

Translation

CIRCULAR: 4/2026

ARCHDIOCESAN VOCATION DAY: 2026

"Here am I; send me!"

(The Sunday following the feast day of Saint John Mary Vianney—the patron saint of priests—which falls on the 4th of August, is observed as Archdiocesan Vocation Day. In connection with this, the circular issued by Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany, Vicar of the Major Archbishop for the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly.)

Dear Parents, Youth, and Beloved Children,

God chooses human beings as co-workers to execute His plans for the good of the world. The words of the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8), who answered God's question, "Whom shall I send?", with "Here am I; send me!", serve as a model and inspiration for all who believe in God. As disciples of Christ, we must be able to set aside all fear and selfish interests to dedicate ourselves to God's plan of salvation—which was undertaken and completed by Christ, and continues through the Church.

Vocation is not a special call intended for a mere few individuals. Rather, it is a specific invitation given by God to each person to live their own life in the most fruitful and joyful manner. Life gains its true meaning when a generous response is given to this invitation.

We can find numerous examples of vocations in Sacred Scripture. It was God who called Abraham to leave his homeland and go to another land designated by God. It was God who called Moses to liberate the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. In the New Testament era, it was Jesus who called each of the disciples, saying, "Follow me." In all these calls, it is God's plans that are revealed rather than human merit. Often, God does not call the most talented among human beings; rather, He calls those who are ready to surrender themselves into His hands. God's mercy and human humility are the ingredients of a divine call. The Prophet Isaiah is an example. Despite clearly recognising his own inadequacy and unworthiness, upon hearing the voice of God, Isaiah courageously declared: "Here am I; send me!"

When God calls, two possibilities lie before human beings: they may either accept or reject the call. Those who accept God's call and cooperate with divine plans transform both their own history and the history of the world around them. It cannot be said that one has responded favourably to a divine call merely because it was accepted verbally or because life circumstances underwent a change. A person can be said to have accepted a divine call only when they whole-heartedly dedicate their entire life to the mission entrusted by God.

Whether by carrying out priestly duties, embracing religious life, leading a family life, or living as single individuals, God calls each of us to be a part of His plan for us and for the world of which we are a part. Every vocation is important and irreplaceable. Nevertheless, when we speak of a "divine call" (vocation), what is generally implied are the calls to the priestly and religious lives. On this Archdiocesan Vocation Day, we need to reflect more deeply upon the vocation to the priesthood and religious life.

In today's world where technology and material achievements are increasing, God and God's poor are often neglected. Amidst the competitive race after wealth and comfort, many have no time to pause for a moment for those who cry out for life and survival. Without offering excuses of busy schedules, the world needs people of good will to stand alongside those who have fallen behind in various ways, and to impart hope, love, and mercy. Even today, God calls many young people to proclaim the word of healing, to lift up those who have fallen, to pray for the broken-hearted, and thus to become good news in the world. Those who have surrendered themselves to God and to God's people through the priesthood and religious life are a necessity of this era.

The thought may arise in many as to how the invisible God calls a person. A person discerns a divine call through diverse and personal circumstances. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist from childhood, an affinity felt towards the Church and divine matters, the desire to "become a priest or a sister", the inspiration provided by the life example of certain priests and religious personnel, and the inner voice to love and help others like Jesus—all these can be considered signs of a divine call.

The parish priest, other priests, sisters, or catechists often help many people to discover their vocation. However, it is in families that vocations must first be recognised. Children growing up in families rooted in firm Christian faith and a spirit of prayer find it easy to accept a divine call. Parents must encourage vocations. Parents must prayerfully listen for the voice of God to discern God's dream for their children. Parents must understand the truth that when children granted as gifts by God are offered back to God, the family and society are blessed.

Completion of the 10th standard (SSLC) is the basic educational qualification for joining a seminary or a convent. There are also numerous individuals who discern their vocation after Plus Two (higher secondary) studies or after undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and subsequently join seminaries or convents. Rather than a person's talents or achievements, God looks at whether that individual is prepared to love God and to fulfill God's will. Before a complete and loving surrender, shortcomings and weaknesses become irrelevant.

Our archdiocese stands in the forefront among the dioceses that have contributed the largest number of priests and religious to the global Catholic Church. Currently, 129 seminarians are undergoing priestly formation for our archdiocese at our Archdiocesan Minor Seminary in Thrikkakara and in various major seminaries. On this day, we must make it a point to pray for all those undergoing priestly and religious formation. Parish priests and catechists must strive to identify children who have an interest in becoming priests or sisters. Jesus inspires young people and children to follow the path of the priests of our past generations who fostered our archdiocese to grow so magnificently. The names of such children should be communicated to the Archdiocesan Vocation Promoter through the parish priest.

Praying that many vocations may arise from our families to belong to Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus, and to impart the peace and joy given by Jesus to many people,

+ Archbishop Joseph Pamplany

Vicar of the Major Archbishop for the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly

N.B.: This circular is to be read out during the Holy Mass in all churches and institutions of the Archdiocese on Sunday, 9 August 2026.