CHAPTER IV
DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIOCESE OF KOTTAR

4.1 BISHOP MARIANUS AROKIASAMY

4.1.1 Early life

The successor of Bishop Rock Agnisamy, Marianus Arokiasamy was a distinguished personality who combines in himself the great qualities of a reformer, leader, guide and a spiritual father. He introduced the function of several ecclesiastical institutions in the diocese. The introduction of the Indian Benedictine Society in 1971, Xavier Mission Home in 1971, Arul Valvu Illam (House of Wisdom) in 1973, the establishment of Old Priest’s Home at Christunagar in 1974 are the legendary plans of Bishop Arokiasamy. He was born on 31st July 1927 at Uthamanoorputhoor, in the diocese of Kumbakonam in Tanjore district of Tamilnadu. After completing his studies at the diocesan minor seminary he was sent to Rome to the “Pontificio Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide”* to pursue his philosophical and theological studies. He studied in this renounced institution, which has given the church eminent men and which has centuries of successful history behind it and the young seminarian Arockiasmy was moulded in an atmosphere of universal outlook. When brother Arokiasamy was a student in Rome, in the Collegio – Urbano he had good fellowship with his professors Cardinal Pietro Parente, a prominent figure of the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Bugnini, secretary of the congregation for divine worship and cenciliar of liturgical reforms and Cardinal James Knox, vice – rector of the college. As a student leader he organised seminars, conferences, retreats and remained as one of the brilliant students of this institution. After seven years of study he was ordained.

* "Pontificio Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide" is a Papal seminary locates in the Vatican Hill on the right bank of Tiber, with in the Commune of Rome, where the outstanding seminarians undergo vocation studies – Source, Catholic Directory of India, New Delhi, 2004, p.XI.

a priest in Rome on 7th December 1954, the feast day of St. Ambrose. He returned to India in 1955 and was appointed secretary to the newly appointed bishop of Kumbakonam Msgr. Paul Arul Samy and served in that capacity for seven years. As a sign of his confidence and hard work in Father Arokiasamy's abilities, the bishop made him Rector of the minor seminary of Kumbakonam. At the age of 37, he became the teacher, guide and administrator of the minor seminary.

He was elected bishop of Kottar on 26th November 1970 at the age of forty two. The call of God came to him to leave his place, his own people, kith and kin and go to the farthest end of the country to serve a diocese of which he had little known. In Kumbakonam, his home diocese his appointment as bishop of Kottar was a mixed sentiment of sorrow and joy. To part with a priest who was an asset to the diocese and lose a man who endeared himself so much to the people was indeed painful. But the people of Kottar were fortunate and a loss to Kumbakonam was a gain to Kottar.

The people of Kottar prepared themselves to receive the young pastor. They wanted to witness the consecration of the new bishop that about forty years the diocese of Kottar was to witness the consecration of a bishop. The first consecration was that of Bishop Lawerence Pereira which took place in 1930, four decades before. Bishop Agnisamy was consecrated as bishop in Rome in St. Peter's Basilica on 29th October 1939. Therefore the diocese celebrated the consecration of Father Arokiasamy after forty years. Much enthusiasm was manifested in organising the function, which was a unique witness of the faithful of the people of God, for most of the faithful, it was the first opportunity to participate in such a holy event.

2 Ibid, p.p. 9-11
4 Ibid, p. 174
5 Ibid, p. 175
The consecration and installation of the bishop of Kottar Marianus Arokiasamy was held on 17th February 1971 in the adhoc prepared open ground between St. Aloysius Minor Seminary, the Bishops House and St. Lawerence Boy's Home. It was a vast plain ground and the stage was laid in the middle of the ground, so that the people could witness the ceremony from all directions. The consecration prelate was Arch. Bishop Justin Diraviam of Madurai. The other prelates attended the function were Arch. Bishop V.S. Selvanather of Pondicherry, R. Antony Muthu, the bishop elect of Vellore, A.B. Jacob bishop of Trivandrum, R.A. Sundaram, bishop of Tanjore, B. Duraisamy Michael, bishop of Salem, Joseph George Fernandez bishop of Quilon, Thomas Fernando bishop of Tiruchirapalli and Paul David Arulsamy, bishop of Kumbakonam. An appropriate sermon was preached by Arch. Bishop D.S. Lourdusamy, secretary of All Catholic Union, Rome. It highlighted the personalities of the former Bishop Agnisamy and the new Bishop Arokiasamy. The function was graced by the presence of christian brethren of other denominations.

The function was witnessed by thousands of people and the keys of the diocese were transferred to the new bishop by the old bishop. Bishop Arokiasamy bowed down by touching the feet of his predecessor who was eighty years old and received his blessings and the key to lead his subjects on the right way.

4.1.2 Pastoral Visitation

The new bishop issued his first circular letter dated 21st February 1971 through which he made contacts with his clergy immediately after the consecration ceremony and he assured to the flock a sincere service and requested the cooperation of the

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6 Interview with Fr. Cesear, J.N., Dt.28.2.2004.
8 Interview, Fr. Cesear, J.N.
clergy, the religious and the people of Kottar. The new bishop wanted to know about
the people, their cultural heritage, social background and he visited every nook and
corner of the diocese and came in contact with all sections of people and noticed
about their advantages and problems. His pastoral service began with the key
words", in faith and love", it was the faith in God and love human”. He explained
these words in the early months of his office through a powerful pastoral letter. The
pastoral visitation made a close link between the pastor and the people. He visited
every parish, all the substations and blessed the churches and the people staying in the
parish at least for two days. He had been visiting the vicariates and the villages with
a team of local priests. The first pastoral visit was made on Colachel vicariate.
Fathers, A. Thobias, J.G. Jesudas, Selvaraj and Vallerian Fernandez the senior priests
accompanied him in his pastoral visitation. He had been visiting the churches and
villages of Colachel vicariate during April and May 1971. Then he made his visit to
Mulagumoodu vicariate during June and July accompanying the priests Fr. Soosai
Marian, Peter, Gnanselvan, Jesu Retinam and Arullappan. His third pastoral
visitation was made to the Thiruthuvapuram vicariate during August and September,
1971 accompanying the priests J.N. Ceasar, J.Lucas, E.Francis, Andrew Selvaraj, M.
Peter and J. Alphonse. The pastoral visitation was made on the Kottar vicariate during
November and December 1971. The bishop was accompanying the priests Leon
Augustine Tharmaraj, Thomas Fernando, Martin Alankaram, Amalraj etc. The
people were eagerly waiting for the pastor in their respective villages. He visited the
people and supervised the functions of the vicariate, parishes and the substations. The

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9 Report, Vicar General, Fr. Villavarayan, J.M., pp. 4 -5
10 Ibid.,
11 Pastoral Letter, Bishop Marianus Arokiasamy, Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, dated 21st February,
1971, pp. 1-3
new pastor did not want the people to waste their money in buying garlands or bouquet to welcome him. He wished the flock to welcome him with cloth materials decorated as garlands. These cloth materials were collected and supplied to the poor children who resided in St. Lawrence boys home Nagercoil and Carmel orphanage Manalikarai"14. The pastoral visitation was completed within four months and a report was prepared and sent to all the parishes to enhance the parochial administration a great success15.

Bishop Arokiasamy had been acknowledged as a man with charisma for preaching. His simple and direct method attracted crowds who listened with rapt attention to the words of their pastor. He had much knowledge about the religious characteristics, international and national leaders. He was often invited to preach retreats for priests in other dioceses. His participation in the priestly seminars at Palayamkottai, Tuticorin, Madurai, Vellore, Tanjore dioceses are important16. He was easily approachable and good at correspondence, kept personal contact with people in various walks of life, the catholic religious heads, political leaders and the other religious heads17. He inspired, encouraged and offered spiritual support to all the religious in his diocese and elsewhere18.

4.1.3 Vicar Generals

The Vicar General, according to the Canon Law "Adnutum Episcopi", has an important role to play in the general administration and to collaborate with the bishop closely. The bishop and the vicar general have to work hand in hand and workout matters successful with the other senior priests or the administrative council of the

14 Ibid., p- 19
15 Ibid., p- 20
16 Then Oli, Diocesan Journal, Kottar, Nagercoil, October, 1972., p.18
17 Ibid.,
18 Ibid.,
diocese. Msgr. J.M. Villavarayan, who for twenty-three years was Vicar General under Bishop Agnisamy continued to serve the diocese in the same post for eight more months. On 16th November 1971, the new bishop relieved Father Villavarayan from the office and recommended him for the appointment as director of the Pastoral Centre at Poonamallie, Madras19 and father Villavarayan served in this high post as director and coordinator of the whole Tamil region. The new bishop had much respect for Msgr.J.M Villavarayan who was his first Vicar General from whom he could know about the whole diocese, its area, the people and all matters within a short period20. On his higher placement, the bishop quoted in a circular letter of November 1971, that the intellectual ideas and scholarship, administrative capacity and excellence and in a way he thanked Msgr. J.M. Villavarayan for his selfless service to improve the diocese on every line. This circular letter was read in all the churches and the whole diocese felt the valuable service rendered by the Vicar General for more than twenty-four years. In the place of Msgr. J.M. Villavarayan, Msgr. S Barnabas Alexander, a native of Kesavapuram, Puthenkadai parish was appointed Vicar General on 17th November 197121.

4.1.4 Consecration of Bishop Anthonymuthu as Bishop of Vellore.

Kottar has centuries old christian tradition and it is a fertile field for vocations. One of its sons was nominated to the office of episcopate on 6th March 1971. Father Anthonymuthu was born in Vellicodu parish in the diocese of Kottar on 7th April 1912. He was educated in Raphael’s minor seminary and St. Theresa’s major seminary Quilon. He was the head of the major seminarians of the Kottar diocese, who led the silver jubilee celebrations of the diocese during the time of Bishop

20 Ibid., p.178
Agnisamy in 1955. The Papal nomination of father Anthonymuthu as bishop elect of Vellore diocese added joy in the entire diocese and the order was received with overwhelming joy in the diocese. After his priestly ordination on 28th March 1936, Fr. Anthonymuthu was serving Kottar diocese for twenty five years as an esteemed and respected priest in various fields. He was assisting the Parish priests in Kottar, Mulagumoodu parishes and was the parish priest in Cheruvallor, Mullamginavillai, Karankadu, Kurusady and Vavarai parishes. Father Anthonymuthu was consecrated Bishop of Vellore on his birthday, the holy day of St. John. It was a special gift to this son of the soil that, his ordination as bishop came after his silver jubilee celebrations. Father Anthonymuthu and his missionary work in the Kottar region as priest are highly commendable. He had been serving the Catholic Mission and converted many people of Illankadai, Thengamputhoor, Aralvoymozhi, Ettamadai, Kattuvillai, Seethapal, Periyakadu and many other places of the Kottar vicariate. Also he had committed service at Mulagumoodu mission from 1958 to 1962. His work at Kappiyarai, Karankadu, Kottamavu, Chunkankadai, Punnavillai, Mulavillai and Velliavillai speaks of his untiring work as a great preacher and missionary. At Thiruthuvapuram vicariate also he did maximum service in the places like Kallithattu, Kappukadu, Cheruvalloor, Maruthamcode etc.

