CHAPTER – 14

THE MISSION FOR TODAY

“And he went up to the hill, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons” (Mk.3: 13-15). The twelve disciples left everything and followed Jesus (Mt.4: 22). Jesus taught them and they were with Him day and night for three years. Being with the disciples Jesus was giving shape to a model community based on the love of God.\(^1\) After completing His mission on earth, He commanded His disciples “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt.28: 19,20). Jesus sent them to the world to bear witness to the love of God.

Following the footsteps of Jesus, Thresia too had a small group\(^2\) with her from her younger days with whom she worked, visited the families, prayed together, engaged in the parish activities etc. A witness testifies that Thresia being the leader, with her companions did activities that were unusual in those days.\(^3\) Thresia was guided by the Holy Spirit and fulfilled always the will of God. It was the will of God that this special mission done to the families which was unheard yet, be continued. In the course of time this community under the charismatic leadership of Thresia, formed the base for the newly founded congregation of Holy Family. One of its members, Dr. Sr. Asha John chf, wrote: “The Congregation of Holy Family was founded on the sanctity of Mariam Thresia and the Congregation held out for humanitarian services through the programme of the family apostolate through creative ministries according to the needs of the time.”\(^4\)

\(^2\) Thresia’s three companions were Karimalikkal Mariam, Maliekal Koonan Mariam and Maliekal Thanda. Vithayathil, Biography of Rev. Mother Mariam Thresia, 91.
\(^3\) *Positio, ‘Summarium’,* 48.
In this last chapter of the thesis, we discuss how Thresia following her union with God, was called and trained to be the foundress of a new congregation- the Congregation of Holy Family - and its growth and relevance in the society today.

1. Mariam Thresia – Called to Be a Foundress

In God’s providence Thresia was called to be the foundress of the Congregation of Holy Family. She responded to the call with great generosity, lending herself totally to the leading of the Spirit through the way of the cross. Blessed Virgin Mary was born immaculate to be worthy of conceiving the Son of God in her womb.\footnote{CCC., 490- 494; 96, 97.} In the same way Thresia was tested and purified in the crucible of suffering and was filled with grace to be the foundress. God was preparing her from the childhood for this great mission.

Child Thresia was very unique compared to other children of her age. Her intense love for the crucified Lord and her desire to identify herself with Him impelled her to practise all the virtues in a heroic way. The expressions manifesting her infused knowledge, extraordinary ascetical practices from her deep faith and love for God, ardent desire to receive the sacraments like confession and Holy Communion, incidents of the practice of forgiving love, etc. are certain things which made her different from others.\footnote{M. Thresia, ‘Autobiography’, 25- 30.} In her teens, for ‘a way to love God peacefully’ she wished to lead a life of solitude in the forest or join a convent. However, God’s choice was just the opposite, to remain at home to which she submitted totally.\footnote{M. Thresia, ‘Autobiography’, 31, 32.} It was to prepare her for a new mission. The rest of her life she had to pay for her ‘yes’ like a holocaust. She was tremendously tested and purified and made worthy of the call to be a foundress. It was this call and mission for a new apostolate and for a new congregation that gave meaning to her whole life of tortures and sufferings.

Let us examine the different ways how God prepared Thresia to be the foundress of a new congregation.

1.1 Desire for a House of Solitude

According to the request of Bishop John Menachery, Fr. Vithayathil reported everything that was happening in Thresia. He had informed the Bishop of the
direction given to him by Mother Mary to build a small prayer room for Thresia. This happened in 1903. Bishop was suspicious of all that were happening in Thresia and so he wrote to her: “I have the impression that devils are tempting you under the guise of angels.” And he was of the view that “Solitary life was not suitable for our times.” Hence about building a small room for Thresia he said: “If it is really from God, I must know it through signs.” In a letter to her spiritual father there is a reference to it: “Father, please continue to pray for what we have been praying for, without being fed up. God will grant it soon.” Once in a vision Jesus told Thresia that she had to suffer much to realise soon what Mother Mary had informed her spiritual father of. Fr. Vithayathil has recorded that Thresia too expressed many times her desire to stay in a house of solitude. Thresia felt sad when people were speaking high of her due to the extraordinary experiences. So to hide from the public she expressed her desire of staying in a solitary place.

1.2 A Few Milestones

In view of the religious commitment and founding of the congregation, a few significant events happened in the life of Thresia. Fr. Vithayathil has recorded that at the age of three and a half Thresia had dedicated herself to God and at the age of nine she had personally taken the vow of perpetual virginity and chosen Jesus as her spiritual bridegroom.

