CHAPTER – I

ORIGIN AND GROWTH

Kanyakumari District as elsewhere in Tamil Nadu is blessed with different religions like Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Before the advent of Christianity, most of the people of this district were Orthodox Hindus. However, the social customs, taboos and caste gradation and other socio economic ills that prevailed among the people of Kanyakumari District completely upset the depressed communities\(^1\). Moreover, the horrors of famine together with the spread of contagious diseases perturbed the people greatly. During this period of turmoil, people thought of a kind of salvation to free either from natural disasters or otherwise. It was under these circumstances, various religions were emerged including Christianity.

**Emergence of Catholicism**

The advent of Christianity in South India is a subject of endless controversy among historians which is as old as the foundation of Christianity itself. The deliberations and discussions made for two centuries still remind a riddle. However, the protagonists of the theory held that the advent of Christianity dates from St. Thomas one of the Twelve disciples of Jesus Christ who founded Christianity in South India. It is believed that St. Thomas first planted Christianity in Arabia and in the Island of Socotra, sailed eastward and landed at

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Malankara near Cranganore in the west coast of South India in 52 A.D. The apostle converted forty Jews in Anguvaram and continued his mission work. As per the Kerala Syrian Catholic Tradition, St. Thomas founded seven and a half churches in various parts of west coast\textsuperscript{2}. The small Syrian Church of St. Mary's blossomed at Thiruvithancode in Kanyakumari District is said to be the half church, which is still vibrating the ever lasting legacy of the Christian faith. St. Thomas also visited Cinnamuttam where he felt thirsty and asked for water but the water given to him from the well was saline. Therefore, he prayed for a while and the well began to emanate good drinking water. Hence, in memory of this miracle the well was named as Thomas well. According to Malabar tradition, St. Thomas from Kerala went to Mylapore on the Coramandal coast and setup his foot in a rock cave on the Cinnamalai near the Madras city\textsuperscript{3} and engaged in vigorous evangelic work and built churches. His preaching and religious work made him to confront with the local Hindu priest. Consequent to this conflict, one of the priests caused the death of the apostle by thrusting a lance in to the body. Therefore, the body of St. Thomas was taken to Mylapore where the Martal remains of the Martyr were laid to rest in eternal peace in the church he built there. According to Nagam Aiya, he was put to death in 67 A.D\textsuperscript{4}. But from the Malabar tradition, it is gleaned that this incident took place in 72 A.D. One of the earliest, written records about the advent and spread

\textsuperscript{2} They are Malankara (Kodungallure), Kottakavu (Parur), Palayoor (Chavakkat), Kokkamangalam Niranam, Quilon and Chayal; (Brown L.M., \textit{The Indian Christians of St. Thomas}, Cambridge, 1956, p.52).

\textsuperscript{3} Thiyagarajan. J., “Advent of Christianity in South India” \textit{In aspects of South Indian History}. (A felicitation volume in honour of Professor. K. Rajayyan), Nagercoil-001, pp.37-38.

of mission activities is an apocryphal work known as the acts of (Judas) Thomas which gives a detailed account of the apostolic labourers of St. Thomas. Divided in to nine parts, the first eight are called Acts : and the last one is called “Consummation of St. Thomas\(^5\). The Syrian Christians of Kerala presents the living testimony to the St. Thomas tradition in the South.

With the passage of time, the extensive trade relations that existed between Kerala and Mediterranean Countries not only laid the seed for the germination but extensive sprout of Christianity. However, the history of Christians in Malabar in the early centuries of the Christian era is not clear. But, it is said that Pantaenus the Alexandrian. Missionary who visited Malabar in 189 A.D. found the Gospel of St. Mathew in Hebrew which he took away to Alexandria. But in the middle of the 4\(^{th}\) century A.D. the number of Christian Community on the Kerala coast increased by an influx of Syrian immigrants consisting of 400 Christians from 72 families belonging to seven tribes in Baghdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem under the leadership of a merchant Thomas of Cana (Knai Thommen). Several priests and a Bishop called Mar Joseph of this group landed at Mahadevarpattanam (Kodungallur). They were not only welcomed by Cheraman Perumal and his people, but endowed them with certain rights and privileges. During the age of second Chera Empire (800-1101 A.D). The Christians became a prominent trading community. The Terisapalli copper plate issued in 849 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Stanu Ravi (844-885 A.D) confers several rights and privileges to the Christians of

Quilon\textsuperscript{6}. These Syrian Christian and the descendants of Thomas Cana are either known as “Knanaya Syrians” are southists and even as northists\textsuperscript{7}. Now a day, the southists are largely found in the Roman Catholic and Jacobite sections of the Syrian Christians groups. In the 6th century A.D the Christian Community in Kerala increased considerably. By the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Malabar Coast witnessed a large scale of immigration of Persian Christians. Subsequently the rulers of Kerala enhanced the rights and privileges of the Christians and treated them on par with high class Hindus in the socio-economic ladder.

Thus, when the Portuguese arrived in 1498, they found St. Thomas Christians from Cochin to Cape Comorin with 1400 Churches and some 2,00,000 Parishioners. At Cape Comorin on the South West, there was an old Church called Thomas Palli built with granite pillars, upon which are seen inscriptions of the royal edicts, dated 15\textsuperscript{th} Chithrai of Kollam era 669 (A.D.1490), issued to the church and to the chief of the fisher folk Christians, in favour of them, concerning grant to meet the expenses of coconut oil for lighting the oil lamps in the church at Kumari Muttom\textsuperscript{8}. During the Dutch and the British period, the church came under the influence of foreign churches. Eventually, Christians of St. Thomas got split up into there main divisions. i) The Nestorian Syrian church confined mainly to Trichur Ernakulam, ii) The Jacobite Syrian Church and iii) Marthoma Syrian Church\textsuperscript{9}.

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\item \textsuperscript{6} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, Trivandrum, 1984, p.85.
\item \textsuperscript{7} These names ‘Southists’ and ‘Northists’ probably took their origin from the fact that the former lived in the Southern part and the latter settled the northern part of the town which formed the Christian Quarters at Mahadevar Pattanam (Cranganore).
\item \textsuperscript{9} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, Trivandrum 1985, p.99.
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But, consequent to declaim of the Portuguese power and the emergence of Dutch power, the Christian church under the Pope became independent under the local Bishops. In the subsequent centuries, Christianity made rapid progress in Kerala. Accordingly, the Christian churches too became well organized institutions. From the early days, the Syriac Liturgy was prevalent among the Christians of Kerala. These who followed (St. Thomas Christian) the Syriac Liturgy were called Syrian Christian10. Moreover, the Syriac language was used in the ecclesiastical communion from 6th to 16th century A.D. in Kerala. However, during the medieval period, the Latin Christian Missionaries who visited quilon introduced, Latin in rites for the first time in Kerala. With the arrival of Portuguese (1498), a large number of Latin Christian grew up in the coastal regions of Kerala. As a result of the services of St. Francis Xavier and the Synod of Diamper (1599) Latinisation process not only grew but a sections of Christians come under the control of the papacy.

With the dawn of the 19th century, when the British power established itself in Kerala, the Church Mission Society of London began its work in co-operation with the Syrian church. But in the later period, the missionaries who broke of the relation with Syrian Bishop began to work their own. It let to the blossoming of the Anglican Church. However, in the midst of these vicissitudes of fortune, some of the C.M.S. Missionaries advocated reforms. As no impact was made as expected, the reformers formed new church known as Marthoma Syrian Church, which differed from Jacobite Syrian Church, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Malabar.

Thus, during the course of 19th century, Kerala witnessed the establishment of Nestorian Church, the Roman Catholic Church now known as orthodox Syrian Church, the Anglican Church (now a part church of South India) and the Marthoma Syrian Church\(^\text{11}\).

**L.M.S. Mission in South Travancore**

Side by side of catholic mission and its churches of various denominations, Travancore witnessed the active involvement of other Christian missions especially the protestant mission. Though Roman Catholicism won the hearts of thousands of converts and opened new vistas in the history of the Christian Church in Travancore\(^\text{12}\). The condition of the poor classes in the caste-ridden Society of Travancore was miserable utilizing this chaotic situation. Some of the British Residents, who were appointed in the court of the kings, took keen interest in the growth of missionary activities and so patronized them. Hence, the social oppression and the religious persecution prevailed\(^\text{13}\) in Travancore including the present Kanyakumari District greatly helped the spread of protestant Christianity in the southern part of Travancore.

