CONCLUSION

Napoleon Bonaparte who was the Emperor of France and was one of the most powerful rulers in world history made this testimony of Jesus: "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force! But Jesus Christ founded an empire upon love, and at this time millions of men would die for him" The renowned scientist Albert Einstein paid this beautiful tribute to Jesus: "I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene... No one can read the Gospel without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled in such life."

In the words of Anthony Padovano, “To neglect Christ is to neglect history. No man in history has influenced more people, inspired more institutions, and evoked more thoughts than Jesus Christ. Many have knelt before his cross in guilt or read his words in wonder. Many have known their keenest joy or found their deepest peace in the memory of his resurrection or in the re-enactment of his Last Supper” Mother Teresa of Kolkata, the recipient of Nobal Prize confessed that she could not think of living without Christ. In her own words: “The most important event that I have experienced in my life is my encounter with Christ. He is my support. Throughout the world countless men and women have been attracted by the magnetic personality of Jesus, who has been a powerful source of inspiration for their life of dedication. To cite just a few leaders of India, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Acharya
Vinoba Bhave and Former President APJ Abdul Kalam have drawn spiritual strength from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Owing to God's abundant graces and the generous cooperation of all concerned, India has a vibrant Church with 164 dioceses, 9750 parishes and a well organized and dedicated diocesan clergy. Assisting the bishops and the clergy are about 125,000 consecrated persons belonging to 99 Institutes of Priests, 34 Congregations of Brothers and 348 Congregations of Sisters.

According to statistics, on an average, there is only one consecrated person for every 1,440 Indian Catholics and for every 9,600 individuals in India. Despite this startling fact, consecrated persons are rendering immense assistance to the Church through their dedicated work, particularly in the fields of pastoral ministry, educational service, health care and social welfare. It is amazing that with just 10 per cent of religious personnel in the world, the religious of India are serving 1.2 billion people at home, not counting several millions in other countries. The Institutes of Consecrated Life in India have made rapid progress in various forms of services oriented ministries during the past few decades. The Conference of Religious in India (CRI) has contributed a great deal to the area of renewal through action-oriented programmes held at national and regional levels.

Salem accepted Christianity and its power of salvation through the well-known Jesuit, Fr. Robert de Nobili as far back as 1623 A.D. The painstaking efforts taken by the missionaries of Madura Mission, Mysore Jesuit Mission and Paris Mission Society were responsible for the spread of Christianity and the establishment of churches during the early days and the consolidation of Christian Community till the creation of the Diocese of Salem.
The early missionaries extended their services to all without the distinction of caste, creed and religion. Human dignity is a vital ingredient of their teaching and witnessing in the teeth of virulent opposition they brought solace to the untouchable and economically marginalized and accepted them as brothers. Coming in the line of the earliest missionaries to Tamilnadu, the Salem diocese has inherited the best part of their ideas of social regeneration.

The early missionaries and the diocesan clergy have ministered to the various needs and aspirations of the people of the territory. History is a marvelous collection of stories of the achievements of great men. This diocese has its share of men and women who dared and faced challenges and ultimately succeeded in their mission of establishing a diocese. The early missionaries sacrificed their lives for God to malaria, inclement weather to disease, they went through untold hardships to learn local language to adjust to spicy food and to unfamiliar customs and traditions. But they held out hope and relief for masses and exuded an optimism even in vulnerable circumstances.

Chapels were a rarity in those days for wandering missionaries. An altar would be improvised with the help of two mortars and a plank. The priest at such an altar offering the most holy sacrifice of mass was an object of curiosity and awe to the non-Christian participants. Hence the missionary would sometime after the mass explain the various gestures and prayers of the mass to the people present before they dashed off their coolie work. Missionaries used to carry with them a medical kit to help the sick as dispensaries and doctors were rare in rural areas in Salem. The
unshakable faith of rural people in the medicine distributed by the missionaries worked wonders for them.

Cycling was the ordinary mode of transport for missionaries in 1930’s. Many a time when the cycle tire went flat or got punctured and where the help of a mechanic was out of question, the missionaries would go to the nearest water source to fill the tube with water and merrily push on to continue their service.