In 1904, on the occasion of the annual retreat conducted during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, Bishop Menachery visited Thresia’s parish church. He spoke to her in the confessional and advised her to dedicate herself to the Holy Mother. He ordered: “Thresia should be surrendered to our Lady as her slave; a rope should be tied around her neck and the other end should be handed over to the Blessed Mother.” In obedience to the Bishop’s command, Thresia was given to our Lady as a slave and Holy Mother accepted her.
On March 12 1905, with the permission of the Bishop, Fr. Vithayathil enrolled Thresia in the Third Order of Carmelites and gave her veil. This was done due to the special desire of Blessed Virgin Mary. It was unusual to give the veil to the lay members. They were given only the scapular. Thresia was given both, according to the direction of the Bishop. From that time onwards Thresia was always wearing the veil. This manifests her boldness to be different and to be a witness of His love.

Thresia made the final commitment in the Third Order of Carmelites on April 16, 1910 in the presence of Fr. Vithayathil. He has recorded that on those days God revealed many secrets to Thresia. Through these experiences she got more clarity about her vocation.

In 1912 Thresia once again explained to Bishop her difficulty to love God staying in her house and expressed her desire of getting a prayer room for herself. This time the Bishop ordered her to stay in Ollur Carmelite Convent. From the two letters Thresia wrote to the spiritual father from the Ollur convent (L.50 and L.51), it is clear that she went to the Carmelite convent only out of obedience: “Did I tell you father that I am going to join the convent? No. I am submissive to all your orders exactly.” Sisters in the convent loved her for her humility, obedience and patience and had the desire to admit her in the convent without any payment. However, when her spiritual father enquired about her decision of joining the convent she answered him boldly: “I am not at all willing and I have no desire to join the convent.” Bishop asked Thresia to pray that he may get to know the will of God for her. Accordingly she prayed to God insistently and God answered her prayer. In the meanwhile people of Puthenchira missed Thresia, who like an angel went round nursing the sick and dying patients, helping the poor, reconciling the separated couples, helping the sinners for conversion etc. They wanted her back in the parish. So they requested the Bishop again and again to send her back home. Convinced of her call, Bishop told Thresia:

17 Vithayathil, Diary, 90.
19 Vithayathil, Diary, 177.
20 Vithayathil, Diary, 180.
22 Vithayathil, Diary, 181.
23 Holy Family Convent, Puthenchira, Nalagamam (Chronicle), 3; See also Copia Publica Documentorum, Vol.2, 342-345; Positio, Informatio, 64; CHFA O11.
“God’s will is that you should not stay in a convent. So you are permitted to return home. Your spiritual father will have a place built for you.”24 After two months of convent experience Thresia went back home to fulfil the special mission that God had entrusted to her.

1.3 Fulfilment of the Desire

It was heavenly desire that a small room for prayer be built for Thresia.25 Gradually Thresia desired for it greatly as it was difficult for her to love God, do penance and prayer peacefully in her house.26 According to the Bishop’s direction, Fr. Joseph Vithayathil, built a house for Thresia. The land for the building was donated by a parishioner. With the help of generous people from near and far the construction of a two storied building was completed within nine months.27 Fr. Vithayathil’s foresight and prophetic decision were manifested in the construction of such a spacious two storied building for a single person. On 7 October 1913 Thresia left her house and started to stay in the new house of solitude permanently.28 Her friends joined her in the prayer and ministry during day time and in the night one among them kept company with her. After three months on January 1914 they shifted from their home and started to stay with Thresia permanently.29

According to the directions of Fr. Joseph Vithayathil, the small community led a well disciplined life of prayer and apostolate in the new house of solitude. Fr. Vithayathil gave them a time table30 that Thresia was following while she was alone. This speaks aloud of their life of contemplation and action. It is as follows:

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24 Vithayathil, Diary, 181.
25 Earlier it has already mentioned that it was Mother Mary who informed about constructing a prayer room for her in 1903. Vithayathil, Diary, 28.
26 Vithayathil, Diary, 180.
27 CHF Charthrathilude, 21.
28 Vithayathil, Diary, 186.
29 CHF Charthrathilude, 22; See also Diary, 186.
### J.M.J