The Protestant Mission came to South India at the instance of the Danish King Fredrick IV and its first missionaries, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henricke pluetschaw landed in Tranquebar in Tanjore District in 1706\(^\text{14}\). They established the

\(^{11}\) Sreedhara Menon, A., *op. cit.*, p.86.


Tranquebar Mission, which was engaged in evangelic work in Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Madras, Cuddalore and Tranquebar. About the middle of the 18th century, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K) helped the Tranquebar mission with money and materials and brought the work in Trichinopoly and Tanjore under its direct control. Subsequently C.F. Schwartz the Tranquebar missionary was appointed as the S.P.C.K. Missionary15. After the death of C.F. Schwartz in 1798, John Casper Kolhoff took over his missionary work. He not only converted Maharasan of Mylaudy but baptized him with a new name Vethamanikam. After a few weeks, Vethamanikam returned from Tanjore to Mylaudy and built a hut meant for prayer and the worship of God16. He visited the sick people daily in and around his native village. Inspite of the opposition from Hindus and untold sufferings inflected on him, he continued the Gospel work. Subsequently, he went to Tanjore, requesting J.C. Kolhff to sent a catechist to look after Mylaudy Mission center. Later Vethamanikam went to Tranquebar and requested W.T. Ringletaube to pay a visit to his village Mylaudy. Ringletaube with the permission of Col. Macaulay constructed a church at Mylaudy. Thus, it is believed that Vethamanikam was the pioneer and Mylaudy became, not only nucleus of the protestant church17 but was the first Mission Station of the L.M.S. in South Travancore18.

In 1810, the Government of Travancore permitted him to construct churches in Pichaikudiyirupoo, Thamaraikulam, Puthalam, Zionpuram, Kovilvilai and Eathamozhi. In course of time, various churches were constructed and consecrated in several places during the 19th century. Meanwhile several prominent missionaries like Charles Mead, C. Mault Smith, C.H. Ashtom, J.C. Thamson, John Abbs, James Russel, James Duthie, A.L. Altan, S. Cave, Robert Sinclair and a host of native missionaries keenly engaged themselves in promoting the London Mission Society. As a result, the whole region between quilon and Cape Comorin could be organized as L.M.S. Mission District name by Quilon, Attingal, Trivandrum, Parasala, Neyyoor and Nagercoil Mission Districts.

With the development of indigenous church, various administrative measures were adopted to manage the church activities. Accordingly, South Travancore Church Council was formed together with a constitution. The Protestant (L.M.S.) known as the South Indian Union Christian was re-designated as Church of South India (C.S.I.) in 1947. After a decade, Kanyakumari Diocese was blossomed in 1959 to manage the churches of the Kanyakumari District. Since then, this Protestant Mission keenly engaged in introducing various welfare measures.

When the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missions took deep root in the soil and engaged in the propagation of Christianity through various welfare schemes, a separate mission namely the Salvation Army also sprung up in different

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parts of Kanyakumari District with its headquarters at Krishnan Kovil, a suburb of Nagercoil in the Agastheeswaram Taluk. The Salvation Army concentrated mainly among the Parayars and other depressed castes\textsuperscript{20}. In the midst of the active services of the Roman Catholic Mission, the Protestant Mission and the Salvation Army Mission, a new Catholic Mission not only flowered but spread its fragrance in different parts of Kanyakumari District name of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission.

**Birth of Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission**

Among the various Christian Missions, the Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission is one among the progressive Christian Missions that rendered meritorious service to the upliftment of the people of Kanyakumari District. As said earlier, the Syrian Catholic Church of Kerala according to tradition was believed to be founded by St. Thomas in 52 A.D., established various churches preached and the Gospel in many places of Kerala. In course of time, these churches began to flourish and blossomed as an autonomous church with its own liturgy, traditions and customs under the Pope of Rome. However, in 1653 Schism that occurred in the church not only created a cleavage but a major portion of its adherents left the consecration and became Jacobites\textsuperscript{21}. Subsequently, attempts were made to pacify the groupism. On 20\textsuperscript{th} September 1930 when Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Ivanios together with a group of four people including Bishop Theophilos (a Bishop a priest, a deacon and a layman) reunited with the Catholic Church, and thus the

\textsuperscript{20} Gopala Krishnan, M., (Ed.) *op.cit.*, p.123.

Malankara church paved the way of regaining its Catholic Communion. On 11\textsuperscript{th} June 1932 by the apostolic constitution, Christo Pastorum principi, his holiness pope pious XI established the Syro Malankara Catholic hierarchy comprising of the Arch Diocese of Trivandrum and the Diocese of Thiruvalla\textsuperscript{22}. Mar Ivanios the Pioneer of the Reunion Movement extended his mission work to Kanyakumari Civil District in 1934\textsuperscript{23}. Since then the Syro Malankara Consecration spread to the whole of Kerala and in some parts of Tamil Nadu too and engaged in intensive Gospel work. In the meantime, Mar Ivanios, the Arch Bishop of Trivandrum sent a priest namely Fr. Joseph Kuzhinjalil to undertake missionary work in Kanyakumari District\textsuperscript{24}.

Before 1956, Kanyakumari District was a part of the Princely State of Travancore. In those days, under protect of the caste hierarchy and social economic taboos, especially under the veil of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability, the high caste Hindus suppressed the depressed communities to the maximum. Treated as slaves, they were neither allowed to enter into the temples for worship\textsuperscript{25} nor walk on the public roads, take water from public wells or allowed the women especially the Nadar women to wear upper garments\textsuperscript{26}. Agitated over these pernicious and most pestering issues, the economically weaker sections of the Society waiting for opportunities not only to revenge but to wipe out the differences and evil practices. At this

\textsuperscript{23} Liturgical Diary of Malankara Catholic Church, 2011, p.1.
\textsuperscript{24} Alasiar, J. (Ed.), Christianity in South India, Kuzhthurai, 2006, p.173.
\textsuperscript{25} The Trivandrum Almanae and Directory, Trivandrum, 1936, p.iv.
juncture, many Christian Missionaries who arrived in the southern part engaged themselves to preach and propagate Christian faith and strived hard to eradicate the social evils that prevailed in the Society. Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission is one such a Christian Mission which established its strong hold in Kanyakumari District during the subsequent periods strived hard to boost the status of such depressed communities.

**Arrival of Kuzhinjalil**

Joseph Kuzhinjalil the founder of the mission in Kanyakumari District was born on 24 May 1903 at Piravithanam in the Meenchal Taluk of the Pala District Kerala\(^\text{27}\). He was the son of Kuruvila with his wife Maria belonging to an aristocratic family. He had four elder sister’s and he was the fifth member. His birth was a joyeuous occasion to his parents because he was the only male member among the four elder sisters. Therefore, his parents prayed god to get a male child and made a vow that if it is materialized their son would be dedicated to missionary service. As their vow was fulfilled, the parents took the infant baby to their church on May 31. The Parish Priest father Mathew Kizhakckariyil gave him baptism and named as Joseph at St. Augustin church\(^\text{28}\). These parents thought of giving him best education available on those days. Therefore, he was sent to a famous Guru (Asan) namely Thaymuri Asan residing at Keezha Thadiur who engaged in teaching alphabet an auspicious day. Subsequently, he was sent to the education salai daily. Later, he went to lower grade vernacular Government School situated four


\(^{28}\) *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.
kilometers away from his native house and get him admitted in the second standard.

