’. He tried to implement the catechism procedure that he had implemented while he was a Bishop. He permitted to give Holy Communion to children at a young age. By the Ecclesiastic of 1910, it was declared that after reaching the age of 7, Holy Communion could be given. As a sign of this gratitude, 400 children from France travelled to Rome and met the Pope. An album signed by more than one lakh children was presented to him. The Papa blessed them and gave them silver medals.

A Saint for the Church

Lot of miracles happened through him in his final days. The news of recovering dreaded diseases spread among the people very fast. Still he lived a simple life and worked very hard. However, during those days there were lots of problems all around the world. He was saddened by the war that was going to take place. In the last meeting of the Cardinals held on May 20, 1914 he wanted the Cardinals to oppose war and stand for peace. But on June 28, 1914 suddenly the First World War started, terrorizing the world. Shadows of deep sorrow was seen on the face of Pope Pius X, who was old by then. On August 2, he gave the world his final message of peace. Within few days on August 20, 1914 Pope Pius X left this world. On August 23, he was buried at the St. Peter’s Church. Soon, many pilgrims started visiting

his tomb. Many miracles took place all over the world through his intercession.

On June 3, 1951 Pope Pius X was included in the category of the Blessed. He was declared a Saint on May 29, 1954. That's how a poor child, occupying all the service positions in the Church, now lives with God, the Father in heaven as an intercessor and model for all. Let us implore the intercession of Pius X in our studies, work and prayers.



LIFE AT A GLANCE

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Birth | : June 2, 1835 |
| Priestly Ordination | : September 18, 1858 |
| Episcopal Ordination | : November 15, 1884 |
| Cardinal | : June 12, 1893 |
| Pope | : August 4, 1903 |
| Death | : August 20, 1914 |
| Blessed | : June 3, 1951 |
| Beatification | : May 29, 1954 |

FEAST DAY: August - 21

GEMS

“Renew everything in Christ.”

MESSAGE

Learning and teaching catechism is the most important activity in the Church.

Notes

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Notes

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