



SIVAGANGAI DIOCESE

News Letter



March 2026



March - 8

St Joseph - Pray for us

March - 19



பெண்களின் மாண்பும் பங்களிப்பும்

BISHOP'S ENGAGEMENTS FOR MARCH - 2026

DATE	TIME	APPOINTMENT	PLACE
Feb 28 & Mar 01		Pastoral Visit	Vallani
02		Holy Mass - Renovation of St. James's Church	Mookaiyur
07		Requiem Mass, Patcheri	V. Michaelpattanam
08		Lenten Retreat Mass	Thangachimadam
09-13		Meeting with the Cardinal, Priests & Religious	Hyderabad
14		Women's Day Celebration (SC/ST Commission)	Devakottai
16		Study Day	Bishop's House
17		Pamban Island Initiatives	Thangachimadam
21	E	Servant of God Leveil's Day	Sarugani
23		Study Day	Bishop's House
24		SMSSS - Executive Body Meeting	Paramakudi
25		Ananda Education Trust Meeting	Devakottai
28		Evaluation of the Lenten Ministry of Lay Evangelizers	Amaithiyagam
29		Palm Sunday	Cathedral
30	M	Priests' Sanctification Day	VPC
	E	Chrism Mass	Cathedral



Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI)

Bishop Speaks...

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we enter the sacred season of Lent, the Church once again invites us to a time of repentance, renewal, and return to the Lord. "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). Lent is not merely a liturgical period; it is a spiritual journey - a movement from superficial religiosity to authentic conversion, from external observance to interior transformation.

A Pastoral Concern: Devotion and Discernment

In my message last month, I reflected on the right ordering of sacred images in our churches and the need for moderation. During this Lenten season, I wish to deepen that reflection by drawing attention to the biblical understanding of fasting and almsgiving, especially in light of certain pastoral trends that require discernment and catechesis.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency in some of our parishes for individuals or families to voluntarily sponsor the erection of sacred images or statues of their choice, often as votive offerings or in fulfillment of personal devotion. While generosity and gratitude are praiseworthy, it is imperative to clarify that the Church cannot entertain every such request arising from personal preference. Church space is not a private devotional domain but a sacred, ecclesial, and liturgical space governed by theological, canonical, and pastoral norms. The multiplication of statues cannot become a substitute for deeper Christian commitment.

It is the duty of the presbyterium - and all of us in pastoral ministry - to instruct and catechize the faithful that true Lenten sacrifice is not primarily about adding religious symbols, but about becoming living witnesses of charity and justice.

Biblical Fasting

The Word of God speaks with striking clarity through the Prophet Isaiah:



"Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free...
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them?" (Is 58:67)

Here the Lord rejects empty ritualism. He does not condemn fasting itself, but fasting that is disconnected from justice, mercy, and charity. True fasting leads to solidarity with the poor. True almsgiving restores dignity to the vulnerable.

Our Lord Jesus reaffirms this teaching. In Gospel of Matthew (6:14), He instructs us that almsgiving must not be for display but for God alone. In Gospel of Luke (12:16-21), He narrates the parable of the rich man who, after a plentiful harvest, said to himself, "I will tear down my barns and build larger ones." But God calls him a fool, because he stored up riches for himself and was "not rich toward God." The Gospel warns us against accumulation without compassion. Likewise, in Gospel of Luke (16:19-31), the rich man who ignored Lazarus at his gate becomes a sobering image of indifference toward the suffering poor. And in Gospel of Matthew (25:31-46), Christ identifies Himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned: "Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did to me." The message is unmistakable that our worship of God is inseparable from our care for the poor.

Almsgiving: The Heart of Lenten Conversion

Sacred Scripture consistently presents care for the poor as a central expression of covenant fidelity. The Book of Proverbs teaches: "He who is generous to the poor lends to the Lord" (Prov 19:17). The Book of Sirach affirms: "Almsgiving atones for sin" (Sir 3:30). The Letter of James is uncompromising: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (Jam 1:27).

The early Church Fathers echo this biblical conviction with prophetic force. Saint Basil the Great declares: "The bread you keep belongs to the hungry; the cloak in your closet belongs to the naked; the shoes rotting in your house belong to the barefoot." Saint John

Chrysostom warns: “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life.” Saint Ambrose teaches: “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person, you are handing over to him what is his.” For the Fathers, almsgiving is not optional generosity; it is a matter of justice rooted in the universal destination of goods.