After completing 3rd standard successfully, he was admitted in the 4th standard in the church school at Piravithanam. At this school, though he exhibited talent, he did not pay intensive care for learning. But he was fully confident of fulfilling the promise made by his mother and so he continued his studies in the St. Thomas High School at Pala. As this school was situated far away from his native village, he used to attend the school very late daily. Therefore his classmates not only rebuked him but nick named as “Late Lathif”. Though he exhibited lethargic attitude towards studies, the fear of failure made him to learn the subjects on religious studies daily. Therefore, he evinced extraordinary enthusiasm in studies. His ambition was to become a Parish Priest in Changanacheri. Therefore, he joined in the theological seminary at Changanacheri managed by the Diocese, of Kottayam. He followed the rules and regulations of the Gurumadam strictly and studied the religious instruction both in Latin and English. He served in the Gurumadam as assistant leader of pupils association and secretary of literary association. After the successful completion of his religious studies, he was ordained to the priesthood on 17th December 1933 by James Kalasri, the Parish Priest of Changanacheri. With great rejoice, he performed the first church service on 23 December 1933 at the Gurumadam in the presence of large gathering including his parents and relatives.
On the third day of his first Thirupali (Church Service), he received a letter from Bishop Mar Ivanios of Trivandrum with a note “It is better to meet him with in a week or two”. However, due to the warm welcome and reception accorded to the newly ordained priest in his native place, he could not either to go over to Trivandrum or to meet the Bishop. But with in a short period he earned an ever lasting reputation and accorded the epithet as religious preacher from the people of Piravithanam and neighbouring areas. Moreover, he conducted a regular meditation in the native place. After a lapse of three months, he went to Trivandrum to meet the Bishop at his resident who gave him a warm welcome. During their talk, the Bishop informed him the economic depression of the Malankara Mission State and the shortage of priests to spread the Gospel of Christ and then he enquired his home condition. The priest without any reluctance replied that there is no need for giving any financial help to my home but to meet my expenses from here itself. On hearing this, the Bishop placed his hands on the shoulder of the priest and prayed for a while and informed him to get permission from the Bishop (Methakuchalacheril Ayar) priest to serve in Trivandrum. Meanwhile he was appointed as assistant parish priest in the Kudamalur church in June. But the repeated request from the Bishop of Trivandrum to serve atleast for one year at Trivandrum motivated him to submit his resignation. The Bishop accepted the resignation and deputed him to continue his missionary service at Trivandrum.

As he arrived at Trivandrum in the midnight, he decided to go to his friend’s house with the small boy sent along with him as his assistant to prepare food material. Since he did not like to
trouble anybody, he decided to sleep in the varantha of the house. In the next day early morning, he enquired a stranger the address of the residence of the Bishop Mar Ivanios. He informed the exact location of his residence which was situated at Pattom, a place leased for the establishment of St. Mary’s church. After knowing the location, Father Joseph meets the Bishop who was staying in a small house with single room. But to receive the guests a small shed was also erected in front of the house which was a “Palace of the Bishop”. But to his great surprise, the Bishop came over there. On seeing each other, both of them felt very happy and informed him either to accept the offer as “Pro-Chathedralin” or serve secretary of the Bishop. But he replied to the Bishop that I am invited only to preach and propagate the religion. As he was interested in missionary activities, he was sent to Marthandam where the condition of the people was most deplorable.

Though the land is known for natural beauty and fertility, the condition of the depressed communities was pathetic. He noticed that many men of Nadar Communities served as Palmyrah tappers, engaged in extracting Palmyra juice and their women folk laboured hard to bring Palmyra juice and firewood for making jaggery. Their children engaged in collecting firewood. Poverty compelled the depressed people especially the poor women to go to Pechiparai forest area by walk to collect bundles of firewood and brought to Marthandam on head load and sold it in the Market and purchased articles of the daily

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bread. Moreover, on the way to the river to take bath, he saw the people moving with oily head with their family members together with bundle of dirty clothes meant for wash. In addition he noticed the common practice of chewing betel leafs before they start dressing. Also the people were suffering from poverty and disease. In addition, their faith in booth saying, which exact and black are completely swallowed their money.

At this pathetic condition, the Latin Catholics and the Protestants under the LMS engaged in intensive religious propaganda at a rented house near the Government High School Marthandam when the Bishop and the Priest met the owner of the house and bargained the rent. But the house owner demanded twelve rupees as monthly rent which appears to be very high for religious leaders. Therefore, they decided to stay in the Travellers Banglow where the present Government Hospital located. Without taking rest, the next day itself he started his religious activities and meets one Burce, an LMS Christian of North Street Marthandam. He developed intimacy with him and requested him to get a house for his stay. Burce suggested a house but stated that many people who stayed left the house due to the disturbance of some ghosts and evil spirits. However, with trust and deep faith in god, he visited the house and fixed the rent Rs.3 per month with the house owner. Then Bishop left the place allowing the priest and the servant boy to stay in the house. But he had no friends and advisors in the newly settled area. Made of palm leaf, the thatched house is a very small shed

with one kitchen and two other rooms made of mud with a single window. While walking on the floor, the dust spread and infested with small insects. In this pathetic situation, the next day itself, an altar was made with a small table and one chair already, used for dining purpose. Such a life he never dreamt of and poverty and loneliness attempted to block his religious activities. However without minding the facilities he stayed in the hut for nearly four long periods. Many people from Kerala and neighboring districts in Tamilnadu gathered there for prayer and worship and returned with mental solace and physical comfort. Subsequently, he organized periodical prayer meetings and conventions in which many people were baptized.

On seeing the wide acceptance of the new faith, he decided to expand the work spot. By this time, he got a bicycle from the brother of Kulanthay Swamy for monthly rent of three rupees. As he engaged in the intense propagation work, it is noticed that for the first 4 years he had not midday meal too. Usually he woke up 4’O Clock early in the morning and went to the near by river to take bath. After that he engaged in prayer and meditation and conducted the holy mass within the specific time. Then, after taking the breakfast, one egg, one banana and a cup of milk, he rode on the bicycle, visited different villages, met the people and enquired their conditions and returned home by about 6 or 7 o’clock in the evening. Immediately, as usual he went to the river to take bath. Then after taking the supper he engaged in prayer and other religious observances, and went to sleep.

As days went on, many people became members of this new faith. On seeing the progress of his church activities, the orthodox Hindus enamored over him and threatened to break his leg. But without minding the hardships and consequences he continued his religious activities. Meanwhile, he absorbed most of the social customs, parties and culture of the local people including the Malayalam Tamil blend language. The local people too understood the Malayalam speech of the priest. On seeing the good manners, behaviour and religious services of the priest, most of the people obtained baptism and many others accepted the priest as their leader. Consequently, a number of people thronged around him daily not only to listen his advice but to solve personal family and other social problems. As he stood for justice, the people accepted his verdict and advice in toto.

In those days, Cholera the fatal diseases spread everywhere. Many people died. The fearing people attributed the wrath of Devil or evil sprits as the reason for the spread of the disease and approached soothsayers for solace. Yet, to their greatest dismay and distress, the intensity of the disease increased greatly and death rate rose up day by day beyond control. On seeing the death, the government sent 14 doctors to provide them medical aid. But everywhere was their discontentment. At this period of turmoil, Fr. Joseph Kuzhinjalil offered them a medicine known as taruvai thailam\textsuperscript{33} or grass oil with prayer which gave solace to many. Moreover, he visited the house of sick people frequently, which also gave them hope to come out of the disease. Though many members of Christian faith were attacked by this disease, none of them lost their lives. Therefore,

\textsuperscript{33} Sr. Emiliyana, Mon Joseph, Kuzhinjalil (Tamil) Trivandrum, 2010, p.55.
many people used to meet the priest for obtaining medicine and for getting baptism as well. In consequence, as days went on, most of the people attended the church service regularly. Thus the new faith flourished, flowered and began to bear fruits.

Another event that sparked at that time was the suffering of pregnant women who was at the pinnacle of labour pain. At this time her relatives invited local soothsayers and magicians, to provide her treatment. But contrary to their expectation, the pain increased beyond control. Therefore, she demanded baptism and so the priest was invited and brought before her. On seeing her suffering, the priest offered her baptism and with in a few minutes her pain was reduced and she delivered a male child without much difficulty. This news spread like a wild fire among the people. It helped greatly the preaching and propagation of this new faith. As a result, many people including children, mothers, sick people, pregnant women and aged people visited the place in long que, attended the mass with full faith and obtained baptism. The popularity created enormous enmity from the orthodox Hindus. But he totally dedicated his life in prayer which not only purified his life but enabled him to forget his sufferings.