#### Time - Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06.00</td>
<td>Going to church, participating in the Holy Mass, receiving Holy Communion etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.30</td>
<td>Acts of charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Spiritual reading on the passion of Christ and lives of saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Meditation on the Sorrows of Mother Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>Spiritual respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Rosary and examination of conscience for 5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Meals and spiritual respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.30</td>
<td>Acts of charity in silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.30</td>
<td>Writing down spiritual matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.00</td>
<td>Spiritual reading (Imitation of Christ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.30</td>
<td>Making the way of the cross in the church and rosary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.30</td>
<td>Cleaning the interior of the church, the sanctuary and decorating the altar with flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.00</td>
<td>Spiritual respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.15</td>
<td>Preparation for meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.30</td>
<td>Meditation on eternal truths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.30</td>
<td>Spiritual respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.00</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.30</td>
<td>Meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.30</td>
<td>Spiritual reading on eternal truths and examination of conscience for 10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Meditation on the passion of Christ, permitted acts of penance and examination of conscience for 5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** No obligation to observe this time-table while visiting the sick and during the illness.

Permitted Acts of Penance
Wear the spiked chain on the arm daily. Wear the spiked blouse from 6 o’clock in the evening. Wear the crown of thorns on the head. Take off the spiked blouse before going to bed. The spiked blouse may be worn also during the day on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Lie on the mat strewn with pebbles. Use for pillow one filled with brambles. Take 60 discipline strokes daily. These acts of penance are forbidden on Sundays and the days of obligation. Also they are forbidden during illness.

Things to be specially observed:

1. Do not go to houses or elsewhere without permission. During the absence of the spiritual father, if necessary, you may go to visit and help the sick.
2. Without permission do not receive or give any alms.
3. The sick people of this parish are to be visited and helped.
4. If it is felt that there is need to stay in the house of the sick, special permission must be obtained.
5. While visiting the sick in their house, be accompanied at least by one of your companions. If this is not possible, take along a reliable lady. If the place is very close, you may go alone.
6. Without permission do not send letters or open and read the letters received.
7. Do not talk to outsiders who are not people of this parish without permission. If they are relatives you may talk.
8. No one is to be let into this house without permission.

“Keep the rule and the rule will keep you.” Keep this saying firmly fixed in your mind.

Your Spiritual Father

Fr. Joseph Vithayathil

Thus the long cherished desire of Thresia to be alone with the Alone was realised. She spent long hours with the Lord as given in the rule of life. The small community under the guidance of Fr. Vithayathil lived a life equal to that of the religious in strict discipline.
1.4 Intervention of the Holy Family

Holy Family of Nazareth, the family of Jesus, is the model family on the earth. Pope John Paul II in his Letter to Families says: “The Holy Family is the beginning of countless other families.” The families are to be formed unto the likeness of Holy Family. Jesus the “Redeemer spent most of his life in the obscurity of Nazareth, obedient as the ‘Son of Man’ to Mary his Mother and to Joseph the carpenter.” Holy Family of Nazareth appeared very frequently to Thresia and had played a big role in her spiritual formation. It could be in preparation for entrusting to Thresia the special mission of renewing the families through the founding of the Congregation of Holy Family.

Thresia was very much associated with the members of the Holy Family; Jesus, Mary and Joseph. She lived as the fourth member of the Holy Family. She had the experience of her heart exchanged with the Heart of Jesus, and she had received the Hearts of Mother Mary and St. Joseph which were placed one on the left side and the other on the right side of her heart. The Holy Family very often came to console and strengthens her especially while she was severely tortured by demons. During the final battle with demons which God allowed to last for three years on 8 December 1904, the Holy Family was present near her to strengthen her. On the occasion Jesus told her that He was pleased with her and Mother Mary added her name to Thresia’s name as a sign of her great victory over the demons. After, that she addressed herself as ‘Mariam Thresia’. Her spiritual father and the Bishop also called her by the new name even before she was given the name officially on her profession day.

In 1905, as a preparation for launching a new congregation in the name of the Holy Family, Mother Mary had asked Thresia to decorate her room with flowers on every Friday. In the evening before the Angelus bells, the Holy Family would be present in the room. At that time all those who were present in the room and prayed rosary together would receive special blessings of the Holy Family. This was carried on for many years.