Evangelical Simplicity in Celebrations

Another pastoral dimension that calls for reflection is the growing extravagance in certain celebrations - church feasts, weddings, anniversaries, house blessings, and other social functions. While joy and thanksgiving are legitimate and beautiful, excess and luxury can become a counter-witness to evangelical simplicity.

Lenten catechesis must gently but firmly invite our Faithful to moderation. A meaningful portion of celebration expenses and luxury budgets can be consciously set apart for:

- ❖ Education of poor children
- ❖ Medical care of the disadvantaged
- ❖ Support of orphans and widows who have lost their livelihood
- ❖ Assistance to economically vulnerable families

In doing so, family celebrations themselves become occasions of grace and solidarity.

Dilexit Te - He Loved You

In his first Encyclical, *Dilexit Te* (“He Loved You”), Pope Leo XIV recalls to the Church the primacy of Christ’s love as the source and summit of our Christian life. He reminds us that we do not begin by loving; rather, “we love because He first loved us” (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). The Holy Father emphasizes that the experience of being personally loved by Christ is not a private consolation but a missionary dynamism. The love of Christ impels us toward communion, service, and generous self-gift.

In *Dilexit Te*, the Pope writes that “the Heart of Christ remains open to all, especially to the poor, the wounded, and the forgotten.” He insists that the Church’s credibility in today’s world depends not on

structures, influence, or external display, but on a visible witness of compassionate solidarity. “where Christian love becomes concrete,” he affirms, “there the Gospel becomes believable.”

The Holy Father further reminds us that the goods we possess - material, spiritual, and intellectual - are not merely personal achievements but gifts entrusted to us. “What we have received in love must be shared in love.” In this light, Christian charity is not optional philanthropy; it is the very expression of discipleship. When the Church bends down to serve, she reflects the Heart of Christ Himself.

Thus, *Dilexit Te* calls the entire People of God to renewal, a renewal of heart, a renewal of mission, and a renewal of credibility. Only a Church that loves visibly, serves humbly, and shares generously can truly proclaim the Gospel in our time.

A Special Call to Ministry

This Lenten season places upon us a sacred responsibility:

- ❖ To catechize clearly on the meaning of true fasting and almsgiving.
- ❖ To guide the faithful toward responsible and theologically sound devotional practices.
- ❖ To promote evangelical simplicity in parish life and celebrations.
- ❖ To encourage concrete structures of charity in every parish.

Lent is not fulfilled by multiplying religious expressions but by multiplying acts of mercy. Our churches must not merely display sacred images; they must form living icons of Christ in works of compassion.

May this Lenten season in our Diocese of Sivagangai be marked by authentic repentance, generous almsgiving, and renewed commitment to the poor. Then our fasting will be pleasing to the Lord, and our Church will shine as a credible witness of the Gospel.

With prayerful blessings,
+ Lourdu Anandam
Bishop of Sivagangai.

MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIV FOR LENT 2026
Listening and Fasting:
Lent as a Time of Conversion

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (Ex 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen *as he does*. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.” [1]

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion.

Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbour.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.” [2] Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.” [3] As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.” [4]

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the

covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one's conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity's thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr

LEO PP. XIV

[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 9.

[2] Augustine *The Usefulness of Fasting*, 1, 1.

[3] Benedict XVI, *Catechesis* (9 March 2011).

[4] Paul VI, *Catechesis* (8 February 1978).

Papal Intention - March 2026

For disarmament and peace

Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.



Papal Documents On The Dignity Of Women

Introduction:

We are well aware of the theme of the year: "Women's Dignity and their Participation". In a previous issue of the SNL, we reflected on womanhood from a biblical perspective. In this month's issue, we turn our attention to the social teaching of the Catholic Church regarding the dignity of women.

The Catholic Church's reflection on the dignity of women has developed progressively through the Magisterium, articulated in encyclicals, conciliar constitutions, apostolic exhortations, and pastoral letters. Rooted in biblical anthropology and natural law, these documents affirm the equal dignity of women and men while recognizing the distinctive vocation and contribution of women within the family, the Church, and society.

The following academic overview presents a thematic classification of key papal documents and synthesizes their principal teachings on the dignity of women.

I. Foundational Social Teaching and Human Dignity

***Rerum Novarum* Leo XIII (1891)**

This foundational social encyclical establishes the Church's modern social doctrine by affirming the inherent dignity of the human person. Within its treatment of labour and social justice, it recognizes women as moral subjects entitled to protection, just remuneration, and respect for their personal and familial dignity, particularly in relation to motherhood and domestic life.

