Rooted in History, Renewed in Christ: Madras–Mylapore Archdiocese Begins Its Platinum Jubilee Journey

Over 3,000 faithful, more than 100 priests, a spectacular illumination of Santhome Cathedral, a historic musical rendition of the Creed in Tamil and a rediscovery of centuries-old ecclesiastical heritage mark the beginning of a landmark Jubilee year.

Chennai, November 22, 2026: History, faith and celebration came together at Santhome Cathedral Basilica on Sunday as the Archdiocese of Madras–Mylapore inaugurated its Platinum Jubilee celebrations, marking the beginning of a year-long journey towards 75 years of its ecclesiastical unification in 2027.

Celebrated on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, the historic occasion brought together more than 100 priests and over 3,000 religious and lay faithful from across the Archdiocese in a remarkable expression of unity, thanksgiving and renewed missionary commitment.

With the theme “Rooted & Renewed in Christ,” the Jubilee seeks not only to celebrate the achievements of the past but also to inspire a spiritually renewed and missionary Church for generations to come.

When History Came Alive at Santhome

The evening began with a documentary that took the gathering through the extraordinary ecclesiastical journey of the Archdiocese of Madras–Mylapore. From its ancient Christian roots to its formation as a unified Archdiocese, the documentary brought to life significant historical milestones and the enduring contributions of generations of priests, religious and lay faithful.

Prepared by Rev. Fr. Ritchie Vincent, Secretary of the Commission for Social Communications, the documentary offered the audience an opportunity to rediscover the rich legacy of faith upon which the Archdiocese stands today.

Behind this presentation was an extensive effort of historical research and documentation undertaken by a team of historians under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Peter Thumma, Episcopal Vicar for the Clergy. Their systematic research formed the foundation for both the Jubilee documentary and the Historical Exhibition, ensuring that the Archdiocese's heritage was presented with authenticity, historical depth and continuity.

At the beginning of the celebration, Most Rev. Dr. George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras–Mylapore, blessed a commemorative memorial marking the 75-year journey of the Archdiocese at the entrance of the Cathedral Basilica.

Standing as a visible testimony to generations of faith, sacrifice and service, the memorial serves as a lasting reminder of those who contributed to the growth of the Church in the region.

A Historic Profession of Faith in Tamil

The solemn Eucharistic celebration brought together priests, religious and faithful from across the Archdiocese, reflecting the unity of the diocesan family.

The liturgy was organised by Fr. Arul Jesu Dass, Secretary of the Liturgy Commission, and enriched by the Archdiocesan Youth Choir, Cecilia Ensembles, under the leadership of Fr. Felix Philip.

Among the most remarkable moments of the Eucharistic celebration was the musical rendering of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in Tamil, described as the first of its kind in the Tamil-speaking world.

Bringing together sacred music, Tamil liturgical tradition and the Church's profession of faith, the initiative gave a distinctive expression to the Creed professed by generations of Christians. It emerged as one of the memorable spiritual and musical highlights of the Jubilee inauguration.

Santhome Cathedral Lights Up for the Platinum Jubilee

The inauguration was organised under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai, Parish Priest and Rector of Santhome Cathedral Basilica and Head of the Platinum Jubilee Committee.

One of the most visually striking moments of the evening was the spectacular unveiling of the official Platinum Jubilee logo.

Illuminated and projected across the entire Cathedral building, the Jubilee emblem transformed the historic Basilica into a magnificent visual landmark, symbolising the Archdiocese's identity, unity and renewed journey of faith.

Reflecting on the significance of the celebration, Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai said:

“This Jubilee belongs to the entire Archdiocesan family. Every priest, religious, lay faithful, parish and institution has a place in this journey. Our desire is that the celebrations should go beyond commemorating the past and inspire a renewed sense of belonging, participation and missionary commitment.”

At the conclusion of the Holy Mass, Archbishop George Antonysamy, accompanied by Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai and other priests, formally launched the Jubilee Passport, Jubilee Flag and Jubilee Prayer.