31 John Paul II, Letter to the families, Bombay: (Pauline publications, 1994), 100.
32 John Paul II, Letter to the Families, 5.
33 Vithayathil, Diary, 47.
34 Vithayathil, Diary, 167.
35 Vithayathil, Diary, 10, 16, 19 etc
36 Vithayathil, Diary, 72, 73.
38 Vithayathil, Diary, 120. This has already mentioned twice before.
The frequent appearing of the Holy Family and Thresia’s close contact with them could be the reason for the Bishop to suggest the name Holy Family for the new congregation. It became a beautiful coincidence as the congregation is founded for the renewal of families.

1.5 Founding Experience

From 1902 onwards Thresia was tested and melted in the crucible of suffering in view of founding the new congregation. The founding of a religious congregation by a charismatic leader is normally a gradual process. “It was Bishop John Menachery who finally discerned her vocation and with a series of rapid decisions in her favour approved her charism as a foundress.”

On 13 May 1914 Bishop John came to the house of solitude, barely seven months after its blessing. He was quite happy with the four inmates, Thresia and her three friends, and their disciplined life under the guidance of Fr. Joseph Vithayathil. Bishop consulted with Fr. Vithayathil: “Why not make this house of Thresia a convent? Fr. Vithayathil responded: “Let it be according to your will. I too had the desire to raise it to a convent.” Then the Bishop asked him by what name the congregation was to be called. He said “Let it be in the name of Mother Mary.” At this Bishop remarked: “There are so many convents in the name of Mother Mary in the diocese; let it be the congregation of Holy Family.” Fr. Vithayathil answered: “It is the will of God. Praise be to God.” Then the Bishop said: “I am convinced that God was directing Thresia through suffering to found a new congregation in this place. Let Thresia make her profession tomorrow itself and the new congregation thus be founded.” The Bishop then ordered him to do the necessary arrangements for the canonical erection of the congregation on the following day, 14 May 1914.

Commenting on this Chevalier K.C.Chacko, a biographer of Mariam Thresia, wrote:

God was guiding both Thresia and the Ordinary of the diocese through the trials which extended over a period of twelve years. The Divine Master who purified Thresia by melting her in the furnace of pain had

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39 CHF Charithrathilude, 26.
42 CHF Charithrathilude, 26.
guided the Bishop to watch and test her on all human standards before accepting her oblation. The final decision of the Bishop who was sceptical of all her supernatural experiences and visions in her favour is itself a tacit approval of the genuineness of her experiences.\(^{43}\)

On 14 May 1914 Bishop John Menachery proclaimed officially the establishment of the Congregation of Holy Family in the presence of her spiritual father and many other priests, religious and a vast assembly of Christian faithful assembled in the parish church of Puthenchira. During those august moments Bishop announced to the parishioners: “A glad news. For Thresia and for persons like Thresia, a new congregation is established, The Congregation of Holy Family.”\(^{44}\) Thresia was given the habit of the new congregation and she pronounced before the Bishop and the faithful the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. She was given the name ‘Mariam Thresia’.\(^{45}\) Fr. Vithayathil has recorded: “During her profession of religious vows, the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph appeared to her and carried on a spiritual conversation with her.”\(^{46}\) On the same day Thresia’s three friends received veil as postulants and Thresia was made the superior of the Holy Family Convent, the house of solitude. Fr. Vithayathil was made the chaplain of the new community.\(^{47}\) It seems that in the history of the religious orders in the church never has it been heard of such an eventful day: founding a new congregation, religious vestition, profession of perpetual vows and appointment as the superior of the house, everything to a person in the course of one day.\(^{48}\) Chevalier K.C. Chacko comments: “The Bishop must have adopted this bold, unusual and extraordinary step, possibly because he felt that a further period of novitiate or trial after the long twelve years of painful preparation which Thresia had undergone was not necessary for confirming her in her vocation.”\(^{49}\)

Thus an illiterate woman Thresia, from a remote village Puthenchira, was called to become the foundress of a new congregation: ‘The Congregation of Holy Family’ for the renewal of families, as the effect of her mystical union with the Lord.