***Pacem in Terris* John XXIII (1963)**

This encyclical explicitly acknowledges women's growing awareness of their personal dignity and civil rights. It affirms equality in human dignity between women and men and advocates women's legitimate participation in social, political, and economic life as a requirement of the common good.

***Gaudium et Spes* Second Vatican Council, promulgated by Paul VI (1965)**

The Pastoral Constitution condemns all forms of discrimination based on sex as contrary to God's plan. It articulates an anthropological vision in which women's equal dignity and active participation in cultural, social, and ecclesial life are presented as integral to authentic human development.

II. Marriage, Family, and the Vocation of Woman

***Casti Connubii* Pius XI (1930)**

This encyclical on Christian marriage emphasizes the dignity and equality of spouses, presenting marriage as a communion of persons grounded in mutual love and responsibility. It rejects notions of female subordination and affirms the moral and personal dignity of women within marital life.

***Familiaris Consortio* John Paul II (1981)**

This apostolic exhortation situates women at the heart of family life and social renewal. It affirms women's equal dignity within marriage,

recognizes their multifaceted roles as spouses, mothers, and educators, and calls for societal structures that support women's participation beyond the domestic sphere.

Amoris Laetitia Francis (2016)

This post-synodal apostolic exhortation reaffirms the dignity of women within the family while addressing contemporary pastoral challenges. It strongly condemns domestic violence, exploitation, and discrimination, emphasizing mutuality, reciprocity, and shared responsibility between women and men.

III. Work, Social Participation, and Justice

Laborem Exercens John Paul II (1981)

This encyclical presents work as a fundamental dimension of human dignity. It affirms the value of women's labor, both within the home and in professional contexts, and calls for just working conditions, equitable wages, and social recognition of motherhood.

Populorum Progressio Paul VI (1967)

This document links women's dignity to integral human development. It underscores the importance of education, economic opportunity, and social advancement for women as essential components of authentic progress and global solidarity.

Octogesima Adveniens Paul VI (1971)

This apostolic letter addresses emerging social inequalities and explicitly recognizes women's struggle against systemic injustice. It calls for women's full participation in political, economic, and social life as a matter of justice and human rights.

Caritas in Veritate Benedict XVI (2009)

This encyclical situates women's dignity within a broader ethical vision of development grounded in truth and charity. It emphasizes respect for life, the family, and women's contribution to building a humane and morally responsible society.

IV. Theological Reflection on Womanhood

Mulieris Dignitatem John Paul II (1988)

This apostolic letter represents a seminal theological treatment of the dignity and vocation of women. Drawing upon Scripture and Christological anthropology, it articulates the concepts of equality, complementarity, and the so-called 'feminine genius,' highlighting women's unique capacity for relationality and care.

Christifideles Laici John Paul II (1988)

This exhortation on the vocation of the lay faithful affirms the ecclesial mission of women, particularly lay women, in evangelization, leadership, and service. It underscores women's responsibility and co-responsibility in the life and mission of the Church.

Letter to Women John Paul II (1995)

Written in the context of the Fourth World Conference on Women, this pastoral letter expresses formal appreciation for women's contributions across all spheres of life. It calls for renewed commitment to safeguarding women's dignity, rights, and participation.

V. Life, Love, and Human Relationships

Evangelium Vitae John Paul II (1995)

This encyclical on the value and inviolability of human life highlights women's particular role in promoting a culture of life. It presents women as key agents in defending life through compassion, moral courage, and social engagement.

Deus Caritas Est Benedict XVI (2005)

This encyclical explores love (*caritas*) as the foundation of Christian life and social responsibility. While not focused exclusively on women, it implicitly affirms women's contribution to the Church's charitable mission and witness to God's love.

Fratelli Tutti Francis (2020) by Pope Francis

This social encyclical calls for universal fraternity and social friendship. It unequivocally condemns violence and exclusion directed against women and promotes equality, solidarity, and respect as essential to building just and peaceful societies.

Conclusion

Considered collectively, these magisterial documents reveal a coherent and evolving teaching that consistently affirms the dignity, equality, and indispensable role of women. They challenge both the Church and society to move beyond mere acknowledgment toward concrete structures and practices that recognize women as active agents in the pursuit of justice, communion, and a civilization of love.

INFORMATION

Hearty Condolences

We, together with our Bishop, Most Rev. D. L. Anandam, D.D., Ph.D., Dr. Theol., express our profound and heartfelt condolences, prayers, and solidarity to Rev. Fr. Jesu Jeyaraj, the Parish Priest of Pushpavanam on the passing away of his beloved mother, Mrs. Sriyapushpam, aged 85, who was called to her eternal rest on 06 February 2026. We join the bereaved family in prayer, commending her noble soul to the loving mercy of God. May the Lord grant her eternal peace and reward her with heavenly rest!

