

## **PASTORAL LETTER 91**

### **Lead Kindly Light**

### **Family Gathering and Family Tree**

### **Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt**

#### *Eparchy of Palai*

Written to the priests, religious men and women, and all the faithful of the diocese. May grace and peace be with you from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved in Christ,

The origin of families is from God. Throughout salvation history, what we encounter are the histories and events of families. God Himself created human beings as male and female in His image and likeness as the crown of all creation (Gen 1:27, 2:7), and established the first family by blessing and appointing them as father and mother. The families of Adam, Cain, Abel, Seth, Noah, and up to Abraham portray the importance of families from prehistoric times. The families of the patriarchs starting from Abraham highlight the special qualities of noble fathers and mothers. In the New Testament, the family of Zechariah and the Holy Family stand as role models. The teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and especially the epistles of Saints Peter and Paul interpret how families ought to be (Eph 5:1, 1 Pet 3:1-12). The fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born into a family and grew up subject to His parents is an excellent demonstration that God loves the family and how precious the family is.

In the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, issued by the Holy Father Pope Leo regarding AI (Artificial Intelligence)—the most modern face of technology—it is stated: "The family is a supreme social good and the fundamental and irreplaceable cell of all social organizations" (*Magnifica Humanitas* 165). In this era where digital formulas are being designed, the Holy Father emphasizes the dignity of the individual, the dignity of work, the common good, common prosperity, the reduction of inequalities, and the protection of the environment. Technology should not become a weapon for the centralization of power or the marginalization of people. The Pope teaches that we must not build a new Tower of Babel of pride on Earth without God, but rather foster a culture of love. The Pope is not against the AI system; rather, he teaches that its internal poison must be removed. The Holy Father intends this great social teaching of *Magnifica Humanitas* as a means for the Church's examination of conscience. Throughout this text is the principle that no matter how much we grow, we must not forget God. Artificial intelligence cannot understand the spirituality and sense of justice of the human heart. Technology is meant to serve humanity; human beings must not become slaves to technological systems. The Pope also reminds us to be vigilant about the dangers that can arise from children using mobile phones unsupervised by parents in this modern age.

In this system where the father is the head of the home and the mother is the mistress of the home, children are born as the fruit of their love, and family relationships are rendered stable through divine love and fidelity. It is the duty of parents to protect the children born of their love, to provide them with good education and practical wisdom, to lead them by the hand in the path of truth, and to make them firm in true faith. In a true Christian family where Jesus

Christ reigns as Lord, family members live together in unity, loving, protecting, and cooperating with one another. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara said 150 years ago that God desires the joy of the family and the joy of the Church to reach its fullness. A good Christian family on earth is like the kingdom of heaven. Whatever one may achieve in life, if one cannot share that joy with one's own family, the luster of those successes and achievements will surely diminish.

Many trends that dull this luster are creeping into our families. Thoughts against having families, couples' decisions to live without children, excessive influence of individualism, distance in relationships between parents and children, selfish love, overemphasis on the digital world, sexual aberrations that ignore morality, and the youth's attraction to addictions all cause internal division in families. We cannot pretend not to see these realities. The role of parents in properly carrying out faith formation, character building, and the safety of family members is grave. Our children go through numerous confusions and psychological stresses from the time marriage proposals begin until entering married life. Therefore, it is the duty of family members to prepare them well and guide them into the state of marriage. The most important factor that helps our children in this regard is the Pre-Cana (Marriage Preparation) Retreat. The three-day Marriage Preparation Retreat provides genuine knowledge about the sacraments, family life, mental health, sexuality, and financial management. Parents must ensure that their children participate in it before marriage. You are reminded to realize its importance and make arrangements in advance while making other marriage preparations.

At this juncture, I intend to bring another important matter to your attention. The great family that is the Diocese of Palai is a gathering of around 72,000 families. It is the families here that make Palai what it is. In the historical records of the Meenachil Taluk in Central Travancore, there are pages of family lives full of sacrifice and radiant with faith, led through 2,000 years by those who lived and died in areas surrounding ancient churches like Kuravilangad, Cherpunkal, Aruvithura, etc. Our ancient families, who migrated to Kanyakumari in the south, the High Ranges in the east, and Malabar in the north to lead migrant lives, resemble the Old Testament Jewish families. Today, our families migrate to other regions of India and foreign countries for employment and permanent settlement.

Many families have published family histories combining the origin of families, life records of ancestors, generational successions, and major events. Such records help maintain unity among family members and knowledge about family roots. However, it would also be good to organize a comprehensive family tree linking all these families on a diocesan level. In this year of observing Community Empowerment, may we be able to trace the roots of families in our diocese and thereby create greater warmth in relationships. As the first phase of this, through the Family Apostolate, it is intended to create a fraternity of those who have written family histories, collect history books, and prepare historical texts for public use in the Eparchial Library. After necessary evaluation and study, the intention is to do a general compilation and prepare the Diocesan Family Tree (History of Families in the Diocese of Palai). When other instructions regarding the Family Tree are announced in parish churches through the Family Apostolate, your valuable cooperation is expected.

The family is the backbone that has supported—and continues to support—world history. If the backbone weakens, man weakens; human existence itself comes into question. You are lovingly reminded that everyone should sincerely cooperate with the activities of the Family Apostolate, which provides coordination and encouragement for pastoral activities that help empower families in our diocese. On the afternoon of Sunday, July 19th, a Grand Family

Convention is being held under the auspices of the Family Apostolate's ministry wings—Mathruvedi, Pithruvedi, and Pro-Life—at the Parish Hall of the Kuravilangad Major Archiepiscopal Marth Mariam Archdeacon Pilgrim Church. Reverend Vicars and organization leaders should take care to send parents as much as possible.

I extend my prayers and greetings to you for the *Dukrana* Feast of our father St. Thomas the Apostle and the Feast of St. Alphonsa.

**Diocesan House, Palai**

**03.07.2026**

*Lovingly in Christ,*

**+ Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt**

*Bishop of Palai*

*NB: This pastoral letter is given to be read on Sunday, July 5, 2026, in all churches, chapels with Holy Mass celebration, religious houses, and institutions.*