These initiatives marked the official commencement of the year-long celebrations and invited every member of the Archdiocesan family to become an active participant in the spiritual journey ahead.

Did You Know That Velankanni Was Once Part of the Diocese of Mylapore?

While the celebrations unfolded at the Cathedral, another remarkable experience awaited visitors around the Basilica — the Jubilee Historical Exhibition.

Prepared and organised through the dedicated efforts of Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai and his team, the exhibition presented significant personalities, historical events and ecclesiastical milestones that shaped the Archdiocese over the centuries.

Among its most fascinating revelations was the antiquity and geographical reach of the former Diocese of Mylapore.

Established on January 9, 1606, following the dioceses of Goa and Cochin, Mylapore became the third diocese established in India. Its historical jurisdiction extended far beyond present-day Chennai, encompassing territories that now belong to other dioceses.

One such place was Velankanni, today one of India's most prominent Marian pilgrimage destinations.

Visitors discovered that the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Health, Velankanni, and its surrounding region belonged to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Mylapore during the period traditionally associated with the Marian apparitions. Subsequent ecclesiastical reorganisations led to the formation of the present Diocese of Thanjavur.

For many visitors, the exhibition became more than a collection of historical records. It opened a window into the remarkable connections between the apostolic heritage of Mylapore and the development of the Catholic Church across South India.

A Tourist Arrives, a Pilgrim Leaves

Among those visiting the exhibition was a young Catholic from Bengaluru who had originally come to Santhome as a tourist. What he discovered, however, gave him an entirely different perspective on the historic shrine.

Expressing his astonishment, he remarked:

“Honestly, I never knew I was visiting a place with such an extraordinary history! I was amazed to learn that Mylapore was the third diocese established in India, after Goa and Cochin, and that even Velankanni, where Our Lady appeared, was once part of this diocese. I had come here as a tourist, but I am leaving with a completely different perspective. Santhome is not just a beautiful church or a tourist destination; it is a place where centuries of faith, history and tradition come alive. This is something every Catholic in India should know!”

His experience captured the larger purpose of the exhibition — helping people, particularly younger generations, rediscover an extraordinary ecclesiastical heritage that often remains unfamiliar even to Catholics themselves.

Special recognition was accorded to the team of historians working under the guidance of Fr. Peter Thumma. Their dedicated research and documentation, which made both the documentary and the Historical Exhibition possible, represent an important contribution towards preserving the historical memory of the Archdiocese for future generations.

Santhome Beyond Its Physical Boundaries

The Jubilee inauguration also embraced digital innovation with the launch of a virtual tour of the National Shrine of St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica.

Undertaken under the direction of Fr. Vincent Chinnadurai and Fr. Stephen, MSFS, the initiative enables people to digitally explore the historic shrine and experience its sacred spaces.

By extending the accessibility of Santhome beyond its physical boundaries, the virtual tour opens new opportunities for pilgrims, visitors and those wishing to discover the shrine's spiritual and historical significance from afar.

The initiative brings together ancient Christian heritage and modern digital technology, making the treasures of Santhome accessible to a wider audience.

Two Historic Dioceses, One Archdiocesan Family

Although the Platinum Jubilee commemorates 75 years of ecclesiastical unity, the roots of the Archdiocese stretch across centuries of Christian history.

At the heart of this legacy stands St. Thomas the Apostle, whose tomb is enshrined at Santhome Cathedral Basilica. The region is also closely associated with St. Francis Xavier, who ministered in Mylapore and spent time in prayer here in 1545.

The ecclesiastical journey that eventually led to the formation of the present Archdiocese is marked by several significant milestones:

- January 9, 1606: Pope Paul V established the Diocese of Mylapore, making it the third diocese in India after Goa and Cochin.
- July 14, 1832: Madras became an Apostolic Vicariate.
- September 1, 1886: Pope Leo XIII elevated Madras to the status of an Archdiocese.
- 1950: The Padroado arrangement in Mylapore came to an end, bringing both ecclesiastical territories under Propaganda Fide.
- November 13, 1952: Pope Pius XII reorganised the ecclesiastical territories through the Apostolic Constitution Ex Primaevae Ecclesiae, resulting in the formation of the unified Archdiocese of Madras–Mylapore.