4.1.5 Liturgical Reforms

In 1972, Bishop Arokiasamy was appointed chairman of the liturgical commission of Tamilnadu and he gave a new impetus to the liturgical movement in his own diocese. He animated and encouraged the renewal and promoted the

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22 Souvenir, Golden Jubilee Celebrations (Tamil), Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, 1980, pp. 78 - 80
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p.82.
26 Ibid.,
effective implementation of the liturgical reform and directives\(^{27}\). It was the vicariate of Thiruthuvapuram, which spearheaded the liturgical movement in the diocese. The Thiruthuvapuram parish and the Forane Church became the centre of liturgical activities in the Kottar diocese. An executive committee was formed to do the labour in the vicariate. Fathers Soosai Marian, Ambrose, Peter, J.N. Ceaser, J.G. Jesudas etc led the movement a great success and the movement spread all over the diocese\(^{28}\). As the prayers were translated into the local language, many prayer books were printed and were distributed in all the parishes. The participation of the laity in the holy ceremonies was encouraged by this liturgical movement. Several seminars and workshops were arranged in the diocese to train the people to have more participation in the liturgical activities\(^{29}\). The years from 1972 to 1975 can be rightly called an era of seminars in the history of the diocese of Kottar. During this period, a number of training programmes for all sections of God's people were conducted at the diocesan, vicariate and parish levels. Parakunnu, Vavarai and Thiruthuvapuram were centers of these movements. The religious both men and women and the laity attended seminars during April and May 1972 in the community hall Sacred Heart of Jesus building Parakunnu, Mount Carmel building Vavarai and community hall Thiruthuvapuram. The topics of discussions were celebrating the Holy mass facing the people*, the sacraments and prayers were read facing the flock and this innovation was received by the people\(^{30}\). Community singing was another important feature of the new liturgical reform. The pastors have been paying special attention to train the people in


\(^{28}\) Ibid., p.16.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., p.16.

* Till 1972, the Priests read the Holy mass facing the alter. For blessings only they turned to the faithful. The reforms were introduced through Vatican council II. After 1972, the priests read the Holy mass facing the people. It proved the way for more participation and more attention from the laity. Source, Report, Liturgical Reforms, Diocese of Kottar, 1973, p.7.

congregational singing, which helped active participation during the religious service. To felicitate and promote congregational singing, catholic hymnals complied and were published in the parishes. To enrich the response of the people during daily mass a booklet called “Makkal Pakuthi” (People’s part) was published in all the parishes so that, the faithful could actively participate in the holy mass and other ceremonies. Running prayers or thanks giving prayers of the faithful uttered by men and women, adults and children, young and old during the liturgical celebrations is also noteworthy. Charismatic groups stayed in every parish and trained the people to pray spontaneously. Active participation and community involvement were seen in Eucharistic worship and in the celebration of other sacraments. According to the norms, baptism is commonly administered once in a month on a Sunday for many children together. It enabled many parishioners to participate in the prayers. The new rite baptism for adults and children was translated into Tamil and was introduced by the bishop. A new rite of sacrament of reconciliation was also introduced. In 1972, the new bishop summoned the senate of priests, Father S. Barnabas Alexander, Vincent Pereira, A.J. Joseph, V. Soosai Marian and J.G. Jesudhas and had discussions on the diocesan issues. In April 1974, the senate setup a committee to study the question of patronal feast celebrations and suggest ways and means for a reform. A seven-member committee was appointed with priests Vincent Pereira, Lucos, J.G. Jesudhas, Thomas Fernando, A. Thomas, A.J. Joseph and M. Peter to study the matters of annual celebrations, the income and expenditure of the total feast. Based on the study, the diocese decided to limit the expenses of the feasting tendency throughout the diocese. More charitable services were recommended. The expenses

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32 Ibid., p.17.
* Vatican Council II introduced reforms in the application of sacraments. It was aimed at Community Prayer – The community baptism was particularly against the traditional practice of solemn baptism limited to the family circle of the child. Source, Report, Liturgical Reforms.
on illumination and fireworks were considerably reduced. Much concentration was made to prayer and biblical activities. The celebrations were reduced to three days instead of ten days feasting in many churches.

4.1.6 Financial Reforms of Bishop Arokiasamy

As a diocese needs at least a minimum of financial resources to carry out its multifarious activities to support renewal programmes, to remain the operational structures and to do more service in the social and educational endeavours, the bishop introduced certain financial reforms in the diocese. Kottar had very little assets. The diocese therefore, depended heavily on the subsidy of the sacred congregations for the evangelization of the people. It also depended on the foreign agencies and the contribution of individuals. The parishes, for long terms, were not able to maintain their priests and other church ministerial staff financially. The general condition of poverty among the Catholics in the diocese could not fully justify this situation. It was necessary to educate the people to contribute their mite, despite poverty for the provisions of the ministers serving them.

To study the questions of the maintenance of parishes and to deal about the matters of the ministers, a committee was appointed by the senate. This committee was headed by father E. Francis and the associate members were fathers J. Lucas, D. Jesudhason, P.C. Joseph Raj and J.N. Caesar. This committee submitted a report on November 1971 and on the basis of the report, the diocese amended many decisions. Bishop Arokiasamy exhorted the people to make their contribution for the welfare of the local church in a pastoral letter during November 1972. The bishop

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33 Ibid., p. 170.
35 Ibid., p. 171.
36 Ibid., p. 180.
gave directions to his flock in this letter and it was a good start in the direction of self-reliance of parishes. Accordingly, every parish should contribute Rs. 100/- per month for the priest and in the case of assistant priests an additional Rs. 50/- and the sub stations should contribute Rs. 50/- for their ministers. Besides every parish had to offer 5% of its total income to the general fund of the diocese, the parishioners who draw monthly salary as well as the well to do sections of the society were directed to contribute 0.25% of their income to the parish. The pilgrim centers of the diocese should set apart 10% of the offerings received for general fund. The religious, who are employed were expected to contribute 1% of their salary to the diocese. The whole people honoured the wish of their pastor wholeheartedly and the scheme was a full success to run the diocese in its spirit.

4.1.7 Inter Religious Talk

On 16th February 1974, the Latin diocese of Kottar welcomed the popular writer, philosopher and exponent of hinduism Thriumuruga Kirupananda Variar in the bishops house. On invitation, the hindu pandit addressed a group of about sixty priests at the diocesan animation centre. There was a proposal to start a christian ashram to function at a centre in promoting dialogue with the hindus of the district.

In December a seminar was jointly organized by the christian denominations on the “Church and Social Justice”. It was organized at Muttom for five days from 17th to 21st December 1974, and many delegates participated in this and discussed about the matters related to politics and society of the christians in the district.

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Pastoral Letter, Bishop M.Arokiasamy, Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, Dated 20th November, 1972


Interview, Fr. Caesar, J.N.,

Felix Wilfred, 1980, op.cit., p.159.

* A brief summary of the talk of Kirupananda Variar was published in Then Oli, March 1974, pp. 42-43.

Ibid., p.162.

The distribution of Bible to all houses in the diocese was made a motto of the diocese in 1974. A subsidized rate was announced by the diocese and the regional biblical centre in Tindivanam took steps to remedy this situation\(^4^2\). The Kottar diocese took steps of printing the New Testament on the eve of its jubilee year 1980. With in a short span of time, a student edition of the New Testament was brought out and more than twenty thousand copies were printed and distributed throughout the diocese\(^4^3\). From time to time intense training programmes were conducted for the laity in the vicariate and parish level. Pupils in the high schools were encouraged to undergo a “Bible Correspondence Course” offered by the “Tindivanam Biblical Centre”. The priests, the nuns and the laity were given refresher courses and seminars by Fr. Odilo Maria Lucas during May 1974. From 26\(^{th}\) to 30\(^{th}\) December 1975 Father R.Joseph Raja, S.J. gave a seminar to the diocesan priests. A seminar was organised during August 16\(^{th}\) to 19\(^{th}\) 1978 for the priests, nuns and the laity. Father Maria Selvam of Pondicherry diocese, Father Soosai Manikam of Madurai diocese and Fr. M.M. Valdharis of Kottar diocese gave lectures on the Bible during seminars and biblical workshops\(^4^4\).

Special Biblical celebrations were arranged in the diocese from 1978. Debates on biblical themes were organised, biblical dramas, skits and stage drama and dance programmes were arranged for displaying in the diocese. Biblical exhibitions were displayed in the vicariate centers and parishes. Elocution, essay writing, biblical dance, and drama programmes were arranged throughout the diocese to enlighten the


youth and the children. After the Tamilnadu bishops regional meet in February 1976, the dioceses of Tamilnadu exposed the means to promote “Biblical Apostolate” in the Tamil region. It recommended a four point programme and these were the enthronement of the Bible in all christian homes, opening of small libraries furnished with books and scriptures related with the Bible in all vicariate centers, presenting of a copy of the Bible by the bride to the bridegroom at their wedding, signifying that God’s word should be the corner stone of the family they are going to start together and to conduct biblical exhibitions, debates and to bring out moral writings basing on the Bible.

In 1977, a Biblical exhibition on the theme, “God Who Dialogues” was conducted by the diocese in St. Joseph’s Convent, Nagercoil for the benefit of all the people of the diocese from 24th April to 4th May 1977. The catholic institutions actively collaborated in making twenty-eight stalls illustrating various themes of the Bible. A large number of people both christians and non-christians flocked into the exhibition halls and enriched their knowledge on the Bible. In 1980, Bishop Arokiasamy of Kottar was chosen chairman of the Tamilnadu “Biblical Commission”. This further highlighted the prospects for a more intense Biblical Apostolate in the diocese.

The priests of the diocese of Kottar were given training to minister their priestly duties, so that they may offer spiritual help and animate the catholic flock in a new direction. One such training programme was conducted in the animation centre of the diocese, Kottar, Nagercoil for seven days by Fr. Sydnesy and Father Jude Botello in March 1977. The training programme was attended by twenty-one young...

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46 Ibid., p.8.
47 Ibid., p.11.
priests of the diocese. In 1979, a retreat for priests was arranged in the diocese. Fr. Pujol S.J and Fr. Jose Maket S.J. conducted a psychotherapy session and it was benefited by another twenty-five priests.

4.1.9 Rural Organisation for Social Education (ROSE)

ROSE (Rural Organisation for Social Education) was a new programme highlighted by the diocese in July 1978. It was a non-formal education programme drawn and implemented in the diocese. This programme was first implemented at Kuruthankodu village. It had twenty eight volunteers to educate the people about the social, economic and cultural aspects of the society. In 1979, its activities were extended in the Thovalai taluk. It had units at Thazakudy and Erachakulam. In 1980, the ROSE, had many units involved in this venture. It arranged public meetings, conferences and seminars to educate the public and to create social awareness against alcoholism, illiteracy, superstitions etc.