At this time of progress, the Travandrum District religious center was completely under economic distress. Therefore, they were not in a position either to purchase land, or to consecrate churches, or to pay salary to church workers. At this crucial time of economic bankrupts, the authorities of the Latin Catholic Mission engaged in intensive religious propaganda which upset the mind of the young priest. However with hope and vision, he
too actively engaged in religious propaganda and set his foot at Kattachivilai and Konam in Nattalam and arranged prayer meetings. Many people were given baptism and conducted prayer meeting in their houses too. As many people accepted this faith a small hut was established by erecting six pillars which became prayer house and then it was converted into a shrine. It became the center of mission activity between and 1934 to 1964 for nearly 30 years; Joseph Kuzhinjalil baptized more than 800 people

Similar religious activities were held at Vettumoni and Pakodu where many people accepted the new faith, obtained baptism and raised huts as prayer halls and appointed Madaswamy, Chellakkan, Annammal, Cisely as evangelists or church workers. He taught them the method of conducting meetings and prayers. Consequently, new churches sprang up in many centers and places. At this time, the priest got opportunities to establish a religious base at Manchalumoodu where he built a prayer shed. However, as Malaria fever spread in this area, many of the adherents migrated to other places. Therefore, its growth came to a halt. At this time, in 1935 one Mathan Kallarackals donated sufficient amount to construct a shrine. With this, the religious activities of father Kuzhinjalil spread to other places and so religious centers were opened at Chellankonam, Ambilikonam, Kulathoor, Kulapuram, Amsi, Kaliyakavilai, Panachamoodu, Attoor, Unnamalaikadai, Soosaipuram and Pilankalai.

On the first day of establishing a religious center at Ambilikonam, more than 600 persons were baptized. However, as this mission steadily progressed, the economic deficiency prevented them to give even the minimum salary to church workers. Moreover, shortage of priests was also a problem for its progress. Therefore, at this time of distress and difficulties, there emerged an idea of seeking the help of nuns for assistance. But the authorities did not favour this idea. Hence, Antony and Kulanthay Swamy from Neyyoor who belonged to the Latin faith were posted as church workers. Kuzhinjalil taught them to show love towards the enemies, kind to the angry and to preach the Gospel under any situation. On many a circumstances, the priest had to stay with church workers in the small huts and to sleep over coconut leaf using it as mat. During rainy season due to leakage, he was forced to change the bedroom from one place to another. On many an occasion, he slept under an umbrella. In simple, he dedicated his life for the happiness, of others which reflects his greatness and simplicity though born and bread in an aristocratic family. Soon his achievement and charisma spread not only in his own parish but in other places too. The members of Piravithanam parish donated some money received as donation to Joseph Kuzhinjalil. Moreover, during the Piravithanam church festival, he sat, under a pearl umbrella with a name board “Mission” and collected money to meet the expenses of the Marthandam Mission Centers. Besides, whenever he went to the Bishop’s house at Changanachery, Monchingoor Kollarackals gave financial assistance to Joseph Kuzhinjalil. Thus, the amount so collected and obtained from diverse sources was spent for the progress of Marthandam Mission Service. At this time of economic starvation, his
classmate one Sankaran Nayar met him during his tour to Kanyakumari. He saw his friend Fr. Kuzhinjalil using hired bicycle for his travel to visit the villages. This greatly upset the mind of who recollected the family glory and background of his classmate who was born in an influential aristocratic family. As soon as his friend returned to his native place, he sent a cheque for Rs.350 with a note to “purchase a vehicle”. Utilizing the money, he purchased the vehicle which activated his spiritual work. In addition, he received Rs.35 every month from a Bishop’s house Trivandrum, which was sufficient to meet the spiritual and personal expenses if spent scarcely. However, this amount was insufficient to meet the expenses of different religious centers. But he believed that it is his god who has sent him with the greatest responsibility to make the baptized people to lead a pious religious life. Therefore, he struck to his religious service at Marthandam without going back to his native place. So with greatest dedication, the dauntless priest continued his service. He selected sixteen people with basic qualification and trained them in church work. They were paid a monthly salary of Rs.3.50 or Rs.4 with great difficulty. But at this juncture women came forward to rescue the priest. They gave their jewels for mortage. On many occasions he went to Trivandrum to seek financial assistance from Mar Evanios, the Arch Bishop of Trivandrum. But after knowing the precarious situation of the Bishops house, he returned to Marthandam without informing the purpose of his visit. On some other occasions, when he requested financial assistance, the Bishop informed him “If you come in the next week I will help you”, in such a situation, without coming back to Marthandam, he went to his native place Piravithanam for seeking financial assistance. But hesitated to
explain his financial difficulties to his parents, he returned to Marthandam by getting only the bus fare from his parents. However, on his way back, he made a halt at Changnaseri to meet the parish priest at his residence. He gave him Rs.50 for missionary service or for what ever services. Under this situation of financial difficulties, Fr. Kuzhinjalil continued his missionary activities to cherish his vision with great zeal.

**Establishment of Churches**

Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission began to spread the Gospel through out length and breadth of Kanyakumari District. With this object in view, they focused their attention not only to propagate their religion but engaged, in various social service activities. They firmly believed that the progress of their mission is largely depended an establishment and consecration of churches at different places.

**Vimalapuram**

With in a year after the formation of Malankara Mission, Trivandrum Diocese Mon Joseph Kuzhinjalil, the architect of the South Malankara Mission, began his Missionary Service. He visited many villagers either by walk or by the rented bicycle and preached the Gospel among the ignorant and illiterate people. One such a place of their settlement was Nattalam and selected a place named as Vimalapuram and started the missionary service on 29th April 1934. On the first day itself, 105 persons got baptism. In the formative period, church service was conducted in a double storied tiled building locally known as

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medai. This Medal was used for conducting classes of the schools. The spread of Cholera in 1940 and the subsequent famine motivated the people to embrace Christianity. To ameliorate the situation they supplied food, medicine and clothing. Thus, the Malankara Syrian Catholic faith began to spread. During 1950, the rift that broke out between the Nayars and the Nadars, the priest offered his help to solve the court cases. For this incident motivated most of the people of Konam and the neighbouring places to accept the new faith. On July 9, 1950 itself, 166 persons at Konam obtained baptism from Mar Ivanios, Bishop of Trivandrum. Between 1934 and 1964, for nearly 30 years, Mon Joseph Kuzhinjalil rendered yeomen service to the people of Vimalapuram. More than 800 people were given baptism. Between, 1964-1971 Fr. Mathew Vazhapileth served as parish priest. He introduced Tamil in the Church Service instead of Malayalam. His attempt to unite all the people by means of staging dramas and conducting various other religious ceremonies are laudable. Moreover, during his 7 years of service, he not only baptized 235 persons but laid the seed for constructing a church. But due to his transfer in 1973, Fr. Mathew Kadakampalli who served in the Mukkampala estate became the parish priest upto 1978. His period is known as a period of renaissance. He firmly stood for the construction of a permanent church by collecting donation and endowments and by utilizing the services of local adherence. In addition, a separate house was constructed for residence of the parish priest. In 1978 Fr. Varghese Mavelil became the parish priest who served only for a year. In 1979 Fr. Koshy Varghese took over

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37 Personal Interview with S. Muthaya Vaidhyar, the prominent local physician, aged 89, residing Keezhvilai, Nattalam, dated 05.10.2010.
the parish as priest and he served upto 1982\textsuperscript{38}. He was the first priest who got the privilege of staying in the newly constructed house meant for their residence. Known for integrity and simplicity, during his period, a small shrine and a bell tower were constructed. Between 1996 for nearly 14 years Fr. Mathew Pallathumuriyil served as the parish priest. During his period the church and its service attained the zenith of Glory. He was followed by Fr. Joseph Sundaram who became parish priest in 1996 and continued to serve the church till 1999. He amalgamated the youth of the church and laid roads to the church and started the Kolping Society and Malankara Catholic Youth Movement. From 1999-2003 Fr. Michael Mukampalath served as parish priest, who started Children’s for unity, Sunday class. He was succeeded Fr. Peter Benedict Anand continued to serve as the priest and a new attractive shrine was conge gated.

**Panachamoodu**

Another notable place of Malankara Catholic Consecration was Panachamoodu which became a center of religious activities. One of the Pioneer Churches, it was established on 3 July 1934 and dedicated it to St. Soosaiapper and baptized 98 persons on the same day itself\textsuperscript{39}. Under the control of different parish priests, the church sprouts its branches in all directions. Till 2009, thirty one parish priests were posted to look after the church affairs.

