CONCLUSION
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The subject of this research is “The Lay People Involvement in the Church Activities in Kanyakumari District”. This study was guided by some questions such as, who are the Lay people and Lay Specialists, how they are different from Clergy, what are their distinct characteristics, what is the nature of their activities in the Parish Church, what are the areas of their services to the Parish people and what is the impact of their specialized activities in the Parish? In order to limit the field of this study, the Catholic Church (Diocese) of Kottar, which is coextensive with Kanyakumari District, has been selected.

In the Catholic understanding, the word “Lay” implies a person who is usually married, often with a family and a job. The word “Lay” reflects a certain secular (worldly) character. It comes from the Greek work “laikos” meaning ordinary, worldly and not consecrated. The “Lay people” meant a group of believers who are not Clerics (priests). Lay Specialists are belonging to the group of Lay people, but at the same time they have a different status in the Parish Community. They have special respect by means of three qualities: their specialization in a particular area of services, their recognition by the Parish Community, and their remuneration from the Parish. They have distinct characteristics. They are highly motivated, educated, and skilled in collaboration.

The Vatican Council II (1962-1965) of the Catholic Universal Church developed two ideologies that empowered the Lay people involvement in the Church...
activities and collaboration in the Church: (1) The Mission of the Church belongs to
every Catholic; (2) Every Catholic is called to become holy person. Traditionally, the
Mission of the Church was thought to be the special work of the Priests or Pastors.
The duty of giving witness to Jesus and living a Christian life(Mission) was
considered to be the role of the Priests or Pastors. The Lay people were considered as
a different group involved in the worldly matters. However, in the Vatican Council
II, the Catholic Church recognized that the successful Mission of the Church required
the involvement, not only of the Priests or Pastors, but also of the Lay people.

The ideology of the Mission of the Catholic Church was set up in the
ritual of baptism. The ritual of baptism is traditionally believed to bring a new birth,
and unite into the Church that is represented as the Body of Christ. The Vatican
Council II brought deeper understanding of the meaning of the ritual of baptism. All
who receive a Baptism (including Lay people) share in the Mission of the Catholic
Church. The Lay people have their own roles of involvement that is found in the
ritual of baptism. There were two implications of this ideology: First, the ritual of
baptism gives equality of membership in the Catholic Church. This equality of
membership is called in common terms “People of God”. It is a community that is
made up of all the people such as Pope, Bishops, Priests and Lay people. All of them
as “People of God” have roles to play in the Mission of the Catholic Church. Second,
this unity achieved by the ritual of baptism is best expressed in the community
celebration of the rituals, especially in the Holy Mass. Therefore, the Lay people are
encouraged to take active roles that are appropriate in the Community celebration.
Everyone who is baptized has the obligation to Christian spirituality. Traditionally, Christian spirituality had been seen as consisting in denying the present life and focusing on the next life after death. The Clergy was thought to be in a ‘state of perfection’ while, the Lay people were thought be in a less perfect state. However, the Catholic Church recognized the impact of the celebration of the ritual of baptism that gives a new birth to all, and all have the responsibility to grow in Christian spirituality. Everyone has to grow in spirituality according to one’s own duties in life. The Catholic Church stated clearly that the spirituality (Holiness) of the Lay people should take its particular character from their married or family state, from their state of health and from their professional and social activities. The Lay people are to experience God not only in prayer and rituals, but in all what goes on in life: the frustrations, tears, joys, laughter, rituals and experiences of daily life. The Lay people are to find out God’s presence with ‘Ordinary’ things of life and to make connection between their religious rituals and daily human problems.