For several centuries, Madras and Mylapore had functioned under different ecclesiastical administrations. Mylapore was governed under the Padroado system of Portuguese royal patronage, while Madras functioned under Propaganda Fide, the Holy See's Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

The ecclesiastical reorganisation of 1952 saw portions of these territories constituted into the new dioceses of Vellore and Thanjavur, while the remaining territories were united to form the Archdiocese of Madras–Mylapore.

Archbishop Louis Mathias, SDB, became the first Archbishop of the newly unified Archdiocese.

The Platinum Jubilee, therefore, celebrates something far greater than an administrative merger. It commemorates 75 years of a shared ecclesiastical journey, bringing together communities with distinct historical experiences, traditions and identities into one Archdiocesan family.

More Than a Celebration: A Call to Renewal

At the heart of the Platinum Jubilee lies a compelling invitation to spiritual transformation.

The Jubilee theme, “Rooted & Renewed in Christ,” calls upon the faithful to remember the past with gratitude, examine the present with honesty and embrace the future with hope.

In his message to the faithful, Archbishop George Antonysamy emphasised that the Jubilee must become an opportunity for reconciliation, renewed faith and missionary commitment.

“Our theme, ‘Rooted & Renewed in Christ,’ is an invitation to rediscover Christ as the centre of our lives and the foundation of our mission. Let this Jubilee be a time of reconciliation, renewed faith

and greater communion, so that we may become a Church that listens, welcomes, heals and serves. May our celebration of the past inspire us to build a more compassionate and missionary Church for the future."

The Archbishop encouraged the faithful to seek forgiveness, heal strained relationships and listen to those whose voices often go unheard.

He envisioned a Church where young people feel welcomed, the elderly are remembered, and the poor and lonely experience the love and warmth of the Christian community.

Emphasising that prayer must translate into action, he also called upon the faithful to work for justice, promote peace and care for God's creation.

His message placed the true significance of the Jubilee beyond commemorative events and historical achievements, inviting every member of the Archdiocese to become an instrument of reconciliation, compassion and service.

A Year of Pilgrimage, Prayer and Mission

The inauguration marks the beginning of an extensive year-long programme of spiritual and community-centred initiatives.

Among the significant initiatives planned are monthly Jubilee pilgrimages to the tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle at Santhome.

These pilgrimages will offer the faithful regular opportunities to gather in prayer, deepen their relationship with Christ and reconnect with the apostolic foundations of the Archdiocese.

Alongside the pilgrimages, various programmes of prayer, formation, fellowship and service are planned throughout the Jubilee year.

Every parish, religious community and family is invited to participate wholeheartedly, recognising that the Jubilee is not merely a series of events organised by the Archdiocese but a shared spiritual journey in which everyone has a role and responsibility.

Seventy-Five Years of Unity. Centuries of Faith. A Future of Hope.

The Platinum Jubilee inauguration concluded with an invitation to the faithful to journey together as one Archdiocesan family, placing their trust in Christ and looking forward with hope to the greater things God has in store.

From the apostolic witness of St. Thomas and the missionary legacy of St. Francis Xavier to the historic formation of the unified Archdiocese in 1952, the story of Madras–Mylapore is one of faith carried forward across generations.

Today, as the Archdiocese embarks upon its Platinum Jubilee journey, that legacy becomes both a reason for thanksgiving and a responsibility for the future.

The celebrations at Santhome were not simply about remembering where the Archdiocese came from. They were equally about recognising what it is called to become — a Church that listens, welcomes, heals, serves and witnesses to Christ.

With centuries of Christian heritage behind it and a renewed missionary vision before it, the Archdiocese of Madras–Mylapore steps into its Platinum Jubilee year —

Rooted in Christ, renewed by His grace, and united in hope.