Surplus Masses Remitted to Procurator

Name	Holy Masses	Amount
1. Carmel Convent	152	22,800
2. Kallal Parish	50	7,500
3. Savariarpattanam Parish	174	26,100
4. Orikkottai Parish	20	3,000
5. Sekkalai Parish	150	22,500
6. Nanakudi Parish	386	58,000
7. Sarugani Parish	77	11,550
8. Andichiurani Parish	404	60,650
9. Kokkurani Parish	200	30,000
10. Fr. Maria Dellus Bishop's House	11	1,650

Contribution to the Diocese

Carried Forward	Rs. 55,66,000 00
Fr. Antony Raj, Australia	3,15,000
Fr. Arockia Britto Prabha Arulanandam	4,00,000
Kallal Parish	50,000
St. Joseph Matric Hr. Sec. School, Devakottai	5,00,000
Total	Rs. 68,31,000 00

Bishop Anandam Charity Fund

Carried Forward	Rs. 16,82,000 00
St. John the Paptist Sisters, Madurai	10,000 00
Total	Rs. 16,92,000 00

Seminarian's Fund

Anandha Charismatic Centre, Rastha	Rs. 5,000 00
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Cathedral Construction Fund

Society of the Servants of the Holy Spirit, Bangalore	Rs. 2,00,000 00
Family Commission	20,015 00
Total	Rs. 2,20,015 00

Ananda Lunch Scheme Fund

Carried Forward	Rs. 14,55,000 00
Mr. John Kennedy - Mrs. Gracy	10,000 00
Vincent De Paul, Kalaiyarkoil	5,000 00
Kalaiyarkoil Parish	10,000 00
Gaspar Nagar Parish	10,000 00
Muthupettai Parish	10,000 00
Mr. Maria Michael Mrs. Susaimary, South Andavoorani	10,000 00
Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Tuticorin	20,000 00
Total	Rs. 15,30,000 00

Necrology

Fr. Arockiaraj N.	-	05.03.2016
Fr. Alphonse G.	-	10.03.1991
Fr. Xavier Jeyasingh J.	-	12.03.2017
Fr. Arulpragasam S.	-	22.03.2018
Fr. Sebastian S.M.	-	25.03.2012
Fr. Alphonsenathan	-	27.03.2024
Fr. Irudayam A.	-	29.03.1999

May their souls rest in peace!

திருமணத் தயாரிப்புப் பயிற்சி வகுப்புகள்

மார்ச் - 2026

எண்	தேதி	நாள்	இடம்
1.	07.03.2026 08.03.2026	சனி ஞாயிறு	சிவகங்கை
2.	21.03.2026 22.03.2026	சனி ஞாயிறு	R.S. மங்கலம்

அருள்திரு. S. ஸ்ரீபதி, செயலர், குடும்ப நலவாழ்வுப் பணிக்குழு
அலைபேசி : 9677950941

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Birthday Wishes



Fr. Arul Dass S.
02.03.1956



Fr. Xavier Arockiasamy S.
05.03.1979



Fr. Michael Antony
07.03.1958



Fr. Jesu S.
09.03.1961



Fr. Sebastin P.S.
10.03.1965



Fr. Paulraj M.
15.03.1967



Fr. Diraviam A.
15.03.1968



Fr. Amalan A.
15.03.1974



Fr. Arul Selvam A.S.
18.03.1975



Fr. Susai Michael A.
20.03.1972



Fr. Arul Santiagu
22.03.1975



Fr. Augustine I.
23.03.1958



Fr. Tamil Selvam J.
23.03.1985



Fr. Singarayar A.
27.03.1967



Fr. Infant Raj S.
30.03.1990

Many Happy Returns of the Day!



Blessing of the Curd Unit, Kalaiyarkoil



Blessing of the Children's Home, Amaravathipudur



Confirmation, Gaspar Nagar



Feast Mass, Chinnadurai



Lenten Retreat Mass, Rastha



SHS Seminary, Bangalore



Somascans Feast, Bangalore



Feast Mass, Muthupettai



Family Commission, VPC



New Cathedral Construction



Best Wishes and Prayers...

We, the bishop, priests, religious and lay faithful of the diocese wish Our Emeritus Bishop

Most Rev. Dr. J. Susaimanickam

on his feast on 19.03.2026.

We pray that God may continue to bless him.