On the basis of human problems in the life of Lay people, the following problems are identified: loneliness and depression, self-esteem, communication and conflict, parent and child relationships, spouse relationships, parent-in laws relationships, domestic violence, responsibility and commitment issue, job search, health issues, alcohol issues, and crimes. On the basis of religious beliefs and practices of the Lay people, the following have been identified. The core Catholic beliefs that give specific identity as ‘Catholic’ are: the real presence of Jesus in the ritual of Eucharist (Communion), Virginal conception of Jesus, bodily
resurrection of Jesus, life after death and the eternity of hell. Religious practices are identified in three categories: the core Catholic practices, Catholic ritual practices and other devotional practices. The level of practices of the above religious practices differs from Parish to Parish and country to country. In some Parishes, there are a high level of observance in the practice of Holy Mass and Holy Communion and low level of practice of confession. The most common Catholic practices are: the Holy Mass, Holy Communion, Benediction of the Blessed Communion, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Novena, Fast and abstinence and spiritual retreat are the Catholic ritual practices. Prayer at meals, private Bible reading, spiritual reading, Charismatic prayer, and personal reflection of God are other devotional Catholic practices.

Lay Specialists interact with Parish people on different issues. More Parish people interact with Lay Specialists, the more likely the Parish people to get involved in the Parish activities. Parish people interact with Lay Specialists on personal problems such as loneliness and depression, loss of work and other economic issues and self-esteem. The Parish people seek help from the Lay Specialists on relational problems such as problems with one’s spouse, problems with parent-child, and problems with one’s in-laws. The Parish people seek advice from Lay Specialists on communication problems, and marriage and family problems. The Parish people seek support and directions from the Lay Specialists, when they have serious problems of domestic violence.

Interactions between the Lay Specialists and Parish people increase the people’s involvement in Parish religious and social programmes. Many people are
involved in Church Choir, Religious teaching, Altar Servers, Prayer-couples, Donation Collectors, and Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils. They involve in social programmes, such as supplying food for the very poor, arranging for the marriages of the poor women, supplying books and notes for the very poor students, and giving family counseling to the families in problems. In all these interactions, the Parish people see the Lay Specialists as examples of (1) How to be involved in the Parish and (2) How to find connection between their human problems and religious beliefs and practices. Traditionally, the essential activities in the Catholic Parishes are performed by the Priests. The Lay Specialists represent both the people by their ‘Lay’ status and ‘Specialist’ status by their education and experience in a particular field.

Parish people see the Lay Specialists as their examples to share and involve in the programs of the Parish, and to find a connection between their beliefs and life experience. The Priests are the persons, who formerly gave meaning to the human problems in religious terms. Now, this help is given by the Lay Specialists whose influence on the Parish people seems little strong as the Priests. In the very process of helping the Parish people with human problems, the Lay Specialists share their own religious experience in dealing with the human problems. This interaction is happening from a point of one Lay person to another Lay person. When the Lay Specialists help the Parish people in the context of their own religious experience, they legitimately witness to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, namely that all the baptized Catholics have the obligation to the Mission of the Church. The Lay Specialists not only witness, but also encourage the Parish people to do their part in fulfilling the Mission of the Church.
Interactions with the Lay Specialists influence the Parish People’s religious beliefs and practices. The Parish people are more inclined to express their beliefs through participation in the religious practices, such as the Holy Masses on Sundays and week days and participating in the Holy Communion in the Holy Masses. During the week days, older people attend the Holy Mass. As the Parish people become older, they seem to go for weekly Mass and Communion. In the devotional practices, the Parish people involve more in the following practices: Benediction of the blessed Communion, Stations of the Cross and retreat. More women seem to involve in the above practices. The other devotional practices such as Bible reading, Charismatic prayer and Spiritual reading are becoming more common in the Parishes.

Lay Specialists’ involvements in the Parish activities seem to increase the financial contribution in the Parish. They encourage the Parish people to participate in the ‘Stewardship Programme’ of the Catholic Church. This programme invites the people to accept God’s gifts (material things) in their life with belief, and return a part of the gifts to God and Church in gratitude. The above concept teaches the Parish people, that everything belongs to God, and they have the obligation to express their gratitude by giving a part of the gifts to God and Church. Such an idea helps the Parish people to get into a habit of giving regular financial contributions to the Parish. The Lay Specialists encourage the members of the stewardship committee to be actively involved in meetings and planning sessions. The Lay Specialists speak to the wealthy people in the Parish about the needs of the Parish and invite them to involve in the Parish activities by financial contributions.
Lay Specialists’ involvement in the Parish activities produce satisfaction among the Parish people. For example, people are happy and satisfied with the quality of Church music, Ritual preparations, Sunday Holy Mass, Baptism preparation, Marriage preparation, family and marriage enrichment, and support programmes for poor families. Those services that are object of personal experience among the Parish people produced high level of satisfaction on Lay Specialists involvement. The satisfactory levels also can indicate the collective experiences of a family or group that are shared with others.