Bishop Arokiasamy completed his 25 years of service as priest on 7th December 1979. The bishops of the neighbouring dioceses, the priests of the Kottar diocese and the whole people expressed their affection and love to their noble pastor. Every church of the diocese of Kottar celebrated the day and special prayers and offerings were made for the pastor. A high mass was read by the bishop in the cathedral and was attended by the priests, the religious, seminarians and the laity.

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49 Ibid.,
4.1.10 Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Kottar

The bishop, the senate and the priests of the diocese wanted to prepare the people to celebrate the golden jubilee of the diocese meaningfully. A two-year plan of spiritual preparations was envisaged in the whole diocese. A meeting of all the diocesan commissions held in the summer of 1978 (April & May) articulated the plan in the key phrase", Committed Charismatic Christian Communities*. It was aimed at creating a prayerful catholic community all over the diocese during the next two years and the target was successfully glorified in 1980 when the diocese completed fifty years of God's service. To execute the programme, full time and part time volunteers were recruited on the vicariate level and trained under the guidance of some senior priests. The volunteers were to conduct renewal programmes (seminars) in all the parishes of the diocese. They had to highlight the morals of christian life in the society and to lead the other people of the district. The second aspect highlighted was the knowledge on the Bible, the good news from God. The third point of importance was that the christian community to flourish in love and understanding. The fourth point was liturgical, the way of worship, the power of the spirit and healing ministry, receiving sacraments. The four points were considered four fold themes of the renewal of the church. This renewal programme was launched on 8th September 1978, on the feast of Mother Mary and feast of Bishop Marianus Arokiasamy. For two years from 8th September 1978, a prayer specially composed for the Jubilee year was recited in all the churches of the diocese. It was a prayer to enhance the spirit of

52 Felix Wilfred, 1980, op.cit., p.126,

* Committed Charismatic Christian Communities" (CCCC) was the key Phrase of the Golden Jubilee year. It was aimed to make unity among Christian Communities. Prayer, understanding and tolerance were the policies through which the Christians can achieve the goal and glorify Catholicism. Source, Report, C.C.C.C., Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, 1979.

53 Ibid., p.217.
the Pontiff, the bishop, the priests, the religious, the vicariates, the parishes and the flock. This prayer was printed in a booklet* and was supplied to all the churches of the diocese. There were two hundred educators who made contacts with the families in the villages and instruct the people how to make life christian, pleasing and useful. These educators took efforts to conduct family life programmes for teachers and students in the catholic schools of the diocese. Vicariate level seminars and workshops were conducted in a large scale for three days in each vicariate. Seminars were conducted in various parishes at Colachel, Kottar, Thiruthuvapuram, Mulagumoodu, Cape Comorin, Christunagar, Kurusady, Manakudy, Pallam, Saral, Enayam, Kadiyapattinam, Kurumbanai, Mankalakunnu, Midalam, Ramanthurai, Kandanvillai, Karankadu, Madathattuvilai, Manalikarai, Mullanginavillai, Palliady, Thuckalay, Kulasegaram, Melpalai, Parakunnu, Puthenkadai, Puthukadai, Siluvaipuram, Vencode and a new awareness was created among the people on a sincere and sinless family life.

A ‘Central Celebrations Committee’ was set up on 27th July 1979 with the bishop as special advisor. Msgr. S. Barnabas Alexander as President, Fr. Joseph Raj as secretary, Fr. Andrew Selvaraj as treasurer and Fr. Josephath Maria, Fr.J. Lucas, Sr. Lucey, Mr. Swamidhas , (Ex.M.L.A) and Miss. Agnus Soosai Mary as members of the executive of the celebration committee. The celebration committee appointed many sub committees such as decoration committee, prayer committee, reception committee, transport committee, finance committee etc. Each committee looked after

* Financial assistance was given by Mr. Misereor, a native of Aachen, Gemany for Printing & Publishing the prayer. Source, Report, Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Diocese of Kottar, 1980.
56 Ibid., p. 3.
different jobs and tried to make the function a great success\textsuperscript{58}. The date for the jubilee celebrations were fixed on 24\textsuperscript{th} and 25\textsuperscript{th} May 1980. The actual date fell on 5\textsuperscript{th} October 1980, and for the convenience of the laity the celebrations were arranged to be held during May 1980\textsuperscript{59}.

The first day celebrations started at 10.AM on 24\textsuperscript{th} May with seminars for various sections of people as parents, teachers, women religious, men religious, youth, children and so on. These seminar sessions were conducted in St. Aloysius Minor Seminary, Carmel High School, St.Xavier Mission Home and St. Joseph’s Convent School, Nagercoil\textsuperscript{60}. The highlights of 25\textsuperscript{th} May 1980 was the solemn Eucharistic celebrations in Anna stadium, Tower junction, Nagercoil at 5.P.M with the participation of bishops, priests, nuns and a great multitude of people. The immense assembly of believers was listening to the ceremonies, singing and involving very actively in the celebrations. The district capital was flooded with crowds of people. The function started with a number of ecclesiastical dignitaries and prominent officials on the stage. The Governor of Tamilnadu had been invited to preside over the function, but he was not able to attend the function. The message of the Tamilnadu Governor and minister Nedumchezhian were read in the stage\textsuperscript{61}.

The celebrations were graced by sixteen bishops: Arch Bishop Justin Diraviam of Madurai, Arch Bishop Selvanathar of Pondicherry, Arch Bishop Kulanthara of Verapoly, Arch Bishop, Mar Gregories of Trivandrum, Bishop Iruthayaraj of Palayamkottai, Bishop Thomas Fernando of Tiruchirapally, Bishop Ambrose of Tuticorin, Bishop Micheal Doraisamy of Salem, Bishop Arul Dhas James of Ooty,

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.2.
\textsuperscript{59} Pastoral Letter, Bishop Arokiasamy, M., Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, Dated 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 1980.
\textsuperscript{60} Report, Celebration Committee, 1980.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., pp. 5-6.
Bishop Anthonymuthu of Vellore, Bishop Jacob (Jacobite) of Trivandrum, Bishop Joseph Fernandez of Quilon, Bishop Jerome Fernandez, the former bishop of Quilon. The bishop of the church of South India M. Christudas of the Kanyakumari diocese also graced the function\textsuperscript{62}. The Holy Mass was read by bishops and priests. An introductory talk was addressed to the public by Arch. Bishop Justin Diraviam. A suitable sermon was prepared by Bishop Iruthayaraj of Palayamkottai. Congratulatory speeches delivered by the bishops of Vellore and Salem extolled the achievements of the church in Kottar. The history of the church was briefly recalled and the tributes were paid to the former Bishops Msgr. Lawrence Pereira (1930-1938), Msgr. T.R. Roch Agnisamy S.J. (1939-1971) and Marianus Arokiasamy(1971 onwards)\textsuperscript{63}. During the meeting a souvenir in Tamil with important matters enlisted from 1930 to 1980 was published. The symbolism of the golden jubilee, a dove with the global symbol was printed in the cover page. The souvenir’s core word was “Renewal of Life in Christ”. Bishop of Coimbatore Msgr, Ambrose published the souvenir. Felicitations were delivered by the district collector A. Abdul Aziz, the CSI Bishop M. Christudas, Mr. A. Swamidhas, Ex. M.L.A of Villavancode constituency. A student edition of the New Testament was released by Bishop A.B. Jacob (Jacobites) of Trivandrum diocese\textsuperscript{64}.

To commemorate the jubilee, four monuments had been planned to be erected in the diocese viz, a statue of St. Francis Xavier at Vadassery, Nagercoil, a “Good News Centre”, at Marthandam, a Home for the Handicaps at Pampanvillai and a Social Service Centre at Punnainagar, Nagercoil\textsuperscript{65}. At the end of the meeting, Msgr. S. Barnabas Alexander, Vicar General of the Kottar Diocese thanked everyone

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., pp. 7-10. 
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p.11. 
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid; 
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p.12.
for having made the jubilee a grace and a success. After the meeting and holy mass, the Eucharistic procession moved from the stadium towards the cathedral amidst singing hymns and reading of passages from the holy scriptures. The procession was concluded with a solemn benediction at the cathedral grounds. It was a big feast of the diocese as well as the whole catholic christians of south India.

The “Good News Centre” worked as a biblical centre of the whole diocese from 1982. The foundation stone for the building was laid by the bishop in April 1981 and the building was blessed in June 1982. It was serving as a catechist centre of the diocese till 1987. Father P. Alphonse was in charge of this centre. The statue of St. Francis Xavier was installed in March 1983 at Vadasery the main station of Nagercoil. The home for the handicaps at Pampanvillai was blessed and opened by the bishop on 23rd March 1984. The handicap children of the diocese were admitted and were given education and training in handicraft and other arts. The establishment of “Social Service Centre” at Punnainagar, Nagercoil was another great achievement of Bishop Arokiasamy. It worked as a sister concern of the Kottar Social Service Society (K.S.S.S). It has tailoring units for men and women, embroidery centre for women and dairy farm for men. It also undertakes charitable work for the poor people. Father M.Peter was in charge of this charitable institution. Bishop Arokiasamy with his intellectual acumen and scholarship, administrative capacity and experience contributed much to the life and growth of the diocese. Bishop Arokiasamy constructed one hundred and eight churches and twenty-eight convents during his regime. Forty-three schools were upgraded as Higher Secondary

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66 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
68 Report, Celebration Committee.
69 Ibid., p.17.
Schools from the status of high schools. Eleven new Higher Secondary Schools were started during his period. He created funds for constructing new buildings and for the extension of new school buildings⁷⁰.

4.1.11 New Parishes Established by Bishop Arokiasamy

From 1971 to 1987 several new parishes came into existence in the diocese of Kottar. The bishop blessed many catholic christian centers as parishes. The Holy Family Church of Carmel Nagar was raised as a parish on 23rd June 1970. The Christunagar, church of Vettornimadam, Nagercoil was blessed as a new parish by Bishop Arokiasamy on 7th August 1970. In this year Kottilpadu church was separated from Colachel and became a new parish. St. Mary’s church of Melpalai was honoured as a new parish on 13th July 1971. Holy Family church of Ettamadai was blessed as a new parish in 1971⁷¹. St. Aloysius church of Elavuvillai was separated from Thiruthuvapuram and became a new parish in 1972. St. Theresa church of Kanjampuram was blessed as parish church on 12th June 1972. St. Elias church of Thuckalay was raised as a parish from Mulagumoodu on 10th October 1972⁷².