\(^{44}\) *CHF Charthrathilude*, 29, 30.  
\(^{45}\) *CHF Charthrathilude*, 30, 31. This name she was given before by Mother Mary. It is mentioned earlier.  
\(^{46}\) Vithayathil, *Diary*, 186.  
\(^{47}\) Vithayathil, *Diary*, 186; *CHF Charthrathilude*, 31.  
\(^{48}\) *CHF Charthrathilude*, 31.  
\(^{49}\) K.C.Chacko, *Mother Mariam Thresia*, 133.
2. Growth of ‘The Congregation of Holy Family’

Strong and powerful seeds bring forth healthy and strong plants/trees. A tree is known by its fruit. Every sound tree bears good fruit (Mt.7: 16,17). The sanctity of Mother Mariam Thresia, who was the cause for the foundation of the congregation of Holy Family, spread far and wide. Many young girls from near and faraway places attracted by the holiness of Mother Mariam Thresia came to join the congregation. Many pious and godly parents desired to send their daughters to the congregation. Mother Mariam Thresia believed that it was the Holy Family who brought candidates to the congregation. Very soon the congregation started to flourish. The charism and the vision of the foundress, Mother Mariam Thresia were the core and the wellspring of the identity of the new congregation. The Sisters under the amiable guidance of Mother Mariam Thresia continued their challenging apostolate of rendering humanitarian services to the sick and needy in the families around. It was a revolutionary step initiated by Mariam Thresia, when the traditions kept the religious inside the four walls of convent. Mother Mariam Thresia in her short span of life worked hard and accomplished what it would have taken centuries for others to achieve.

2.1 Under the Providence of God

The newly founded Congregation of Holy Family had no material assets. Mother Mariam Thresia, the Superior of the community kept her complete trust in the providence of God. As the number of members increased, she had to struggle hard to provide the barest minimum living conveniences. A witness testified: “the community was in great difficulty in the beginning. They had to strive hard for their daily sustenance. Help was sought from local people and all other parts of Cochin and Travancore.” Many generous people came forward to help her. Fr. Vithayathil has recorded: “When there was no food and no help came from people, she would pray hard to God and God saw the need. St. Joseph would bring and leave the needed money sometimes in her box, sometimes under the mat on which she slept, and sometimes in her hand.”

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50 CHF Carithrathilude, 34.
51 CHF History, 41.
54 CHF History, 50.
57 Vithayathil, Diary, 187.
One of Mariam Thresia’s followers testified: “She seemed to pass through crisis situations as if unaffected by them. We used to say that whatever Mother prays for she will receive … She asked us never to be discouraged or desperate. She told us to trust in God and that God will look after all our needs and taught us an ejaculation. ‘My Mother, my trust’, and counselled us to repeat it during all our activities.”

A close neighbour of Mother said: “The Servant of God had great trust in God. She knew that God was aware of her limitations and hence would provide for her in all her needs. Trusting in God’s providence she used to undertake most arduous tasks.” When she started schools the only capital she had was the trust in the divine providence of God. For the construction of the convent at Kuzhikkattussery, she had the courage to go to the Maharaja of Thripunithara for help. When she knew that Maharaja was sick, she prayed, gave him a medicine made with certain medicinal leaves. Suddenly he got relief and as gratitude he offered a huge quantity of timber for the construction. During this period also Mother was not spared of physical agonies and tortures from demons. However most of them were in the night, leaving her rather free during day time to do the developmental works and humanitarian services.

One of the pioneer teachers of Holy Family Convent School, who later joined the congregation and was privileged to live with Mother Mariam Thresia, Sr Thresia gave her testimony which is a clear evidence for Mother’s complete confidence in the providence of God. She shared:

I joined this congregation only because of the great love of God and love of neighbour that characterized Mother Mariam Thresia. She was extremely fond of giving something to the poor and to the servants. Her brother often came to the convent parlour drunk and spoke scolding her and created all sorts of disturbances. Her quiet and only response was praying for him. Mother has suffered a lot. There is hardly any other individual who had to suffer so much humiliation as Mother. She had an implicit trust in God’s providence and was not disturbed even when the

60 Positio, ‘Summarium’, 510.
61 Vithayathil, Diary, 187; K.C.Chacko, Mother Mariam Thresia, 139.
convent stores were empty and the cultivation in the convent gardens yielded nothing. Her optimism and trust in God were extraordinary. Though she was embarrassed much by the diabolic temptation on one side and the ridicule of the world on the other, with great faith and courage she prayed intensely and raised resources for paying for the construction of the convent.  

Mother Mariam Thresia’s hard work and undying faith in the providence of God bore everlasting fruits in the society and in the Church. The Congregation of Holy Family was nurtured by Mother Mariam Thresia’s sufferings and sacrifices, toils and tears, hardships and humiliations and above all by her habitual union with the Lord. Before Mother passed away, there were fifty five professed members, thirty boarders and ten orphans. She established three convents, built two chapels attached to the convents, a study house in Thrissur, two primary schools and an orphanage.  