A practical question could be asked from the perspective of the present study on the involvement of Lay people in Church activities. Are the Lay people or Lay Specialists involvement in the Church activities needed? This question can be answered taking into account the conditions, environments and influences that contribute to the survival and development of people and its organizations in the society. In the Catholic tradition, 1) Family, 2) School, and 3) Religious organization such as Parishes have been the instruments for teaching values, and forming good character in human persons. These instruments are in a state of serious problem. Families are undergoing big changes. The traditional nuclear family is slowly decreasing due to divorces and marriage problems. The family problems are increasing with major problems such as alcohol, and social crimes. Families have big problems such as communication conflict, loneliness, depression, relational problems and health problems. These family problems affect the children in the schools. Every Parish used to have a school to teach moral and social values. But these schools are in
the danger of being closed due to the decrease of the number of children. Those children who are in the Parishes are sent to the city schools for better education. Religious organizations such as Parishes are also in problem. The shortage of priests is the problem of the Universal Church. Due to this, for example in the United States, about three hundred Parishes seem to function under the leadership of someone other than a Priest. However, the shortage of priests is not a problem at present in the area of this study. In future, it can be a problem. Besides the shortage of priests, there is a problem of Catholic identity in the Catholic Parishes. A group has a strong identity when there are strong bonds of connection among members of the group. The Catholic connection among the members is rooted in distinctive beliefs and practices. The influences of modern society are challenging those Catholic distinctive beliefs and practices. As a result, the Catholic youth affected by such influences as the media and new life style, have not much knowledge about Catholic distinctive beliefs.

When open systems such as religious organizations are affected by outside forces or power such as media, they may adopt to more complex levels. Lay people or Lay Specialists involvement in Catholic Church activities is a new ‘phenomenon’ that is happening in Catholic Parishes to work in a time, when several components of Catholic Parishes are in problem due to breakdown in families, decrease of teaching Catholic moral values in schools, and slow disappearance of Catholic identity. In this situation, the Lay Specialists are motivated, specialized in a particular area, and skilled to work in cooperation with the Priests and people as a team. The Lay Specialists are giving help in human problems by fostering better
relationships in the families; identifying problems of responsibility and commitment; improving skills for better communication between husbands and wives and parents and children; improving feelings of self-worth and self-esteem; and inviting the lonely and depressed to participate in community activities. They help to restore harmony for those who have problems in their religious beliefs and practices. The Lay Specialists prepare the celebration of the rituals in such a way as to create an atmosphere of spiritual experience for the Parish people. Giving good spiritual experiences helps Parish people to develop strong attachments to the Parishes. And the Parishes in return, invite the people for financial contributions. The Parish people recognize the services of the Lay Specialists by accepting them as examples of how to involve themselves in the Parish activities, and find a connection between their life and religious experiences. Thus, the Lay Specialists in the Catholic Parishes contribute to the stability of the Parish organizations by their specialized roles.