The sisters of legion of Mary dedicated their life for the promotion of this church. In this church different church

\textsuperscript{39} *Confluence* 79, p.112.
workers namely Antony, Cinna Thampi (Paulose), church secretary Y. Vargheese, were appointed from time to time to assist the parish priest. Besides, the usual Sunday service, special services were also conducted in the evening under the care of the parish priest, the church has flowered with 130 families with a total membership of more than 500 members. At Panachamoodu, John, popularly known as preacher erected a big cross with 19" height a 2" breadth and one feet thickness which became a shrine for prayer thanks to the services of Mar Ephraem⁴⁰. Seminars and discourses were conducted in the Panachamoodu St. Joseph church on 29.12.2007⁴¹.

**Ambilikonom**

Ambilikonom church was one of the oldest churches established by the dedicated services of Joseph Kuzhinjalil and Chenattu Mathai Kathanar ever since 1934. In the beginning stage, prayer meetings were arranged in the house of some prominent persons of the locality. The brothers of Franchiskan church and local church workers helped greatly to the construction of the church. In the formative stage, Malayalam language was used for the church service. Later it was replaced by Tamil. Today hundreds of peoples became the members of the church. They dedicated their time for the promotion of the consecration. Bishop Mar Ephraem visited the villages and noticed many physically handicapped people and provided treatment with the help of expert doctors⁴².

\textbf{Anakkaraì}

Fr. Mathew Kadakam Palli, with the support of sister Benedict and Sr. Reetha, Chellamuthu, formed a group and visited the houses of Ambilikonam and constructed the thatched hut and conducted the prayers on 3 October 1976. Two other sisters namely Sr. Virgin, Sr. Mariyatta helped him to visit the houses of the locality. Accordingly on October 5 forty eight people were given baptism for the first time and services were arranged all Sundays. The church has the credit of the services of different parish priest namely Mathew Kadakampalli, Mathew Allumuttel, Dhilip Thayanath, S. Varchese, Robinson Peter OIC, Justin, Bernardu, Arul Dhas. Now the church has different organizations like, Sunday class, Legion of Mary, Kolping Society, Marthandam Integrated Development Society, Children’s for unity, Malankara Catholic Youth Movement, Malankara Catholic Association, Women’s fellowship. In the year 2008 May, a Shrine was also consecrated and thus church began to flourish. On 04.05.2008 Bishop Mathaku Yoahanon Mar Chrysostom consecrated a shrine\textsuperscript{43}.

\textbf{Themanoor : Attoor}

On 5\textsuperscript{th} May 1957, Mon Joseph Kuzhinjalil established a Church Themanoor near Attoor dedicated for St. Thomas, Mar Gregarious the honorable bishop of Trivandrum congregated the church in 1958. Since then, a number of priests served in this church\textsuperscript{44}. The church has a number of organization like, Sunday

\textsuperscript{43} MDB, Vol.V, No.6, June 2008, p.7.
class, children’s for unity, Malankara Catholic Youth Movement, Women’s fellowship, Self Help Groups, Kolping Society, Vincent De Paul Society Legion of Mary, At present more than 300 families became its adherents. With the growth of the church two members of this parish became priest and 3 women became sisters of this domination. In the Attoor parish, a new shrine was constructed and Bishop Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom consecrated it on 05.05.2004.

**Unnamalaikadai**

Some of the followers of Malankara Syrian Catholic faith namely K. Ponnu Swamy and his wife G. Rosammal met the parish priest of Marthandam Christu Rajapuram church Fr. Mon Joseph Kuzhinjalil and requested him the aspiration of the people of Unnamalaikadai the need for a church at their place. Accepting their suggestion, Fr. Joseph Kuzhinjalil purchased 50 cents of lands, and erected a small thatched shed and baptized 50 persons on 10th October 1960 by Bishop Mar Gregarious. Since then different priests were appointed to conduct the church services. Nowadays the church has 148 families with 537 persons as its members. Under the auspicious of MCYM a one day symposium was held the campus of the church on 14.06.2008 and issued MCYM identity cards.

**Santhomkill – Ganapathikal**

The popularity of Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission spread far and wide. Knowing the value and importance of this mission, the prominent church workers Wilson, Nelson and

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Thankappan of Ganapathikal who formed a Group met Fr. Philip Chempakacheri of Cherupallur church and pleaded the need for establishing, a church at their native village. Therefore, with this idea, Fr. Philip with sisters of Marthandam Assisi Center visited houses and met the people of Ganapathikal Village and made preparation for the establishment of a church at Ganapathikal. On 19th April 1981 Fr. Philip Chempakacheri inaugurated a church and baptized 59 persons on that day itself. At present the church enrolled 50 families. The church has the fortune of obtaining the services of some prominent priest like Philip Chempakacheri, John. G. Vadakaypuram, John Thundiyath (Moni), Daniel Mannikuzham (Shaji) Johnson Parakal, G. Vargheese, Devadhas, Joseph Pathrose, Jose Bright, Josepin Raj, Sibi47.

Charur

The parish priest of Attoor church established this sacred heart church at Charur in 1980. The church has enrolled 55 families. Legion of Mary, Vincent De. Paul Society, Kolping Society, Youth Movement, Malankara Catholic Association, Women’s fellowship, Children’s for unity are effectively functioning under this church. Church has a credit of receiving the services of priest like Josephgrum, Filath Thomas, Poovannal John Kampara, Samuel Idamannil, Francil Poomathivilai, Philip Dayanand, Johns Nedu Vilai, Peter Anand Michael Mulampalath.

Chellankonam

Chellankonam is a little village situated in the bus route between Karungal to Thuckalay. A remote village, its ignorant people, felt a need for missionary service. Therefore, Joseph Kuzhinjalil established a Malankara Catholic Church on September 30, 1936. Since its consecration, John Arancheril served as parish priest for nearly 19 years. He devoted his time not only for the progress of the church but for the growth of the village as well. Moreover, it was he who established daughters of Mary Organization and a school. After him, different priests namely Xavier Gnanapalli, Joseph Gnayalur, Thomas Nilayil, John Thalayil, Zakarias looked after the church affairs. With the appointment of Fr. Joseph Bright as Parish Priest, all Bhakthi Organizations like Sunday Class prospered greatly. Since 1946, the Legion of Mary concentrated much for the growth of the church. Now this church is one of the leading churches catering to the needs of the local people. The Malankara Catholic Association general body meeting was held on 20.06.2004 and selected its office bearers, President, Vice President, Secretary, Additional Secretary and Treasurer⁴⁸.

Soosaipuram

Soosaipuram St. Susaiappar church blossomed under the care of Joseph Kuzhinjalil as a small thatched hut in 1963. Though preliminary measures were initiated to give baptism, the sudden death of 5 brothers of the local area due to disease, postponed the function. Therefore, on July 12, 1964 Fr. Mon Joseph Kuzhinjalil gave baptism to 32 persons and declared

opened the church officially. In course of time, many people became members of the consecration. At present, the church has 120 families to its credit. Religious instruments such as Sunday Class, Women’s fellowship, children’s for unity, Malankara Catholic Youth Movement, Malankara Catholic Association, Kolping Society, MIDS and Vincent-De Paul Society are functioning with great zeal. The number of parish priest namely Mathew Kadakam Pallil, Thomas Neriyatel, Kosivarcheese, Varchese Mavelil Kor Apishkopha, Mathew Palathu Muriel managed the church. Since 2007 Fr. Antony managed the church in a progressive way. A poor member namely Jose who was an adopted family of this church was provided with a house worth for Rs.50000.

**Cheruppallur**

When Fr. Philip Chempakacherri was the parish priest of Pilankalai, one Kanagaraj from Vellaparavilai met the priest and gave suggestion to establish a church at Cherupallur. Therefore, both of them met some of the prominent elderly people and with their support conversation meetings were organized. On 15th April 1979, on the eve of castor ceremony Fr. Philip conducted the first service at Cherrupallur in a thatched shed created for this purpose. Subsequently, on 3 June 1979, 36 persons belonging to 17 families place cheri declared open the sacred heart church with the assistance of the sisters of Marthandam Assisi center. Under their care, the church has 100 families as ordant believers. Several priests served for the promotion of the church of them, the prominent priests were Fr. Philip

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Chennam Vilai

At Chenamvilai Annai Velankani Church is blossomed in the year 2006. Several parish priests served not only for the promotion of the church, but for the socio cultural and economic development of the people of the locality. Moreover the church has different organizations such as Bhakthi Movement and Sunday Class assisted by a group of sisters at present Fr. Maria John his parish priest 50.