The Diocese of Salem comprising the civil districts of Salem and Dharmapuri was erected canonically on 26th May 1930 and entrusted to the priests of Foreign Mission Society of Paris under the zealous and generous labours of the most Rev. Bishops Henry Prunier, V.S. Selvanather, Michael Duraisamy and S. Singaroryan. The Diocese of Salem has consistently grown in all aspects. In the various forms of ministries – spiritual, educational, social and pastoral, the different members of the diocese namely the clergy, religious and the faithful have contributed to the impressive and multifarious development of the diocese.

Increase of the catholic population, catechists nuns, clergy and religious, establishment of new parishes, erection of seminary, schools, health centers and orphanages, promotion of inter religious dialogue, involvement in women liberation, socio-welfare activities through Salem Social Service Centre and other centres run by the religious and the social communications [Epiphany Centre] indicate the evolution and growth of the diocese. But the epicentre of this evolution has all along been ‘People’ to bring to the forefront the Christian spiritual life.
The record of defence of human rights through educational and social welfare institutions in this diocese is a golden chapter in its history. The universal system of education imparted through the diocese and other religious congregations is value based and life oriented. The diocese has a great role to play in the progress and development of education that creates a conducive atmosphere for attaining all round development in man’s life. The diocesan priests and the religious of both men and women who involve in educational ministry work zealously for the promotion of literacy in the diocese as they firmly believe that literacy is a fundamental factor of social integration and an effective instrument of economic progress of the society. Though rooted in Christian faith, all these institutions respect the ideals and values of all religious faith and thereby promote inter religious harmony at their centres of great learning. Their main motto is to prepare the children to become good positive citizens of our great nation. Besides imparting knowledge they mould the young minds with certain skills and attitudes to live a meaningful life.

The town of Salem has been specially favoured in its pioneering of education from early times. It has afforded qualitative educational facilities for its people. The popularity of the educational centres run by the diocesan priests and the religious is due to the life of renunciation and selfless service pursued by them for the noble cause of education. They run schools even in the remote areas for the benefit of backward communities.

Education of women given by religious orders at schools and the women rehabilitation centres is a fillip to women to emerge from ghetto mentality and to take their legitimate place in the society. As Sarojini Naidu says, “The mission of Indian
womanhood is to keep alive the hearth fires, the altar and the beacon fires of the nation”. The congregations of women orders serving the diocese are aware of the problems faced by the women folk in the modern time. A re-orientation of women education is essential. They agree that the universal education will definitely empower women and raise their status.

The nuns who involve actively in the uplift of woman adapt a renewed strategy for more dignified status of women through providing them qualitative and job oriented education to enable them to face their challenges. They also instill in the minds of young women that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that every one is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth without distinction of any kind.

The idea behind the creation of the rural development and rehabilitation centres shows the great concern of the diocese for the large section of suffering rural masses. The neglected women, aged, the poor children are taken care by diocesan priests and the religious orders of men and women of the diocese through rural development and rehabilitation centres such as Don Bosco Anbu Illam for Street Children, Sisters of Charity’s Orphanage for neglected Children, Idhayalaya Juvenile Home for girls and Holy Cross Rural Development Centre for economically marginalized class.

A statistical survey of the Diocese of Salem would reveal the great development achieved by the diocese in various aspects especially in the charitable work, New Chapels, Hostels For Boys and Girls, Orphanages, Catholic Information Bureau, Pastoral Centres and Epiphany Centre for Social Communication have been
rich additions to the catholic life of this diocese. Hospitals, Dispensaries, Polio Clinic, Home For Aged and Leprosy Relief Centres speak creditably of the humanitarian work undertaken by the diocese.

The religious communities involved in health care ministry ensure the total liberation of every poor person from the clutches of diseases. Their Health development programme also benefits all sections of the society irrespective of caste, color, religion and position. To implement the immunization programmes, the Government Health Department is in constant touch with them. Through these health care centres awareness has been created among the public about the prevention and the treatment of many contagious diseases.