This study leads for further research studies. For example, future study could focus on the impact of the roles of Lay Specialists on the life and role of the Priests. In the context of Lay Specialists involvement in the Catholic Parishes, the Priest’s primary duties seem to preside over the Holy Masses and the ritual celebrations. The Priest’s roles seem to change from the traditional roles to those roles of director and supervisor of the Lay Specialists. If so, the necessary question arises as to ask, whether the Priests have needed collaborative skills to work with the Lay Specialists. Questions such as this could lead to further studies on the changing
roles of the Priests in Catholic Parishes. Catholic Parishes need to have more Lay Specialists to increase the Parish people involvement and financial contributions. Information and reflections from this study can lead for further historical studies on religious organizations such as Catholic Parishes which are vital for the integration of social norms and values.
PLATES
CROSS OF ST. THOMAS CHURCH, [ARAPALLY]
THIRUVITHANCODE, KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT
POPE JOHN XXIII

III
POPE JOHN XXIII SIGNED THE LETTER TO CONVOKE VATICAN COUNCIL II IN 1962 A.D.
POPE JOHN XXIII CARRIED ON CHAIR DURING THE OPENING SESSION OF VATICAN COUNCIL II
AREA OF THE DIOCESE OF KOTTAR
GLOSSARY
### GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apostles</td>
<td>Twelve in number, also called as ‘disciples’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apostolic Succession</td>
<td>The legitimate continuation of the office and authority of the Popes from the time of disciples of Jesus Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>One of the seven sacraments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>Expression of faith.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canon Law</td>
<td>Church Laws.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catechism</td>
<td>Religious instruction given in the Church mostly on Sundays after or before Holy Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Character/ Moral</td>
<td>That which gives direction, and shape to our lives. The total virtues which make a person what he or she is.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charism</td>
<td>A gift of the Holy Spirit, example wisdom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td>The Principle that the Church is a community (college) of local churches which together make up the Universal Church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>The Bread that is made ‘Sacred’ in the Holy Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>An official Church Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenant</td>
<td>The bond between God and people. There are two Covenants in the Bible: Old Covenant and New Covenant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>Persons who are ordained after proper training and become Priest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>One of the seven rituals that give the Blessings of the Holy Spirit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diakonos/Deacons</td>
<td>Servant. An ordained assistant to the Bishop or Priest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples</td>
<td>The followers of Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine</td>
<td>An official teaching of the Catholic Church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dogma</td>
<td>A doctrine which is approved by the highest authority in the Catholic Church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecumenism</td>
<td>The Movement which seeks to achieve unity of all Christians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episkopos</td>
<td>Greek word meaning ‘overseer’. The highest level of the ritual of Holy Order. Those who receive this ritual are called ‘Bishop’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Personal knowledge of God. Christian faith is personal knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnosticism</td>
<td>A Greek religious philosophy. It denies the goodness of creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>The “Good News” preached by Jesus, and thereafter by the Apostles and the Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>It is the group of ordained Clergy in the Church: Pope, Bishops, Priests and Deacons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarnation</td>
<td>The process by which the Word of God became a human person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom of God</td>
<td>The rule of God. Everything is moving towards the rule of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laikos</td>
<td>Greek word meaning ‘ordinary’ ‘Lay’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgy</td>
<td>The ritual of the Church, especially the Eucharist and Sacraments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>A service. Any service designated by the Church in its Mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission of the Church</td>
<td>The purpose of the Church to preach the Bible in Word, in Sacraments, in Witness and in Service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ordination</td>
<td>A person after proper training in Philosophy &amp; Theology becoming Priest. It is given by Bishop or other higher religious authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Padroado</td>
<td>Portuguese Missionaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paroikia</td>
<td>Greek word meaning ‘those living near’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parish</td>
<td>Local Catholic Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purgatory</td>
<td>The state of purification before going to heaven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real presence</td>
<td>The presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (Communion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>The external, social expression of one’s belief in God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>An organized group of Christians, who live in community with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>Teaching knowledge about God, Church and Sacraments in the Catholic Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat</td>
<td>Spiritual meditations for a short or long period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacraments</td>
<td>Any visible ritual of God’s invisible presence. In the Catholic tradition, there are seven Sacraments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>State of permanent union with God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Any deliberate infidelity to the wish of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctifying</td>
<td>The abiding presence of God in the human person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>A style of life consistent with the presence of God’s spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicar Forane</td>
<td>Head Priest of a region, consisting of several Churches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicariate</td>
<td>The territory of the Vicar Forane.</td>
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</tbody>
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