George Nager

The Malankara Catholic Church dedicated to St. Georgia was started on 1 September 2001 and performed the first service by Fr. Joseph Pilankalai. Ayar Methayu Yoohanon Mar chrysoostom consecrated the new church on 2 January 200551 and Fr. Geevarghese changet served as its first parish priest. Now the church has 75 families. Like other churches this church has different organization like Sunday Class, children’s for unity, MCYM, MCA, Women’s fellowship, Vincent De Paul Society, Kolping Society, MIDS and Legion of Mary.

Kannacodu

Kannacodu St. Infant Jesus Church was blossomed due to the efforts of the first Bishop of Marhandam Lawerence Mar Ephraem together with dedicated service of the daughters of Mary. The church has members from 36 families. Organization such as children’s for unity, MCYM, MCA, Kolping Society, MIDS, Self Help Groups, Vincent-De Paul Society and Legion of Mary\textsuperscript{52} are taking adequate steps for its ecclesiastical growth.

Kanchicodu

When the people of Kanchicodu felt the need for a church (or prayer house) Late Bishop Benedict Mar Gregorious selected Kanchicodu as a suitable place for the construction of church. Therefore, a thatched shed was erected which served as the nucleous of the church, named after St. Alosious, it stood for the propagation of religion among the masses. Fr. James parvilai became its first parish priest. On the first day of its consecration, eleven persons obtained baptism and became its members. Three families belonged to CSI also became its members. Several priest namely Fr. James Parvilai, Joseph Kadakampalli, John G. Vadakaypuram, John Thudiyath, Daniel, Manikulam (Shaji), Johnson Paraikai, Joseph Pathrose, Hormise Puthan Vetel, Robinson, Bernardu, Baburaj, Joseph Bright, Johnson Karakuniel, Janan Jerold looked after the church service. Fr. John Thundiyath, parish priest laid foundation stone and started the construction works of the present church. During the period of Fr. Dannieal Manikulam, the parish priest declared open the new church in 1992. Subsequently when Fr. Johnson

\textsuperscript{52} Confluence 79, p.120.
Paraikal became the parish priest, the Gopuram of the church was completed. Several sisters dedicated their life for the upliftment of the church. The church started in 1979 with 10 families attained much progress with 88 families with a branch church at Keezhmangodu. The church enjoyed the services like Vincent De Paul Society, Legion of Mary, Sunday Class, Women’s fellowship, Youth Movement and Children’s for unity. Sunday class teachers received training from this church.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{Kattuvilai}

A Malankara Syrian Catholic Church was started on 19 August 1979 by Fr. Georgeumman with 11 families of Chellankonam Church. Now the church has enrolled 58 families. He was succeeded by a group of parish priests namely Chakariyous Kuzhiparampil, Vincent K.M. Joseph Sundaram, Michel Mugampalath, Peter Anand, Christopher O.I.C. Since 2006 this church is managed by Fr. Jose Bright who was assisted by a group of sisters. Legion of Mary, Vincent De Paul Society MCYM, MCA, Women’s fellowship, Kolping Society, Children’s for unity, MWDS, Sunday Class all conducted.

\textbf{Christu Nagar – Sivalogam}

The establishment of a church at Sivalogam named as Christu Nagar was suggested by one Kanagaraj of Cherupallur to the parish priest Fr. Philip Chempagacherri of Pillankalai Church. After obtaining suggestion from the sisters of Assisi center Marthandam the sisters went to Sivalogam, stayed in the house of one Cherrian and visited various houses and prepared

the people for baptism followed by the consecration of the church. Various priests namely John G. Vadakaepuram, John Thundiyath (Monni), Dannel Mornikulam (Shaji) Johnson (Parakal), Robinson, Hormis, Jose Bright, Johnson, Sibi served the parish. They were assisted by sisters like Emiliyana, Amarid, Vijaya, Maylzihi Xavier, Mary George, Benedict Prasanth, Stanchi, Nayvaythya, Susan Philip, Maria Domanic, Vincent De-Paul Society, Chhrilren’s for Unity, MCYM54.

**Keezhmangodu**

Keezhmangodu gifted with St. Georgier church since 2000. This church attained the present shape in 2001 thanks to the services of the parish priest Fr. Hormis. In 2007 Fr. Johnson Karikunthil became the parish priest and assisted by Fr. Janan Gerald as assistant priest. They not only stood for the promotion of religion but for the economic progress of the people55.

**Kuzhthurai**

Ever since 1971 two parish priests namely Fr. Thomas Vilastel Neriyachil were staying in the Malankara Catholic Mission house at Kuzhthurai. In this parish home, one room was utilized as altar for conducting prayers and church services. As a place of worship, in 20 August 1971 four protestant families became members of the new consecration. Moreover, on 30 January 1972, 14 Hindu families not only embraced this new faith but obtained baptism too. Followed by them other parish priests like Fr. Mathew Kadagampalliel, Fr. Thomas Poovanal,

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55 *Confluence 79*, p.122.
Fr. Joseph Kurumpilayath, Fr. Mariya Arputham, Fr. Peter Anand, Fr. Philip Chempagacherri, Fr. John and Fr. Deva Dhas looked after the religious activities. Ever since 2004, Fr. Babu Raj looked after the church which has 259 members. MIDS, Legion of Mary, Vincent De Paul Society, Youth Movement, Children’s for Unity, Sunday Class are formed to popularize the faith and look after welfare activities.

**Thachoorkonam : Arumanai**

In order to fulfill the ambition of the adherence of Thachoorkonam in Arumanai Fr. Joseph Thadathel laid the seed for St. Mary’s church in 1978. As a result of dedicated services of the priests, the sisters, and its members, the church began to grow. In course of time, it became one of the leading churches in Marthandam Diocese. The church has the credit of services from parish priests namely Fr. Thomas Poovanall, Fr. Joseph Kurumpileth, Fr. John, Fr. Samuel Thengu Vilai, Fr. Philip Thayanath, Fr. Selestin, Fr. Johns Neduvilai, Fr. Joseph Pathrose, Fr. Devadhas and Fr. Josephin. Vincent De Paul Society, Kolping Society, Legion of Mary, MCYM, Children’s of Unity, Sunday Class is flowered in this church. One day religious discourses were organized on 29 December 2007 and distributed prices. In this church the Vincent De-Paul Society was established on 25.01.2004 under the leadership of Sr. Selvi Jebha Singh.\(^{56}\)

**Pilakkalai**

In 1971 Mother superior Mary purchased 12 acres of land at Pilakkalai of which 50 cent of lands was given for the

\(^{56}\) *Ibid.*, p.120.
establishment of a church. With this motive a thatched hut was erected for the purpose of conducting the holy prayer. Fr. Mathew Pillayeth, with the support of sisters of Mary Makkal visited the houses of the followers and prepared them for receiving baptism. Accordingly on 21 March, 1971 Fr. Mon Joseph Kuzhinjalil baptised eleven people. As a result of their dedicated service, a number of people became its adherents. With the growth of membership, under the effort of Fr. Dominic a new church was constructed in 1975 and Bishop Benedict Mar Gregorius consecrated the church, on 8th December 1975. In 1976, with the advice of Fr. Mathew Kadakampalli and under the supervision of sister Charls, a house was constructed in 1976. In the same year a small shrine was also constructed at Swamyvilai in the land donated by one contractor, Joseph and with the entire financial assistance given by the daughter of the brother of Fr. Dominic. In May 19, 1996 the Silver Jubilee celebration was conducted and the church at Pilankalai began to flourish. Holy Childhood camp was organized in this church from February 1-13, 1999 in which children from 7 parishes attended. An ordent member of Pilankala parish who served as President of Kananoor Panchayat was the recipient of Anna award for the best Panchayat President was congratulated57.

**Poonthopu**

Fr. Joseph Pathrose took the initiative to establish the St. Georgiya Church at Poonthopu with 15 families as its members, Methaku Ayar Yoahanon Mar Chrysostom consecrated the church on 7th April 2005. Since then, this church began to grow.

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with the support of various sisters. A number of small organizations like Kolping Society, Legion of Mary, Children’s for Unity, MCYM, MCA, Sunday Class also blossomed in this parish.

**Peruvazhikadavu**

Peruvazhikadavu village is endowed with St. Francis Assisiyar church Bishop Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom consecrated the church on 20, December 2007 for the benefit of more than 40 families. More families began to enroll themselves as members due its popularity.