Sahayapuram, Sahyamatha church was blessed as a new parish on 3rd July 1973. Carmel Mary church of Kolvel was separated from Puthenkadai parish and became a new parish on 9th July 1973. St. Philomina church of Sadayalputhoor was blessed and honoured by Bishop Arokiasamy as a new parish on 31st December 1973. The Rosary church at Kanjiracode of Mulagumoodu vicariate was raised to the honour of a parish in 1974. In 1975 St. Lourdh’s church of Lourdhugiri was blessed to the position of a parish. In the same year Saviour’s church of MathoorKonam was

⁷² Ibid., p.7
blessed as a new parish of the Kottar diocese. St. Nevis church of Pattarivillai was honoured as a new parish on 31st May 1979. St. Xavier church of Marthanadam was honoured as a new parish on 3rd June 1979. Good Shepherd church of Nallayanpuram was separated from Parakunnu and became a new parish. St. Mary's church of Maravankudiyirippu was felicitated as a new parish of the diocese of Kottar on 7th January 1984. St. Lawrence church of Mulloorthurai was separated from Ramanthurai and became a new parish. St. Jude's church of Kuttaikadu was venerated into a new parish by Bishop Arokiasamy on 19th October 1979. St. Antony's church of Vizhunthayambalam became a new parish in 1984. Carmel Mary church of Ramapuram was separated from Rajavoor and became a new parish in 1985. Fatima church of N.G.O colony, Nagercoil was blessed to the status of a new parish by Bishop Arokiasamy in 1986. Sahayanagar, Sahayamatha church was raised into the status of a parish on 1st May 1986.

4.1.12 New Churches Blessed by the Bishop

In 1971, St. Ignatious church at Kovalam, was extended and blessed by bishop Arokiasamy. St. Francis Xavier church, Karingal had a new look in 1971 was blessed by the pastor. The new structure of St. Antony's church at Bonkalai was blessed by the bishop in 1971. On 3rd January 1972, the Perumankuzhi church dedicated to Infant Jesus was blessed by the bishop. Nattalam, Jesus Mary church was blessed by the bishop in 1972. The Pullanny church had a new look during the pastoral administration of Fr. Mariadasan and this new structure was blessed by the bishop in 1972. The extension of Vellankanni church, Munchirai was blessed in 1972. Good Shepherd church of Midalakadu was blessed with a new structure in 1972. Kamaraj

73 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
74 Ibid.,
Nagar, Sahayamatha new church was blessed by the pastor in 1972. The new church of Kallankuzhi, dedicated to Our Lady of Heaven was blessed by the bishop in 1973. In Mulagumoodu vicariate the new church dedicated to St. George was blessed by the pastor on 26th February 1974. The new church dedicated to St. Micheal at Meenaskhipuram, Kottar Vicariate was blessed by the pastor on 1st March 1974. The new stone church dedicated to Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Palapalli, was blessed by the pastor on 30th April 1974. The new church dedicated to Our Lady of Health at Pillaiavillai of Mulagumoodu vicariate was blessed by the bishop in 1974.

In the Colachel vicariate, at Kadiyapatinam parish a new bell tower was blessed by the bishop in 1974. In Kottar vicariate at South Ramanathichanputhoor, a new church dedicated to Arokiamatha (Our Lady of Health) was blessed by the bishop in 1974. In Kottar vicariate, at Vedanagar a new church dedicated to St. Micheal was blessed by the bishop in 1974. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Muhilankarai, a new church dedicated to Our Lady of Health was blessed on 16th January 1975. In Kottar vicariate, at Vellamadam a new church dedicated to St. Martin was blessed by the bishop on 7th February 1975. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Iruthayapuram (Kulappuram), a new church dedicated to Christ, the King was blessed by the bishop on 12th March 1975. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Nagacode, a new church dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the bishop on 15th April 1975. In Kottar vicariate at Arokanagar, a new church dedicated to Our Lady of Health was blessed by the bishop on 8th November 1975. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Fathimapuram, a new church dedicated to St. Fathima Mary was blessed by the bishop in 1975.

Ibid., 1974, pp.1-3.
Kottar vicariate, at Kaaravillai, a new church and the bell tower were blessed by the bishop on 4th April 1976 and the diocese of ABEN*, in Germany financially supported the construction work of the church. In Kottar vicariate, at Rajakkamangalamthurai, a new church and the parish house dedicated to St. Mary were blessed by the bishop on 8th September 1976. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Pilavillai a new church dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the bishop on 25th September 1976. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Nattalam, the Pilgrim station of Martyr Devasahayam Pillai, wore in to a new church building, and was blessed by the bishop on 30th December 1976. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Villathruai, a new church dedicated to St. Francis Xavier was blessed by the bishop in 1976. In Mulagumoodu, vicariate at Tharathattu, a new church was blessed by the bishop in 1976. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Veepuvillai a new church dedicated to Arokianathar was blessed by the bishop on 16th January 1977. In Mulagumoodu vicariate at Perumchilambu, a new church dedicated to Holy Mary was blessed by the bishop on 24th April 1977. In Kottar vicariate, at Kulasekharanputhoor, a new church was blessed by the bishop in 1977. Two new churches at Kodupaikuzhi dedicated to St. Paul and Arugu villai St. Theresa Church were blessed by the bishop in 1977. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Xavierpuram a new church dedicated to St. Francis Xavier was blessed by the bishop on 19th December 1977. In Kottar vicariate, at Ramanputhoor, Nagercoil, a new church dedicated to the Holy Family was blessed by the bishop in 1978. In Tiruthuvapuram, at Ittagavelly, a new church dedicated to Great Protector was blessed by the bishop in 1978. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Chitanthope, a new church dedicated to Our Lady of Adoration was blessed in 1978. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Kuzhivillai a

* ABEN, the German Lain Catholic Mission has been funding the Dioceses of India. In 1976, the Kaaravilai, St. Joseph's church of Rajakkamangalam Parish was financed by this mission source, Report, Diocese of Kottar, 1977.
81 Ibid., 1976, pp.1-6.
new church dedicated to Adoration of St. Mary was blessed in 1978. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Paruthiyoorthottam, foundation stone for a new church dedicated to St. Micheal was laid on 1975 and the new holy church was blessed on 13th September 1978. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Manali, foundation stone was laid to glorify the God’s church on 12th October 1977 and the new church was blessed by the bishop on 14th October, 1978.55

In Kottar vicariate, at Nagercoil, a new church, dedicated to Sacred Heart of Jesus was blessed by the pastor on 19th March 1979. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Attoor a new church dedicated to St. Anthiraya was blessed by the bishop on 14th May 1979. In Colachel vicariate, at Chinnavillai, a new church dedicated to St. Theresa was blessed by the bishop on the 1st day of October 1979.56 In Kottar vicariate, at Mel-Manakudy, a new church dedicated to St. Anthiraya was blessed by the bishop on 26th January 1980. Two more new churches were blessed by the pastor in the Mulagumoodu vicariate at Cholapuram, dedicated to St. Benedict and Arulananthapuram dedicated to Arulananthar in 1980.57 In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Parakonam a new church, dedicated to St. Lourds Mary was blessed by the bishop on 8th March 1981. In Kottar vicariate, at Chekkady, a new church dedicated to Sahaya Annai was blessed by the head pastor on 28th August 1981. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Maruthamcode, a new church dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the pastor on 29th September 1981.58 In Kottar vicariate, at Punnainagar, foundation stone for a new church was laid by Vicar General Fr. Soosaimarian, on 12th February 1981 and the church was blessed by the bishop on 30th May 1982. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Paaikodu, a new church dedicated to

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55 Ibid., 1978, pp.1-5.
56 Ibid., 1979, pp.1-4.
the Holy Spirit was blessed by the Pastor on 23rd July 1982. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, the new church at Maavillai dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the bishop in 1982 and the ceremonies were led by Fr. Mariadhas, the parish priest. A church in Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Malaikodu was blessed by the bishop in 1982 and the ceremonies were led by Fr. Kulandaisamy, the parish priest. A new church at Karumpillavillai, dedicated to Sacred Heart of Jesus of Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, was blessed by the bishop in 1983 and the holy blessing was assisted by Fr. Alkanthar Louis, the parish priest. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Bethelpuram (Varthanavillai), a church dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the bishop in 1983 and the parish priest Fr. Arullappan assisted the blessing ceremony. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Annainagar, a new church dedicated to Our Lady of Heavens was blessed by the bishop in 1983.

In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Manjallumoodu, a new church dedicated to St. Antony and at Soosaipuram, a new church dedicated to St. Joseph were blessed by the bishop in 1984. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Machuvillai, a new church dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the bishop and the blessing ceremonies were assisted by the Vicar General Fr. V. Soosaimarian. The Colachel vicariate head church, dedicated to Our Lady of Presentation was an old church. On 16th November 1979, Fr. J.G. Jesudas, the parish priest and Bishop Arokiasamy laid the foundation stone for a new church and the construction work was completed in 1984. The bishop blessed this new church on 21st October 1984 and the ceremony was assisted by the parish priest Fr. A. Thobias. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, a new church

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89 Ibid., 1984, pp.2-3.
dedicated to St. Mary was blessed by the Pastor on 30th December 1984. In Kottar vicariate, at Elankamanipuram, a new church building extension dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the bishop in 1985. In Mulagumoodu vicariate, at Nattalm, foundation stone for a new church was laid on 13th March 1981, and the new church of Saint Antony was blessed on 20th March 1985. In Kottar vicariate, at Mylaudy, in the premises of St. Micheal Latin Church, foundation stone was laid for a new church by the bishop on 4th October 1985, and the new church was blessed on 21st September 1986. In Tiruthuvapuram vicariate, at Amalapuram, a new church dedicated to St. Mary was blessed by the bishop on 15th October 1986. In Mulagumoodu, at Kallukootam, a new church dedicated to St. Fathima Mary was blessed by the bishop on 17th May 1987. In Kottar vicariate, at Vadasery, foundation stone for a new church was laid on 1986 and the church was blessed by the bishop on 25th July 1987. After the higher placement of Bishop Marianus Arokiasamy as Arch. Bishop of Madurai from 15th August 1987, few churches were blessed by the Vicar General Fr. Soosai Marian. In 1988, in Thiruthuvapuram vicariate, new churches at Puthucode dedicated to St. Joseph, at Vavarai dedicated to Lady of Mount Carmel, at Packiapuram, dedicated to St. Mary were blessed by the Vicar General. In Kottar diocese, at Subashnagar, a new church dedicated to Infant Jesus was blessed by the Vicar head priest. MelaRamanaputhoor new church dedicated to Holy Family was blessed by Fr. Soosai Marian on 15th September 1989.

4.1.13 Promotion as Arch Bishop of Madurai.

In March 1986, the 264th Pope John Paul II placed Bishop Arokiasamy as Arch Bishop of Madurai as the then Arch. Bishop Justin Diraviyam submitted his

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92 Ibid., 1985, pp.1-8,
93 Ibid., 1986, pp.1-3,
94 Ibid.,
resignation in 1986 due to his old age. Therefore Bishop Arokiasamy was elevated as the Arch. Bishop of Madurai on 23rd August 1987. This ceremonial high placement was a reward for his commendable services done for the upliftment of the church. The farewell to the bishop was a sorrowful event of the diocese as the priests, the religious and the laity felt sad on the occasion to part their pastor. His coronation as Arch. Bishop of Madurai was a historical event. The Arch. Bishops of Mylapore, Pondicherry, Verapoly and the bishops of Palayamkottai, Kumbakonam, Tanjore, Tuticorin, Salem, Ooty, Quilon, Vellore, Trivandrum, Dindigal graced this occasion. In his place the Vicar General Father V. SoosaiMarian became the administrator of the diocese. He was in office from 16th August 1987 to 2nd February 1989. Arch Bishop Arokiasamy served the Arch Diocese of Madurai from 23rd August 1987 till his retirement 24th April 2003, a period of 16 years.