2.2 The Congregation of Holy Family Today

The Congregation of Holy Family founded by Mariam Thresia, a simple, almost unlettered poor woman of hardly any means, and drawing inspiration from her deep spiritual union with the crucified Christ, has now reached its hundredth year of foundation. Within these hundred years, the congregation has had a surprisingly dynamic growth in the number of its members. It is now divided into nine provinces and two regions, and spread to all continents except Australia. The new apostolate initiated by Mariam Thresia, the family apostolate, which is ever relevant, found new ways and means of expression, according to the needs of the time. Pope John Paul II in his Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* given in 1981, invited all congregations to do the family apostolate: “I would like to add a most pressing exhortation to the heads of institutes of consecrated life to consider always with substantial respect for the proper and original charism of each one - the apostolate of the family as one of the priority tasks, rendered even more urgent by the present state of the world.”  

Mother Mariam Thresia with her infused knowledge and undaunted prophetic courage sensed the needs of the time a century before and entered into the field of family apostolate.

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In those days Mariam Thresia “encountered Christ in the suffering brethren, visited families and spent herself in charitable works such as helping the destitute, preparing the dying, nursing the sick, leading sinners into repentance, teaching the ignorant and caring for the orphans.”\(^65\) The Constitution of the Congregation demands the members to be dynamic in action according to the signs of the time. It says: “Our Congregation must constantly be dynamic by an inner spirit that enables us to enter into all the facets of the present society with the heroism of a total surrender and respond imaginatively to the needs of all, according to the nature of our call.”\(^66\) Responding to the signs of the times, the Congregation has now taken up dynamic ways of family apostolate activities.

In the congregation a three-tier system has been developed for the effective and efficient functioning of family apostolate.\(^67\)

### 2.2.1 Family Apostolate Training & Research Institute (FATRI).

This institute at the General level organizes and coordinates the family apostolate activities and counselling programmes of the Congregation. The FATRI has been started to serve the families in a scientific and effective way. It is a training centre where counsellors and full timers are trained. It is a research centre where the newly emerged topics on social and psychological issues are studied to update the knowledge. Academic courses in psychology and counselling affiliated to recognized universities are conducted in this institute. It has a counselling centre where varieties of individual, marital and family problems are handled using psychotherapies, crisis interventions, marital and family counselling etc. Under this institute a Family Renewal Centre was established at Kuzhikkattussery where Mother Mariam Thresia breathed her last and her mortal remains have been laid to rest. Retreat for couples, especially for broken and separated ones are conducted here. All the couples who come over here are reported to have experienced powerful intercession of Blessed Mariam Thresia.

\(^65\) *Covenant of Love*, Constitution of the congregation of Holy Family, 2.

\(^66\) *Covenant of Love*, Constitution of the congregation of Holy Family, 3.

\(^67\) This is taken from a paper presented by Dr. Johncy chf for the annual conference of Catholic Psychologists Association at Mumbai on October 5-7, 2012.
2.2.2 Integrated Family Development Forum (IFDF)

This is to organize and coordinate family apostolate programmes at the Province level. IFDF conducts home mission units, insertion communities, programmes for different group associations like children, youth, couples, old, widows, women, alcoholics etc. Basic counselling courses are conducted for people of various categories. Holy Family Lay Association for the Catholic couples to engage in the family apostolate activities is also conducted.

2.2.3 Direct Family Apostolate (DFA)

This is for the local community based family apostolate programmes. This aims at a life like that of Mother Mariam Thresia, to enter into family problems mainly through family visits. “The life and apostolate of Mariam Thresia, the prophetess of the domestic Church acquires much significance during this age when the families get into several complex situations.” Under the directions of IFDF, various programmes for the different age group and for various associations are conducted in the DFA level.

As the Congregation of Holy Family is celebrating its centenary, the current statistics of the congregation may be presented:

- Total Members…1890
- Total Convents….226
- Total Educational Institutions…88
- Total Homes for Works of Mercy…41
- Total Hospitals and Clinics…21
- Total Social Centres…7

The remarkable growth of the congregation from the simple seed planted at Puthenchira, speaks of the greatness of the seed and the extraordinary latent power it carried. Mariam Thresia did not have material power or money power. She was not a scholar in the worldly sense. She did not have physical attractiveness. She was not talented in music, art or literary works. The sole power she had was the enormous spiritual power with which she made a history. “She could not hand down any written

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