**Mathoor**

On the request of one Charles of Mathoor, Fr. Mathew Kadakampalliel began to conduct prayer meetings in a private house on every Sunday since 1978. Many sisters of the D.M. Convent, Marthandam visited various houses at Mathoor and engaged in prayer meetings. At this time a plot of land at Mathoor was purchased and erected a thatched hut for the purpose of worship and for the conduct of church services. On 14th April 1979 more than 80 people of this area became members and were given baptism. Subsequently 1986 a concrete building was constructed for the purpose of worship of St. Soosaiappar. After Fr. Kadagam Palliel this church was brought under the control of fathers like Fr. Mathew Allumutel, Fr. Philip Thayanath, Fr. Robinson, Fr. S. Varchese, Selastin, Fr. K.V. John, Fr. Johnson Karikunthil.\(^{58}\)

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Mathoorkonam

St. Peter church at Mathoorkonam was established in 1984, due to the effort of Fr. Joseph Kurumpilath. At present this church has 52 families and conducted its Silver Jubilee celebration and remained as a symbol of growth. In the St. Mathoor Konam parish Vincent De-Paul Society was established on 14.12.2003\textsuperscript{59}.

Mukkampala

In 1962 a church meant for St. Soosaiappar was established by the attempt of Fr. Michael. Different parish priests, namely Fr. Varchese, Fr. Thomas, Fr. Saviyo, Fr. Mathew Kadakampalliel, Fr. Thomas Thakayadath, Fr. Paysiel Francis Salaus, Fr. Thomas Kuruwila, Fr. Varchese Nadu Thala, Fr. John Kirupanath, Fr. Peter Kadamangodu served in this church.

Muthalar

The Sacred heart church at Muthalar was started in 1982 by Fr. Mathew Kadakampalli. From its inception, the sisters from D.M. Convent, Anakkarai, served in the church. At present under the able care of Fr. G. Michael, the church has different organization like Sunday Class, Legion of Mary, Kolping Society, MCYM\textsuperscript{60}.

Vellachippara

Vellachippara is a place of natural beauty. At this place a church was constructed, and on 24 May 2005 the church was

\textsuperscript{60} MDB, Vol.V, No.6, June 2008, p.9.
consecrated for the sake of Malayalam speaking people. Fr. Yesu Dhas, Fr. Varceese, Fr. Franclin Jose, Fr. Robinson and Fr. Josepin Raj were some of the prominent parish priests of the church. This church gifted with Sunday school, Vincent De Paul Society and Children’s for Unity.

Besides the above prominent churches, various other churches were consecrated at Allvarkoil in 1976; Cherrotukonam in 2006; Chitharal in 1977; Kulasekaram in 1979; Kumarakovil in 1978; Kuzhithurai in 1958; Konam in 2009; Pechiparai in 1973; Valodu in 1978; Vettikuzhi in 1980; Pechiparai Zeropayin in 200761.

Adaikakuzhi

Adaikakuzhi is known for green vegetation and a place of worship. But in the absent of the church, people of this village attended the church service at Fathima Nager located 4 KM away from Adaikakuzhi. Therefore, knowing the sentiments of pious Christian of this place, Fr. John Kuttiyel with the permission of Fr. Mar Gregorious established a small church in 1973. Due to the popularity of the church, members of 110 families became its adherents. From the inception to the present day, different parish priests namely Fr. Josuva Thalththaythel, Fr. John Thalayel, Fr. Jackap Vilaiel, Fr. David illirikar, Fr. Joseph Pillankkalai, Fr. Prem Kumar, Fr. Chalstin George Thavarathil, Fr. Justin, Fr. Mathew, Fr. Jose, Fr. Jerold, Fr. Maria John, Fr. Yesu Dhas, Fr. Moon, Fr. Maria Thason served for the growth of the church. A one day seminar (symposium) was organized on 5 April 2008 in which nearly hundred delicates participated62.

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**Athichavilagam**

A Malankara church was established in 1961 with the members who obtained baptism from Bishop Benedict Margregorious. In 1989 Velankanni Shrine is also installed in the church premise in commemoration of the Silver Jubilee Celebration. Later in 2009 Fr. Jose revenged Shrine and Methaku Ayar Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom consecrated it on 1st September 2009. In course of time, a house was constructed for the residence of parish priest. In this church various priests namely Fr. Thaniyel Iyyaneeth, Fr. Abraham Valuparampill, Fr. George Umman, Fr. Chakariyas Kuzhiparampil, Fr. Mathew Pallathumuriel, Fr. Premkumar, Fr. G. Varchese, K.M. Vincent, Fr. Johnson Kaimalil, Fr. Abraham Vavo, Fr. Mayparathu, Fr. Michel Mugampalath, Fr. S. Varchese and Fr. Mariya John served. Since 2006 Fr. Jose is parish priest assisted by a group of nuns of Marymakkal Sabha.\(^{63}\)

**Kaduvakuzhi**

St. Alphonsa church is the first church started under Marthandam Diocese to fulfill religious aspirations of the Tamil speaking people of Chervarakonam area. The church was consecrated on 8th March 2009. Fr. Satheesh serving as the parish priest at present.

**Kidarakuzhi**

When Fr. Lawerence Mar Ephraem was parish priest of the Kirathoor church, he felt the need for establishing a church at

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Kidarakuzhi to fulfill the religious sentiment of its people. To satisfy their aspiration Fr. George Purathoot who became the parish priest, took up the responsibility of constructing a church. On 10 November 1991 St. Arulappar church was consecrated by Methagu Ayar Benedict Mar Gregorious and since then on every Sunday the regular church service was not only conducted but Sunday class were also continued. The church has the credit of the organizations of Legion of Mary, Vincent De Paul Society, MCYM, MIDS, Self Help Groups, Children’s for Unity and Women’s fellowship. Parish priests Fr. S. Varchese, Hormis Puthanvettill, Joseph Sundaram and Maria Arputham looked after the church. Since 1991, 2004 a number of sisters greatly assisted for the promotion of the church\textsuperscript{64}.

**Koickathoppu**

St. Thomas church was started in 1963 by the efforts of Fr. Thomas Manikarkatanam and Fr. Jacob Valliya Vilaiel. Since its inspection Danniel, Fr. Josuva Thalaththaytheil, Fr. Thomas Pannikar P.G., Fr. Joseph Puthankalam, Fr. Thomas Alliyath, Fr. John C. Puthanveedu, Philip Thayananth, Francis Poomathivilai, G. Varchese, Geevarchese, K.M. Vincent Devadhas; 2008 Fr. Devadhas served as parish priest under whom the church developed greatly. Moreover the church received assistants from the organization sisters of charity\textsuperscript{65}.

**Kirathoor**

St. Georgia church at Kirathoor was established on 12, May 1935. Due to the service of Fr. Chenattu Mathew Kathanar

on the first day of the inaugural function, 166 persons obtained baptism. Fr. Jerbin served as its first parish priest. In course of time, its membership rose to 750 families. In 1947 Mary Makkal Kaniyar Movement was organized. Subsequently, the church has a number of organizations like Legion of Mary, Children’s for Unity, Youth Movement, Women’s Fellowship, Kolping Society and Holy Childhood. As one of the biggest churches with large number of members, the church has been ably maintained by eminent parish priests named Chenatu Mathyaie, Cherapiyon, Ephraem, Francis Kodatanadi, Hormis James, Arkelayen, Thomas Panikkar, Gee Varchese, Lawerence Thotam, (Ayar Lawerence Mar Ebhraem)\textsuperscript{66}, George Purathud, S. Varchese and Joseph Sundaram. Ever since 2006, Fr. Franklin Jose efficiently managing the church. In this church the Annual Celebration was started and celebrated from 18 April 2008 to 27 April 2008 with much eclate. Thousands of people from different churches participated the procession conducted the last day\textsuperscript{67}.

\textbf{Sooriacode}

St. Therasal church at Sooriacodu was established in 1960. In the beginning of its inception as a small church, it served as branch church of the Ambilikonam parish. From 1996 when Fr. Chakariyas Kuzhiparampil became the parish priest, with the aid and donation of the local people, teachers and church members and foreigners the church was built in the present shape and conducted the services. Subsequently a group of eminent priest served in the church. From 1996 Fr. Premkumar continued to serve the parish and directed it

towards the path of progress. However with the arrival of Fr. Satheesh Kumar, a new church was also constructed and performed worship in the church. Now the church has the tremendous growth with 110 families with 450 members. Till date nearly 450 members were given baptism. Fr. Lawerence purchased a hospital at Sooriyacodu and attached with the church administration for the sake of the diocese\textsuperscript{68}.