4.2 BISHOP LEON AUGUSTINE THARMARAJ
4.2.1 Early life

Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj was born at Kovalam, a coastal village near Cape Comorin on the 11th April, 1941. His parents were Augustine Fernandez and Reginammal Augustine. His father was an accountant, who was also a social worker of St. Ignatious church of Kovalam for more than two decades from 1939 to 1959. His Godparents were Mr. Barnaboss and Mrs. Lourdhammal Barnaboss. The Bishop had three brothers and two sisters. His parental house is located at Middle Street, Kovalam. He had his school education in St. Ignatious Primary School, Kovalam from 1946 to 1950, and St. Antony’s Middle School, Kanyakumari from 1950 to

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Interview, Fr. Ceasar J.N.
Souvenir, Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.
Diocesan Diary, Kottar, Nagercoil, July 1989, pp. 2-3.
In 1956, he joined St. Aloysius minor seminary, Nagercoil and completed his high school education in the Jesuit Carmel school, Nagercoil in 1958. He was a student of St. Paul’s major seminary Tiruchi from 1958 to 1965. He served as a deacon for one year from 1964 to 1965 in the parishes of Kurusady, Ramanthurai, and Vencode. On 29th March 1965, he was ordained priest by the then bishop of Kottar Rev. Thomas Roch Agnisamy at the cathedral church of Kottar.

Fr. Leon Augustine Tharmaraj served at Siluvaipuram parish near Kollemcode as assistant parish priest from 1965 to 1966. He served in this capacity at Kottar cathedral church from 1966 to 1969. He served the people of Saral as assistant parish priest from 1969 to 1970. From May 1970 at the age of 29, he served as parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Good Health, Rajakkamangalamthurai in Kottar Vicariate. The primary school dedicated to St. Joseph was promoted to the status of middle school at this time and he served the people for six years. In 1976, Fr. Leon Augustine Tharmaraj was transferred to Thundathuvillai parish of Mulagumooodu vicariate as parish priest. In 1976, he served as parish priest of the Cathedral, Kottar and served as head of the vicariate of Kottar till 1978. He served in these parishes and earned a noble name for himself.

In 1978 Fr. Leon A. Tharmaraj was appointed rector of St. Aloysius minor seminary, Nagercoil by the then Bishop Marianus Arockiasamy. He succeeded Rev. Fr. SoosaiMarian and held office for eight years from 1978 to 1986. On November 14th 1988, Fr. Leon Augustine Tharmaraj was declared bishop-elect of Kottar diocese by order of Pope John Paul II. A son of the soil was therefore selected.

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103 Ibid.,
104 Souvenir, Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, op. cit.,
by the Pontiff as bishop elect of Kottar diocese. He had to shoulder the responsibilities of “All Devotional Associations (ADA)” as director. He was also appointed director of “Catechismal Forum” of the whole diocese from 1984 to 1988. The papal order was read in all the churches of the diocese and the people were happy with this declaration as a son of the soil was chosen as bishop of their diocese. The 264th Pontiff, John Paul II consecrated Fr. Leon Augustine Tharmaraj as the 4th bishop of Kottar on 6th of January 1989 along with 14 others from other parts of the world in Rome. The new bishop came to Kottar and took charge as bishop on 5th of February 1989. Immediately after arriving Kottar, he paid a visit to St. Aloysius minor seminary where he had been Rector for eight years and had discussions with the seminarians. The next Sunday 12th February 1989, he paid a visit to his native village Kovalam where he celebrated High Mass and participated in a meeting in the evening of the same day.

4.2.2 Vicar Generals

Rev. Fr. V. Soosai Marian was the Vicar General of Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj till in 1989. In a statement, the new bishop said that Fr. Soosai Marian acted as a guide, teacher and brother who led the new bishop during the initial stages. Rev. Fr. Paul Leon was appointed Vicar General and served in this capacity from 1989 to 1995. Many churches were built in this period. The Parish Councils were established with more powers in the parishes of the diocese of Kottar. Many churches and sub-stations were elevated to the status of new parishes. Anbiyams or

111 Directory, Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, 1990, p.64.
112 Interview with Bishop Leon. A. Tharmaraj, 24th May 2003.
Family units, Basic Christian Communities were formed in all the parishes and substations of the diocese. Rev. Fr. C. Eronimooose was the Vicar General who served Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj from 1995 to 2000. This was a glorious time for the diocese as many new parishes were erected and many new churches were blessed and the co-ordination of Mulagumoodu and Thiruthuvapuram vicariates were extended further. Rev. Fr. E. John Kulanndhai served as Vicar General from 2000 to 2005. From the Kottar Social Service Society (K.S.S.S), the Kuzhithurai Integral Development Social Services (K.I.D.S.S) was started as a sister concern for Mulagumoodu and Thiruthuvapuram vicariates. Many elegant churches were newly built during the time of Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. Rev. Fr. V. Mariadhasan has been serving the diocese as Vicar General since 2005. The Platinum Jubilee of the diocese was celebrated under his guidance. When Bishop Leon Augustine Thamaraj fell ill and was hospitalized, Rev. Fr. V. Mariadhasan was appointed caretaker administrator of the diocese. He performed this office in an able, alert and keen way. At present, he is serving Rev. Bishop Dr. Peter Remigius who has been bishop since 2007. Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj celebrated the silver jubilee of his priestly ordination on 29th March 1990, soon after he became the bishop of Kottar. Pope John Paul II sent a letter of appreciation to the bishop for his dedication and service.

4.2.3 Basic Christian Communities

The formation of “Family Units” (Anbiyams) or Basic Christian Communities is a milestone in the history of catholic church all over the world. The Kottar

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113 Souvenir, Platinum Jubilee Year, 2005.
114 Ibid., p.34.
Diocesan Family units were started in 1988. The entire diocese was divided into 4 vicariate units and the vicariate units were sub-divided into 16 circle units. This process was peacefully and successfully carried out throughout the diocese. Rev. Fr. M. J. Edwin was the director of the diocesan family units from 1988 to 1992. There were 642 family units in the diocese. Each unit had 50 to 60 families as members. Rev. Fr. V. Arul Raj was the diocesan director from 1992 to 1994 and the number of units rose to 692. Rev. Fr. Michael Nayagam was appointed director of the Anbiyam associations from 1994 to 1997. There was a phenomenal rise in the number of family units into 2000. This was a glorious revolution in evangelization activities of the diocese. Prayer, discussions, recitation of the Holy Rosary, recitation of litanies, singing holy songs and hymns become the activities of these units. Rev. Fr. S. Vincent succeeded Fr. Michael Nayagam and served as director from 1997 to 2001. Under his stewardship, the number of family units increased from 2000 to 2100. The activities and programmes were intensified throughout the diocese. Rev. Fr. John Demoson took charge as director after Fr. S. Vincent in 2001 and he continued in this capacity until 2004. During this period, 356 units were included in the four vicariates and the total number rose to 2456 family units.

In 2004, the family units were brought under two directorates – Kottar and Colachel vicariates were placed under the Kottar headquarters. Rev. Fr. Chellayan took charge of this wing from 2004 onwards. 1160 family units are registered in this vicariate. Marthandam becomes the headquarters for Mulagumoodu and Thiruthuvapuram vicariates. Rev. Fr. Paul Richard Joseph takes charge as director of

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117 Ibid., 1988 - 1992, pp. 8-12
119 Ibid., 1997 – 2004, pp.15-17
this wing. This wing has a total of 1424 family units\textsuperscript{\textcircled{120}}. On the 16\textsuperscript{th} of January 2006, Thiruthupuram – Mulagumoodu Anbiyam evangelization meeting held at St Joseph’s Higher Secondary School Thiruthuvapuram. Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj, the Vicar General Rev.Fr. Mariadhasan and Rev.Fr. Maria Soosai, the director of family units in Thiruthuvapuram were the delegates of the meeting. The Kottar – Colachel evangelization meeting held at the Assisi campus Nagercoil on the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of January 2006. The Bishop, the Vicar General, and Kottar vicariate Director Fr. Raja Titus, and Colachel vicariate director Rev.Fr. Chellaian were the delegates of the meeting\textsuperscript{\textcircled{121}}. Flag hoisting, exhibition, procession, validictation and book publication were the main ceremonies of the function\textsuperscript{\textcircled{122}}. The family units have celebrations at the unit, parish, vicariate and diocesan levels. The diocese releases a journal titled “Foundations (Adithalam)” as a periodical of the family units\textsuperscript{\textcircled{123}}.

4.2.4 New Parishes Blessed

Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj blessed many substations and raised them to the status of parishes. On 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1988, St. Catherine church at Kappiyarai was elevated to the status of a parish\textsuperscript{\textcircled{124}}. On the 19\textsuperscript{th} of November 1989, Holy Family church Mela Ramanputhoor was elevated to the rank of a parish. Similarly, the church of Our Lady of Heaven, Themanoor (Thottavaram) was raised as a parish church with Chitaral as its substation. In 1990, Melaperuvillai, St. Rosary church was honoured as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{\textcircled{120}}Report, Anbiyam, Kottar, Nagercoil, 2004-2007, pp.6-9.
  \item \textsuperscript{\textcircled{121}}Report, Anbiyam, Mulagumoodu, Thiruthuvapuram Vicariates, 2004-2007, pp.9-17.
  \item \textsuperscript{\textcircled{122}}Report, Anbiyam, Diocese of Kottar (4-Vicariates), 28\textsuperscript{th} January 2006, pp.4-9.
  \item \textsuperscript{\textcircled{123}}\textit{Ibid.}, p.11.
  \item The Anbiyams (Family units) are named after saints. 35 families form a family unit. The families assemble at the house of one of its members and pray together. Devotional songs, Bible reading, reading of reports, taking of attendance and planning the future activities are the main activities of a typical meeting. – Source, \textit{General Rules, Anbiyam}, Diocese of Kottar Nagercoil, 2000, p.6.
  \item \textsuperscript{\textcircled{124}}Report, Anbiyam, Thiruthuvapuram Vicariate, 14 – 12- 2005, p.7.
  \item Inscription, St. Catherine Church, Kappiarai, 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1988.
\end{itemize}
a new parish. On 26th of May 1991, St. Andrew’s church, Attoor was raised to the rank of a parish. It was evoked from Puthenkadai parish. In 1992, the Holy Family church MelMidalam became a parish. On 16th October 1993, St Vincent De Paul church Periyavillai was erected into a parish. On 14th November of the same year, Christ the King church, Kanavoor was erected as a parish. On July 17th 1995, St. Antony’s church Nagacode was raised to the status of a parish with Rev.Fr. Andrew Selvaraj as its first parish priest. This parish had been carved out from Kulesegaram parish. On 15th December 1995, Pozhikarai church became a parish. On 19th of June 1996, Good Shepherd church Velliavillai was carved out from Thundathuvillai parish. On the 21st of May 1997, Vadassery church became a parish while on 5th of November 1997 St. Antony’s church Maruthamcode was elevated to the status of a parish and Maruthamcode has two substations of Kuzhithurai and Amalapuram. Padarnillam was a substation of St Francis Xavier’s church Mankuzhi. On 5th of May 1999, Padarnillam was raised to the level of a parish by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. Until 1999, St. Michael’s church Choolal was a substation of Siluvaipuram parish. On 25th of May, this church was elevated to the status of a parish by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. This parish has substations at Kulapparam and Manali. On 16th of October 1999, St. Thomas church Chinnamuttom was elevated to the status of a parish. Our Lady of Health church, Munchirai was raised to the position of a parish on 7th of October 2000. It had been a part of Puthukadai parish station and Sebastiyarpuram is the substation of Munchirai. The Sahayamatha church of Kootamavu was raised to the position of a parish on 25th of June 2001. Thumbali, Immaculate Heart of St.Mary’s church was a substation of