One of the missions of the diocese is to liberate the poor from poverty and economic slavery and to bring them hope and joy. With the aim of promoting welfare activities for the uplift of the poor and the downtrodden in the diocese, the Salem Social Service Centre was established. Its development activities have reached out to the larger segments of the people. This Society has been implementing various community development programmes for the benefit of rural masses such as Small Savings, Credit Unions, Adult Education, Madar Sangams, Balwadis, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Vocational Training and Employment, Youth and Women Empowerment.

Various motivation and training programmes are also conducted at village and zonal levels. Important projects among them are the people’s participation in decision making, formation of committees for planning and implementation and leadership training. On account of these programmes the poor people in the villages have
organized about 210 self-help groups for both men and women. Among these self-help groups 113 groups have emerged as Credit Unions. Now these groups are empowered to have access to government schemes and bank loans. Thus the diocese renders meritorious humanitarian service for the less fortunate people especially for the empowerment of women through its Social Service Centre.

The laity involves predominantly in the development of the diocese. The laymen and women show keen interest in the multifarious activities of the diocese including pious organizations and social welfare activities. They work chiefly through the existing organizations like young Christian Workers Association, Legion of Mary, Sodality of Our Lady, The Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Union of India, A.I.C.U.F, Pontifical Mission Societies, Prison Ministry and the recently started Anbiyams. The Pious Associations are some form or the other is found in almost 58 parishes in the diocese.

The new Diocese of Dharmapuri, which was created out of Salem Diocese in 1997, stands as an illustrative monument for the rapid growth of the Diocese of Salem. In order to serve the pastoral needs of the growing Catholic population, the Diocese of Dharmapuri was created due to the pioneering effort of the then Bishop Michael Duraisamy. Out of 43 Parishes of Salem Diocese 22 parishes were entrusted to Dharmapuri Diocese. Several religious congregations have opened their houses in the newly created Diocese to involve themselves in carrying out various ministries. At present Salem Diocese has 58 parishes. The oldest parish is Idappadi, which was created in 1676, and the latest one is Manjakuttai, which was formed in 2012.
Thus the steady development of the diocese and its influence on the lives of both Catholics and Non-Catholics have shed luster on this part of the country. The diocese’s presence is felt mainly due to its admirable educational service, charitable and social welfare work for all without distinction of caste, creed, or religion. Its contribution to the nation building is stupendous. Its doctrine, administration and prayer service, inter-religious dialogue and the attractive forces of truth and goodness play increasing measures in the lives of the people of this region. The entire credit of the growth of the diocese from its inception to the present day is due to the indefatigable spirit of the former Prelates and the sagacious guidance of the present Bishop. Rev. Dr.S.Singaroyan, the untiring service of the Missionaries and the Clergy, the zealous Religious and the enlightened Laity of the Diocese of Salem.

A library for public use can be setup preferably at Epiphany Centre in the Infant Jesus Cathedral premises to create awareness among the people about the various missions undertaken by the diocese. The Educational Apostolate serving the Diocese of Salem could make an attempt to start an Arts and Science College to fulfill the long felt need of the Salemites to enable the younger generation to receive value based education.

The achievements of any organization may be understood through writings and publications. In order to undertake writings about the works and services of the diocese and other religious institutes, the documents concerning them can be preserved and the same may be accessible to the public. The religious, social, educational and other contributions of the Jesuit Mission in Tamilnadu is understood by the public because of the existence of the Senbaganoor Archives at Kodaikanal and
its utilization. Likewise historical archives may be created in the Diocese of Salem for
the use of research scholars.

Hence the study reveals that since the days of inception of the Diocese of
Salem, it has been rendering yeomen services in a variety of fields such as Pastoral,
Educational, Social Welfare, Protection of human rights and Empowerment of weaker
section of the society.

The past successful achievements of the Salem Diocese are indeed the
guarantee and hope for a still brighter future for the cause of the people of Salem. The
Undoubtedly the diocese will touch new horizons in the fields of Pastoral, Social
Educational, Health Care, Missionary Activities, the Protection of Human Rights and
the Uplift of the Subaltern Groups.