\textbf{Nadaikavu}

Nadaikavu, situated on the southern most edge of Kanyakumari District is gifted with St. Antony’s church, functioned in one of the halls of St. Antonys School. In 1934 December 16, Fr. Mathayiekalada baptised 46 peoples and started Christhu Raja Church and attained the steady growth due to the services of different parish priests. A new church was consecrated at the present place on 26 January 2004. The church has the total membership of more than 550 families. Several priests mainly Fr. Mathayiekalada, Fr. Joseph, Fr. John, Fr. Yoohanon, Fr. Chrobhiyon, Fr. Francis, Fr. Kodankuzhi, Fr. Edward Ebhraem, Fr. Joshva, Fr. Josepinasise, Fr. Ananiyash, Fr. Rymond L.M., Fr. Gee Varchese Manigarottu, Fr. Danniell Thottam, Fr. Josuva Thalathaythiel Chakkaries Kuzhiparampil, Fr. P.G. Thomas Paniker, Fr. Danniel Mangatath, Fr. Joseph Puthankulam Verupayel, Fr. Philip Thayananth, Fr. Francis, Fr. G. Varchese, Fr. Vincent served lifelessly for the progress of the church and its community. In this church a three day camp of children’s for unity was conducted during 2001\textsuperscript{69}.

\textsuperscript{68} Maria Arpatham, V., \textit{op.cit.}, p.62.
Fathima Nagar

On September 1935 Chenatu Mathayiekathanar established a church at Fathima Nagar, Soosaipuram. He was succeeded by a group of parish priests namely Fr. Abram, Fr. Joshva, Fr. Mark, Fr. Xavier, Fr. Joseph Mylaudy, Fr. Thomas Valliyavilai, Fr. Mathew Ponmayli, Fr. Thanniel Thottam, Fr. Joshva Thalathathel, Fr. John Kuttiel, Fr. John Thalayiel, Fr. Joseph Pilankalai, Fr. Prem Kumar Orumavilai, Fr. Selestin, Fr. George Thavarathil, Fr. George from 2006, Fr. Bernad continued to serve effectively as parish priest. Under them the church attained much progress. Daughters of Mary functioned effectively in this church and three more new presidiums were also formed in the Soosaiappar Church.\(^70\)

Palavilai

Palavilai is endowed with the famous St. Vincent De Paul Society church started in 1945. Starting from Fr. Raymond, the church is looked after by a host of priests like Fr. Thomas Panikar, Fr. Mathew Kayyalakal, Fr. Lawerence Thottam, Fr. Gee Varchese Manigacottu, Fr. Jacob Kilakaydathu, Fr. Joseph Puthankalam, Fr. Thomas Azhiyath, Fr. John Thalayiel, Fr. Jacob Kilakaydathu, Fr. Johncy Puthan Veedu, Fr. Augustin Verupaiyel, Fr. Philip Thyanth, Fr. Maria Francis, Fr. Varchese, Fr. Joseph Sundaram and Fr. Thomas Kavuvilai: At present Fr. Maria Arputham is serving as parish priest. With the progressive support of various organizations like Legion of Mary, Vincent De Paul Society, Kolping Society, MCA, MCYM, Sunday Class, Women’s Fellowship the activity rose in full swing. The

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\(^{70}\) Maria Arputham, *op. cit.*, p.32.
23rd Annual Festival of Palavilai Church was conducted on 6 January 2008 at St. Xavier Church\textsuperscript{71}.

**Pushpagiri**

Pushpagiri St. Thayrasal Malankara Church was formed for the people of two villagers namely Anaparai, Kottankalluvilai which was consecrated by Bishop Margregorious on 29 June 1994. The church received the services of fathers like Fr. Danniel Thottam, Fr. Philipose Thomas, Fr. Sakarias Kuzhiparampil, Fr. Jacob Kaliyanthanam, Fr. Joshva Tazhattel, Fr. John Kuttiel, Fr. Joseph Pillangkalai, Fr. Premkumar Orumavilai, Fr. Selestin, Fr. Geroge Thavarathiel and Fr. Justin. Nowadays, Fr. Bernad Naduthayri Vilai with support of Sr. Albiya the church attained significance. A small shrine was also constructed with in the church premises. At present the church has 130 family members. The members of Legion of Mary took a Sunday Procession on 29.08.2004 in the surrounding of the church\textsuperscript{72}.

**Mankadu**

Mankadu, situated in the Southern most part of South Travancore is gifted with St. Georgiar church. On 3\textsuperscript{rd} September 1962 Arch Bishop Benedict Margregorious Baptised 200 persons and the church is ably managed by successive parish priests namely Fr. Danniel Iyyaneth, Fr. Idikuzha Pandiyath, Fr. Gregorious Kuzhiparampil, Fr. Abiraham Valuparampil, Fr. George Umman, Fr. Mathew Palathu Muriyil, Fr. Mathew Madapalli, Fr. Jacob Vilai, Fr. G. Varchese, Fr. K.M. Vincent,

Fr. Maria John and Fr. Yesu Dhas. Recently the church is brought under the control of Fr. Albin with the support of St. Reeta Francis. The church committee managed the Children’s for Unity, Youth Movement, MCA, Kolping Society, Vincent De Paul Society and Legion of Mary\textsuperscript{73}.

**Mancha Thoppu**

Ever since 1935 various people from Mancha Thoppu attended the church service in Kirathoor church. However, in 1959 Mancha Thoppu was separated from Kirathoor and Fr. Raymond became its parish priest. But in 1968 Fr. Thomas Panikar became parish priest who was succeeded by a group of parish priests namely Fr. Idikkulapandiyath, Fr. Cherian Panikar, Fr. Mathew Kayyalakal, Fr. Kozh, Varchese, Fr. Chakaries, Nediyakalayil, Fr. Lawerence Thootam, Fr. George Purathoot, Fr. S. Varchese, Fr. Joseph Pillankala, Fr. K.V. John, Fr. Sebastian Kannaththanam, Fr. Thomas Kavvilai, Fr. Maria Arputham and Fr. Mathew. Later from 26 January 2006 Fr. Jose served as parish priest. In the same year parish home was also opened in the church for the residence of the priest. On September 2004 Annual Celebration of the Manchathoppu parish began and all the people attended the prayer service\textsuperscript{74}.

**Mecodu**

Mecodu is gifted with St. Xavier church. Till 2006 this church remained very small. But on 5 August 2007 this church was raised to the status of parish church. With in the campus a

\textsuperscript{73} MDB, Vol.V, No.5, May 2008, p.16.

\textsuperscript{74} MDB, Vol.I, No.5, September 2004, p.16.
house was constructed for the residence of parish priest. On those day one poor women namely Rathnam was given Rs.6000 to construct the roof of the house, under the leadership of Fr. Premkumar by Bishop, Ayar Yoohanon Marchrysostom75.

Mariagiri

At Mariagiri a church was any occasion established by the brothers Franciskon order in 1940. Four years after its inception, Fr. Hormies gave baptism to the adherents of this area in 1944. Thanks to the dedicated service of Daughters of Mary Sabha and its Sisters the church began to flourish. Nowadays, the church became so popular with the membership from 405 families. Like other big churches, this church too has Children’s for Unity, MCA and MCYM. An array of parish priests namely Fr. Hormees, Fr. Akkilas, Fr. Ambrose, Fr. Joshva, Fr. Thomas, Fr. Damacious, Fr. Danniel Iyanath, Fr. Premkumar, Fr. Vincent, Fr. Michel Mukkampalath and Fr. Varchese, whose dedicated service made the church to the present status. Parish priest MCYM meeting of the Kaliyakavilai Diocese, Bible class and other religious classes were held in Mariagiri at 2.00 p.m. on every Sunday76. Since 2007 the church is now under the control of Fr. Albin. Besides these churches, Malankara Catholic Missionaries established churches at Karumanur in 1959, Pallukuzhi in 2006, Pankuzham in 1948, Meenachel in 1986, Mecode in 1946 at Thittakuzhi in 2000.

Similarly, the Nagercoil Diocese areas also gifted with a number of churches. Among them Chettikulam church was