126 Ibid., pp.6-8.
127 Ibid., pp. 9-12.
128 Ibid., pp.18-24.
129 Ibid.
Kappukadu parish till 2001 and on 4th of June 2001, this church was elevated to the status of a parish by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. The substations of this new parish are Udavilai and Karumpilavilai. On 11th of July 2001, St. Michael’s church Puthugiramam became a new parish. Infant Jesus church Kottooorkonam was blessed as a new parish on 21st September 2001 and Rev.Fr. V. Robert served as its first parish priest and it had been a substation of Kulasegaram parish until 2001. On 28th of May 2002, St Mary’s church Annainagar became a parish.

On the 3rd of June 2002, Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj blessed Iruthayapuram church and elevated it to the rank of an independent parish and this church is dedicated to Christ the King. The church dedicated to St. Antony at Manali became a parish on 4th of June 2002 with substations at Kel-Moolachal and Palapalli. On 12th of August 2003, the church at Seethapal was separated from the parish of Kurusady and elevated to the status of an independent parish. On 18th of October, St Mary’s church Thadikkarankonam was raised to the rank of a parish. On 12th of March 2004, Our Lady of Health church Arokanagar was blessed and elevated to the status of a parish. On 31st of May 2004, St Ann’s church Vaddakkukkonam was blessed by the bishop and raised to the status of a parish. On 28th of February 2005, Christ’s church Puthukudiyirippu became a new parish and it had been carved out from Christunagar parish. On 3rd of June 2005, St Jude’s church of Simon Colony was separated from Colachel and became an independent parish. On 14th of June 2005, St. Michael’s church Vedanagar became a parish. Sacred Heart church Viricode had been a substation of Elavuvillai parish until 2005 and on

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131 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., pp.28-31.
24th of June 2005, this church was blessed and elevated to the status of an independent parish.

4.2.5 New Churches Blessed

The churches of Kottar diocese are old and traditional. In earlier times, the churches were made of mud and stone. In the early 1900s, the churches were built with stone and mortar. In the late 20th century, these churches were reconstructed with stone, bricks, cement, iron and other modern construction materials. Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj blessed many new churches during his time. These churches bear inscriptions that describe the greatness of the pastor. On 9th of November 1990, St. Mary Amali’s church Ponmani was extended to a huge structure and this new extension was blessed by the bishop. On 20th of March 1991, Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj blessed a new church at Arammannam, the ceremony was assisted by the parish priest and the Vicar General Rev. Fr. Paul Leon. This church is dedicated to St. Thomas, the apostle of India. On 28th of February 1992, the Sacred Heart of Jesus church of Karumpillavilai was blessed by the bishop. On 2nd of January 1990, the foundation stone of the church at Kottoorkonam was blessed by the bishop and on 21st of September 1992, the new church was blessed by the pastor. On 22nd February 1993, St. Mary’s church of Amalapuram was blessed by the bishop. On 19th of May 1993, a newly constructed church dedicated to SahayaAnnai of SadayanKuzhi was blessed by the bishop. On 5th of October 1993, St. Antony’s auditorium and community hall within the premises of St Antony’s church Pilavillai

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135 Ibid.
138 Inscription, St. Thomas Church, Arammannam, Dated 20th December, 1991.
139 Inscription, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Kootoor Konam, Dated 21st September, 1992.
140 Inscription, St. Mary’s Church, Amalapuram, Dated 22nd February, 1993.
141 Inscription, SahayaAnnai Church, Sadayankuzhi, Dated 19th May, 1993.
were blessed by the pastor. In the same year, a new church was blessed at Manali and dedicated to St. Theresa\textsuperscript{142}. On 23\textsuperscript{rd} December 1994, a newly built church was blessed at Mathapuram and was dedicated to St. Mary\textsuperscript{143}. In the same year, a newly constructed church was blessed at Anducode and it was dedicated to St Mary and the Holy Rosary\textsuperscript{144}. On 12\textsuperscript{th} of March 1995, a newly built church at Annainagar, near Ireniapuram was blessed by the bishop, the ceremonies were led by the then Vicar General, Rev.Fr. C. Eronimoose\textsuperscript{145}. On the New Year Day of 1997, an elegant church dedicated to St. Michael was blessed at Kuzithurai\textsuperscript{146}. On 4\textsuperscript{th} February of the same year, a shrine dedicated to St. Antony and a new church were blessed by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj and the ceremony was assisted by Rev.Fr. V.Robert at Vettuvenni a famous pilgrimage centre of Catholics, which lies between Marthandam and Kuzhithurai\textsuperscript{147}. On January 16\textsuperscript{th} 1998, St. Sebastian’s church Kesavapuram of Puthenkadai parish was blessed by the bishop\textsuperscript{148}. On 24\textsuperscript{th} of January 2001, a new church was blessed by the pastor at Kullathoor\textsuperscript{149}. 

On 11\textsuperscript{th} of June 2002, a new church dedicated to St. Michael was blessed by the Pastor at Thittuvillai\textsuperscript{150}. On 2\textsuperscript{nd} of October, the day of Gandhi Jeyanthi, the Holy Angels’ church at Melpuram was blessed by Bishop Tharmaraj and the ceremony was assisted by Fr. John Kulandai, the Vicar General\textsuperscript{151}. On 11\textsuperscript{th} of November 2002, the Enchacode SahayaMatha church was blessed by the head priest\textsuperscript{152}. On 4\textsuperscript{th} of June 1998, the foundation stone was laid by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj along with

\textsuperscript{142} Inscription, St. Antony’s Church Auditorium, Pilavillai, Dated 5\textsuperscript{th} October, 1993.
\textsuperscript{143} Inscription, St. Mary’s Church, Mathapuram, Dated 23\textsuperscript{rd} December, 1994.
\textsuperscript{144} Inscription, Latin Church, Anducode, 1994.
\textsuperscript{145} Inscription, Latin Church, Annai Nagar, Dated 12\textsuperscript{th} March, 1995.
\textsuperscript{146} Inscription, St. Michael’s Church, Kuzithurai, Dated 1\textsuperscript{st} January, 1997.
\textsuperscript{147} Inscription, St. Antony’s Pilgrim Centre, Vettuvenni, Dated, 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 1997.
\textsuperscript{148} Inscription, St. Sebastian’s Church, Kesavapuram, Dated 16\textsuperscript{th} January, 1998
\textsuperscript{149} Inscription, Kullathoor Catholic Church, Dated 24\textsuperscript{th} January, 2001
\textsuperscript{150} Inscription, St. Michael Church, Thittuvillai, Dated 11\textsuperscript{th} June, 2002.
\textsuperscript{151} Inscription, Holy Angel’s Church, Melpuram, Dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} October, 2002.
\textsuperscript{152} Inscription, Sahayamatha Church, Enchacode, Dated 11\textsuperscript{th} November, 2002.
the Vicar General Fr. C. Eronimoose for a new church dedicated to St. James at Puthenkadai and it was blessed by the bishop on the 12th of December 2002. The same day, a newly built auditorium dedicated to St. Eustachius was blessed by the noble pastor at Packiapuram. On 5th of February 2003 the bishop blessed an elegant church at Ambalakadai and it was dedicated to St. John and St. Paul. Similarly, he blessed a new church at Pullani dedicated to St. Antony. On 10th of October 2003, a new church built with stone dedicated to St. Mary at Ambankalai was blessed by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. At Manchakonam, St. Theresa church was blessed by the head pastor in 2003. Our Lady of Adoration church, Unnamalakadai was renovated into a new structure by the efforts of the parishioners and this new church was blessed by the bishop on November 2004. In the same year, St Xavier’s church Vattavillai was blessed by the noble pastor. On 24th June 2005, a new church at Iruthayapuram was blessed by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. In the same year a new church dedicated to St. Antony at Pooteety was blessed by the bishop. The new church at Udaivillai was the last church blessed by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj in Tiruthuvapuram vicariate. The blessing ceremony was assisted by the Vicar General Fr. V. Mariadhasan and the church was blessed by the bishop on the new year day of 2006.
The new church blessed in Mulagumoodu vicariate was St. Fatima Mary’s church at KelMoolachel and it was blessed by the bishop on 18th of May 1990164. On 9th of November 1992, St. George’s church at Ethavilai was blessed and honoured by the pastor165. On 3rd January 1992, plans for the reconstruction of St. Sebastian’s church as well as pilgrimage centre, Madathatuvilai began and on 3rd January 1993, the new church was blessed by the bishop166. St. Jude’s church as well as the pilgrimage centre at Swamiyarmadam was extended with additional blocks and in 1993, on the feast of St. Jude, 28th October 1993 this structure was blessed by the bishop167. In 1995, a new auditorium of St. Elias church, Thuckalay was blessed by the bishop. In 1997, St. Lourdh’s shrine of St. Elias church was also blessed by the bishop. On 19th of June 1996, Good Shepherd church at Nallayanpuram was blessed by the bishop168. St. Thomas church Chellamkonam was blessed by the bishop on 2nd July 1997169. The new church dedicated to Michael at Kuzhivilai was blessed by the bishop on 15th March 1998170. The new church dedicated to St Francis Xavier at Elampilavilai was blessed by the bishop on 9th December 1998171. A newly constructed church dedicated to St. Theresa was blessed by the bishop at Chetticharvilai on 6th April 1999172, while another church dedicated to St. Michael, at Manalikuzhivilai was blessed on 6th of November 1999173. A new church at Saayakodu dedicated to Christ the King was blessed by the bishop on the 19th of November 2000174. On 26th of December of the same year, a newly constructed

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164 Inscription, St. Fathima Church, KelMoolachel, Dated 18th May, 1990.
165 Inscription, St. George Church, Ethavilai, Dated 9th November, 1992.
166 Inscription, St. Sebastian Church, Madathatuvilai, Dated 3rd January, 1993.
167 Inscription, St. Jude Church, Swamiyarmadam, Dated 28th October, 1993.
169 Inscription, St. Thomas Church, Chellamkonam, Dated 2nd July, 1997.
170 Inscription, St. Michael’s Church, Kuzhivilai, Dated, 15th March, 1998.
171 Inscription, St. Francis Xavier Church, Elampilavilai, Dated 9th December, 1998.
172 Inscription, St. Theresa Church, Chetticharvilai, Dated 6th April, 1999.
173 Inscription, St. Michael’s Church, Manalikuzhivilai, Dated, 6th November, 1999.
174 Inscription, Christ, the King Church, Saayakodu, Dated 19th November, 2000.
church dedicated to Christ the King at Mulavilai was blessed by the bishop\textsuperscript{175}. The foundation stone of St. Mary’s church Allanvilai was laid in 1997 and the new church was blessed by the bishop 2001\textsuperscript{176}. A shrine dedicated to St. Francis Xavier was blessed at St. Antony’s church, Maavilai in 2001, while in December 2003, St. Antony’s auditorium was blessed by the bishop in the premises of this Latin church\textsuperscript{177}. The extension of the church at Arulananthapuram was blessed in 2001. On 31\textsuperscript{st} of May 2002, a new church at Kozhipoorvilai dedicated to St. Michael was blessed by the pastor. On 2\textsuperscript{nd} of August 2002, the new church at Mallanvilai was blessed by the bishop\textsuperscript{178}. On 17\textsuperscript{th} of August 2002, St. Joseph’s church, Kurunthancode was blessed by the pastor. St. Joseph’s church Manchady was blessed by the bishop in 2002\textsuperscript{179}.

The new church dedicated St. Antony at Thikanamcode was blessed by the bishop on 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 2003. The new church at Kuzhivilai (Mulagumoodu) was blessed on 9\textsuperscript{th} May 2003. On 6\textsuperscript{th} July 2003, St. Antony’s church was blessed at Serukol by the head pastor\textsuperscript{180}. On 16\textsuperscript{th} July 2003, St. Carmel Mary church of Nullivilai was blessed by the pastor\textsuperscript{181}. The Mukkalambadu church was blessed by the bishop on 15\textsuperscript{th} September 2003 along with an elegant church auditorium\textsuperscript{182}. The graceful Mylacode, St. Michael church was blessed in 2003. At Maruthoorkurichi, St. Mary’s church was blessed by the pastor on 21\textsuperscript{st} November 2004\textsuperscript{183}. The graceful Vasanthanapuram church dedicated to Infant Jesus was blessed by the bishop on

\textsuperscript{175} Inscription, Christ the King Church, Mulavilai, Dated 26\textsuperscript{th} December, 2000.
\textsuperscript{176} Inscription, St. Mary’s Church, Allanvilai, 2001.
\textsuperscript{177} Inscription, St. Antony’s Church & Shrine of St. Francis Xavier, Maavilai, 2003.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.,pp.14-15.
\textsuperscript{181} Inscription, Carmel Mary Church, Nullivilai, Dated 16\textsuperscript{th} July, 2003
\textsuperscript{182} Inscription, Church Auditorium, Mukkalambadu, Dated 15\textsuperscript{th} September, 2003.
On 12th January 2005\textsuperscript{184}. On 31st May 1989, St. Ann's church, Thengamputhoor was blessed by the bishop. The shrine of St. Jude at Simon Colony was blessed by Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmarj on 25th November 1990. The elegant church at Christunagar, Nagercoil dedicated to Christ the King was blessed by the bishop on 25th November 1990\textsuperscript{185}. St. Lourdh's church at Kezhakkattuvilai was blessed on December 1990. Our Lady of Health church at James Nagar was blessed by the bishop in 1991. On 17th August 1990, the foundation stone was laid for a new church at Krishnankoil and on 20th September 1992 this church dedicated to Our Lady of Health was blessed by the bishop\textsuperscript{186}. On 23rd October 1993, the new church in Vattakarai was blessed by the bishop. On 30th January 1993, a new church dedicated to St. Micheal at Puthugiramam was blessed by the Pastor. On 29th December 1995 St. George church of Thalavaipuram was blessed by the pastor\textsuperscript{187}. In 1996, St. Xavier's church at Alenchy was blessed by the Pastor. The Ramapuram new church dedicated to St. Carmel Mary was blessed by the bishop in 1997. On 3rd January 1996, a blissful auditorium with a seating capacity of 1100 people was blessed at Kovalam. In 1998, Ammandivilai St. Xavier Shrine, Kandarvillagam, Our Lady of Heavens church were blessed by Bishop Leon Tharmaraj. On 20th April 1999 a new church at Chinnamuttom dedicated to St. Thomas was venerated by the pastor\textsuperscript{188}. In 2002 a new church at Naayinarkottai dedicated to Mount Claret, was blessed by the pastor. On 15th January 2002, a new church dedicated to St. Antony was blessed by the pastor. In the same year the Puthukudiyiruppu church was extended and blessed by the pastor\textsuperscript{189}. On 11th June 2004 Kattuvilai new church

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{184}{Ibid.}
\footnote{185}{Report, Kottar and Colachel Vicariates, “New Churches Blessed”, Nagercoil, 1988 to 2000, pp.4-9.}
\footnote{186}{Ibid, pp.9 -14.}
\footnote{187}{Ibid, pp.14 -16.}
\footnote{188}{Ibid, p.p. 15-19.}
\footnote{189}{Ibid, p.p. 19-21.}
\end{footnotes}
dedicated to Our Lady of Glory, near Friday Market was blessed by the bishop. On 6th August 2004, the Thazhaiyoothukonam church dedicated to Our Lady of Heaven was blessed by the bishop\textsuperscript{190}. On 24th August 2004, MelAsaripallam church dedicated to St. Micheal was blessed by the bishop\textsuperscript{191}. On 5th May 2005, the elegant Rossary Church of Puthenthurai was blessed and special offerings were done by the people\textsuperscript{192}. In 2005, at the Weavers Street, Colachel a new church dedicated to St. Sebastian was blessed by Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj\textsuperscript{193}.

4.2.6 Establishment of Banking Service

In the name of the diocesan patron St. Francis Xavier, a “Benefit Fund” was started for the economic well-being of the people of the Kottar vicariate during May 1996. The main office functions in the Assisi campus, Nagercoil. A branch of this institution operates in Kanyakumari, opposite to the railway station. It has deposit schemes such as fixed deposits, current deposits, recurring deposits and loan schemes such as housing loans, educational loans, occupational loans, gold loans and the saving schemes etc\textsuperscript{194}. On 25th January 1997, Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj started the “Villavancode Development Society” with Thiruthuvapram as headquarters\textsuperscript{195}. The inaugural ceremony was blessed by the bishop at St. Joseph’s Higher Secondary School, Thiruthuvapram. Fr. V. Robert and Fr. M. Xavier Rajamony took charge as director and secretary of the V.D.S. The office of the V.D.S. functions at Unnamalakadai, in the diocesan buildings for the extension services. This society develops the saving behaviour of the people. Also it accepts deposits from its

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid, p.p 21-27.
\textsuperscript{191} Inscription, St. Micheal’s Church, MelAsaripallam, Dated 24th August, 2004.
\textsuperscript{192} Inscription, Rosary Church, Puthenthalurai, Dated 5th May, 2005.
\textsuperscript{193} Inscription, St. Sebastian Church, Weaver’s Street, Colachel, 2005.
\textsuperscript{195} Report, Formation of Development Societies and Organisations, Kottar Diocese, Nagercoil, 1990-2005, pp.4-6,
members. It grants housing, personal and material loans to the customers. Year after year it has progress and becomes busy in helping the members. Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj started the “Colachel Vicariate Benefit Fund” on 9th September 2000, near the Colachel bus station. A new shopping centre was also inaugurated with a title “Bishop Agnisamy Shopping Centre”. Rev. Father George Vincent was made director of this benefit fund from 2000 – 2003. A branch of the CVBF was established at EnayamPuthenturai. Deposit schemes, savings bank, fixed deposits, recurring deposits, gold loan, short and long term personal loans, housing loan, education loan schemes are the main projects of this CVBF and there are many beneficiaries in the Colachel vicariate and Kanyakumari district.

4.2.7 Demise of Pope John Paul II

The 264th Bishop of Rome and Vicar of Jesus Christ Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyla) who had been blessing 338 martyrs, offered sainthood for 482 saints, consecrated 232 cardinals and 321 bishops passed away on 5th April 2005. The sovereign of the state of Vatican who travelled over 129-countries all over the world including India ruled Vatican for 26-years, 5-months and 17-days. On his demise the

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198 Pope John Paul II was born on 18th May 1920 at Wadowice, in the diocese of Krakow, Poland. He was ordained priest in Krakow on 1st November 1946, elected titular Bishop of Opolon on 4th July 1958, ordained Bishop on 28th September 1958, appointed as the See of Krakow on 13th January 1964. Created Cardinal on 26th June 1967, elected to be the Supreme Pontiff on 16th October 1978, made as Pastor of the Universal Church on 22nd October 1978. Pope John Paul II established the “Pontifical Council”, for the Family, with the purpose of promoting the spiritual and social values of the family, the Interpretation of “Legislative Texts”, in 1984 to interpret the rules of the codes of Canon Law and other legal texts, Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care of Workers”, (Dolentium Homeinum) on 11th February 1985 to promote the work of various catholic organizations operating in the medical field. “Pontifical Council for the Cultural Heritage of the Church”, on 25th March 1993 for the maintenance of the cultural heritage of the church. Source, Catholic Directory of India, 2004, pp.5-9.
diocese of Kottar paid homage to him. Sacramental mass, procession and mourning for 7 days were observed in the diocese and in all the parishes.

The 78 years old Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, a native of Bavaria in Germany has been created 265th Pope of the Catholic Church and he will be called Pope Benedict XVI. The new Pope took charge on 19th April 2005 and this ceremony was celebrated throughout the diocese of Kottar.

4.2.8 Adoption of Rain Water Harvest Scheme

The Tamil Nadu government made orders during February 2003 that all the buildings in Tamil Nadu should adopt the “Rain Water Harvest Scheme” with in ten months time, accordingly all the churches, convents, shrines, schools, hostels, boarding houses, colleges and all the buildings own by the diocese were brought under this scheme.

4.2.9 Platinum Jubilee Celebrations -2005

With the noble theme “All To Enjoy Christian Brotherhood”, the platinum jubilee celebrations of the diocese were made on 26th May 2005. The whole diocese was preparing for the celebrations even before one year, and on 26th May 2004 the bishop consulted the Arch bishop of Madurai and proposed the plan of celebrating the jubilee year. The bishop and the Diocesan Council wanted to prepare the people to celebrate the platinum jubilee with christian spirit and action. To execute the plan, full time and part time volunteers were recruited on the vicariate level and were trained by

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199 Native Newspaper, 6th April, 2005.
200 The Vatican declaration was “Hebeum Papam”, ie, “We Have a Pope”. The conclave elected him as Pope. The new Pope wrote an autobiography entitled “Milestone Memories” (1927-1977), a 50 years experience of his Catholic life. The Hindu, 20th April, 2005.
201 Kanyakumari district has an average of 1369.5 millilitre rain fall every year. The “Science and Environmental Department”, New Delhi, recommended rain- water harvest scheme to be adopted in India. The Hindu, 2nd October 1998.
the senior priests. The volunteers were divided into four groups and were working in
the four vicariates. They had to highlight tolerance among the other religious people
and to enhance the knowledge on the Bible. The Diocesan Council composed a prayer
especially for the jubilee year, and it was recited in all the churches of the diocese
during the Sunday offerings\(^2\). It was a prayer to enhance the spirit of the Roman
Ponfitt, the diocesan Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj, the priests, the nuns, the
clergy and all the people. The prayer was printed in a booklet and was supplied to all
the churches of the diocese. Vicariate level seminars, workshops and meetings were
conducted on a large scale to motivate the people in spirit and service\(^3\).

A “Central Celebration Committee” was appointed by the bishop with Fathers
V. Mariadhasan, M. Soosai, B. Dinysius, V. John Bosco, B. Eugene, A. Vallerian,
S. Jesu Retinam, S. Vincent and the laity Mr. R Angelose, W. Lenin Babu,
S. Alphonosius, M. Rajappan, Y. Stalin, Maria Razal Andrews and A. Christopher as
representatives to chalkout the plans for the celebrations\(^4\). The venue of celebrations
to be held in the grounds of the bishops house, Ramavarmapuram in between
St. Lawerence Boy’s Home and St. Aloysius Minor Seminary. A circular letter was
read in all the 148 parishes and 202 substations to make the function more
grandiloquent. The celebrations included all religious prayer, reading of high mass,
publication of the platinum year souvenir, opening of All Religious Retreat Centre
and the establishment of the diocesan library\(^5\). There were many sub committees to
plan and to look after the ceremonies. The celebrations started at 10 am on 26\(^\text{th}\) May

\(^3\) Ibid., p.10.
\(^4\) Report, Diocesan Council.

* The Celebration Committee appointed many sub committees such as Prayer Committee,
  Reception Committee, Transport Committee, Finance Committee, Food Committee and these
  Committees looked after different jobs and tuned the function. Source, Report, Celebration
  Committee, Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, 2005.
2005, with a meeting of all religious people as parents, professionals, priests, religious and youth of all religions. An inaugural meeting was conducted in St. Aloysius minor seminary, Nagercoil between 10 am and 12 noon\textsuperscript{206}. At 4.30 pm, all religious prayer was attended by many religious heads in the cathedral, Kottar. The papal nominee Pedro Lopez Quintana presided over the function and the prayer was led by bishop of the Church of South India Dr. Devakadatsam. Sage Kunnakudy Ponnampalam, Mr. Muhammad Faruk, Bala Prajapathi Swami, the district collector Sunil Palival and the district police superintendent Mr. Rama Subramaniyam attended the prayer ceremony\textsuperscript{207}. The prayer was followed by a Holy mass at 5.30 pm and the function was graced by Pedro Lopez Quintana, the apostolic Nuncio of India. Arch Bishop of Madurai Rev. Peter Fernando, Arch Bishop of Madras – Mylapore, Rev. A.M. Chinnappa, Bishop of Kumbakonam, Rev. Peter Remigius, Bishop of Coimbatore Rev. Thomas Aquinas, Bishop of Thuckalay Rev. George Alencherry, Bishop of Marthandam Rev. Yohanan Mar Chrysostom, Bishop of Palayamkottai, Rev. A. Jude Paul Raj, Bishop of Tiruchi Rev. Antony Devotta, Bishop of Thanjavur, Rev. M. Devadass Ambrose, Bishop of Trivandrum Arch. diocese, Rev. Soosai Packiyam and the Bishop of Neyyattinkarai Rev. Vincent Samuel attended the holy ceremony\textsuperscript{208}. The Apostolic Nuncio Pedro Lopez Quintana addressed sermon and it was translated in Tamil by Bishop Thomas Aquinas of Coimbatore. Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj proposed vote of thanks\textsuperscript{209}. During the day transport facilities were made available by the Tamilnadu Road Transport Corporation. Twenty five

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., p.16.
\textsuperscript{207} Report, Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, pp.17-19.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., p.21.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., pp.21-23.

The President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu K. Karunanithy, Bishop of Cuddalore Rev. Dr. A. Alexander, Bishop of Dindigul Rev. P. Antony, Bishop of Salem, Rev. S. Singarayaa, Bishop of Udhagamandalam, Rev. Antony Samy and Bishop of Vellore, Rev. M. Joe Lourusamy, sent felicitations on the ceremonial day. Source, Ibid., pp.25-27.
special buses were used on that day for the convenience of the pilgrims and the faithful. Many people from Madurai, Tiruchi, Tirunelveli, Trivandrum, Quilon and other parts of the country attended the ceremony.

4.2.10 Demise of Bishop Leon .A. Tharmaraj -2007

The 65 - year old bishop who had 40 years of noble religious service including 18 years leading the diocese as bishop was on 5th January 2007 admitted in the Holy Cross Mission hospital, Kottiyam of Quilon district of Kerala for treatment. He had fewer blood counts and the bishop was hospitalized for 8 days. The condition became worse and the doctors found that he was seriously affected by cancer. Then the bishop was admitted in the Regional Cancer Centre, Trivandrum on 12th January 2007. The Vicar General Fr. V. Mariadhasan and the Arch Bishop of Trivandrum diocese Rev. Dr. Soosai Pakiam were with the bishop. The hours became short and at 12.50 am. on 16th January 2007, the bishop breathed his last. The Diocesan Council was summoned and Fr. V.Mariadhasan was made Bishop in Charge and it was decided to hold the last funeral ceremony of Bishop Leon Augustine Tharmaraj. The demise of the bishop was declared in all the churches at 1 am on 17th January 2007. The corpse was taken from Trivandrum to Kottar by 2.10 am on 17th January 2007. In the early hours of the day the priests, nuns and the clergy paid homage to the body of the bishop in the Bishop’s House, Kottar. The body was placed for public reverence from 10 am to 1.30 pm. The corpse was taken to his native village Kovalam by 2.30 pm and from Kanyakumari a procession was leading to St. Ignatious Church, Kovalam through Vivekananthapuram. After the holy mass, the body was taken to the residence of the late bishop at middle street, Kovalam. The

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211 Native Newspaper, Dinakaran, Tamil, Dated 27th May 2005.
213 Ibid., pp.7-8.
body was again taken to the Bishop’s House, Nagercoil by 7.10 pm. Holiday was declared to all catholic institutions on 18th January 2007, the funeral day of the deceased bishop.\(^{214}\)

The next day 18th January 2007 from 9 am to 2.30 pm, the body was placed for the witness of the laity. The papal representative Rev. Dr. Pedro Lopez Quintana came and witnessed the body of the bishop. At 2.30 pm, the last procession took place from the Bishop’s House via, Derik junction, Chettikulam junction, K.P. Road and was led to the cathedral church, Kottar. The children threw flowers on the body. The vehicle carrying the bishop was followed by Rev. nuns, priests, the political leaders, the laity and the public. The procession reached the cathedral at 3.45 pm. Twelve priests carried the body to the alter.\(^{215}\)

The holy mass followed, the Arch Bishop of Madurai Rev. Dr. Peter Fernando led the ceremonal funeral mass. Rev. Arch Bishop Soosaipakiam of Trivandrum gave an introductory note about the bishop. Rtd. Arch Bishop of Madurai Rev. Marianus Arokiasamy, Arch. Bishop of Mylapore-Chennai Dr. A.M. Chinnappa, Assistant Bishop of Mylapore, Dr. Lawerence Pius Durai Raj, Bishop of Kumbakonam Dr. Peter Remigius, Rtd. Bishop of SivaGanga S. Edward Francis, Rtd. Bishop of Tiruchi S.L. Gabriel, Bishop of Tiruchi Dr. Antony Devotta, Bishop of SivaGanga, George Antony Samy, Bishop of Dharmapuri Dr. Joseph Antony Iruthaya Raj, Bishop of Salem, Dr. S. Singarayan, Bishop of Coimbatore Thomas Aquinas, Bishop of Tuticorin Dr. Ivan Ambrose, Bishop of Vellore, Dr. Sundar Raj, Bishop of

\(^{214}\) Ibid., p.9.
\(^{215}\) Ibid.,

* The member of Parliament of the Kanyakumari constituency Mr. Bellarmine, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, Miss Leema Rose, John Jacob, Jeya Paul, Rajinald, Rajan and the former minister K. Lawerence, former M.LAs, S. Austin, K.T. Kumara Das, Pachaimall attended the funeral of the bishop. Source, Report, Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, 2007.
Quilon Dr. Joseph, Bishop of Neyyattinkarai Dr. Daniel, Bishop of Dindigal
Dr. Antony Papusamy, Bishop of Thuckalay, George Allencheri, Bishop of
Marthandam Mar Chrysostom, Bishop of Tanjore Dr. M. Devadhas Ambrose, Bishop
of Ooty. Dr. Arullappan Amalraj and the C.S.I Bishop of Kanyakumari diocese
Dr. Devakadatzam attended the funeral ceremony. Rev. Fr.B. Dionysius, the
diocesan chancellor read the condolence of Pope. Rtd. Arch Bishop of Madurai
Dr. Marianus Arokiasamy addressed on the, “Bishop Deceased and Prayer Life”,
Fr.C. Eronimoose spoke on the charitable, religious, economic and social services of
the bishop. The district collector Sunil Palival, the representative of the catholic
society Mr. A. Eugine, Rev. Sister Fertile Mary, Bishop of Marthandam Yoohanon
Mar Chrysostom, Bishop of Thuckalay Mar Geroge Alencherry, the head pastor of
Salavation Army Arul Paul, Muslim religious leader Mr. Ahmedkhan and Hindu
religious head of Nagercoil Bala Brajapathi Swamigal gave the condolence. The
ceremonial burial took place at 7.10 pm. The holy mass was led by Arch Bishop of
Mylapore Dr. A.M. Chinnappa. The body was buried in front of the alter of the
cathedral, near the memorial of Bishop Lawrence Pereira, the first bishop of the
diocese of Kottar. At the end of the ceremony Fr. V.Mariadhasan, Vicar General of
Kottar diocese proposed vote of thanks. The programmes were telecasted through
C.D.N. cable operators, Nagercoil. The diocese declared a 4 days mourning. The
parish priest of Kovalam Fr. Joseph Justus declared a 7 days mourning in the parish.
On 21st January 2007 the parish priests of all the parishes and the members of the
parish council were demonstrating a silent procession and at the end, a mass was read
and the whole flock attended the mass in the parish head churches.

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216 Report Fr. V. Mariadhasan, p.12.
218 Ibid.