

CHAPTER 1

1828-1831

The Two Founders of the Congregation beginnings of the Mother-House.

1. It was the beginning of the 19th century; the famine and plague that followed Tippu Sultan's invasion of Malabar had just subsided. The schismatic Syrians, owing to their too close contact with Protestant Missionaries, began gradually to be protestantized. Disobedience to the mandates of the Holy See was about to give rise to the notorious Padroado schism in the churches under the Portuguese Patronage. The Syrian Catholic of Malabar, however, as a body kept imperturbably of the apostolic See. There was, however, among them much room for improvement and progress.

THE CARMELITE CONGREGATION OF MALABAR

The education of the bulk of the clergy was conducted by "Malpans" (professors), priests noted for their learning and piety, who, with the recognition from the local Ordinaries, were Rectors of Petit seminaries – a system of imparting ecclesiastical education not uncommon in Europe even after the council of trent. A thorough knowledge of the Syriac language, a sufficient knowledge of the rudiments of Theology, a minute study of holy writ, and an elaborate training in all the ceremonies of the church were at all times insisted upon by the "Malpans". The spread of Protestantism among the schismatic Syrians called for higher and more exhaustive knowledge in Theology on the part of Clergy. Only a select few received their training in the seminary of Verapoly conducted by the Discalced Carmelite Missionaries.



2. The status of the laity, too called for improvement in various directions Generally speaking, the knew to read and write. The study of Sanskrit classics was the privillage of only a very few.

As for higher secular education, there was no scope for it. With the advent of the C.M.S Missionaries, English education began to hold ground in Malabar. The schismatics naturally took the best advantage of it. In the absence of proper parochial schools, Catholic children had to learn their Catechism and ordinary prayers in village schools.

3. The local Ordinaries had always at heart the amelioration of the spiritual and social conditions of the both the clergy and the laity; they had done towards it what their circumstances permitted; much, however, remained still to be done. The fullness of God's time came in the 19th century, when, there appeared a confluence of agencies that wrought with marvelous success an all-round improvement in the Church of Malabar. The chief of these agencies, it may be said. Was the Carmelite congregation of Malabar trained under the able direction of learned and holy ecclesiastical authorities.

4. The very Rev. Thomas Palakal of pallipuram in the present Archdiocese of Ernakulam, beloved alike of God man, a great disciplinarian and an ardent lover of prayer and retirement, was Rector of Pallipuram Seminary, which, in discipline and observance of rules, far surpassed all its sister seminaries scattered all cover Malabar. As secretary to Mgr. Raymund Surio, O.C.D., Vicar Ap. Of Verapoly 1808-1816 and as consultor to his successors, Father palackal had gained the esteem and love at his superiors and childhood was marked by an extraordinary devotion to our Lady and to St Dominic he received his ecclesiastical training under Father Abraham Thachil of Kuthiyathode; immediately after his ordination

to the priesthood he assumed the charge of training candidates for the Sacred ministry. Through his disciples, Fr. Palackal introduced many reforms into the Malabar church. He deviated, not a little, from the old method of conducting studies and confining in seminaries. He insisted upon the seminarians always remaining under his immediate vigilance and their habitual wearing of the clerical soutane—an innovation gradually adopted by the whole of the syro-malabar clergy not satisfied with the old curriculum of studies, he got down Tamil books treating on Theological subjects and taught them to his pupils. What characterized him most was his ardent love of study, prayer and penance. He was always seen, either busy with books in his room, or pouring forth his soul before God in the church. He observed a daily rigorous fast without any breakfast. He had the gift of tears; it was more difficult for him to suppress his tears than for others to shed them. His face, though emaciated, was ever radiant with divine love; Mgr. Francis Xavier, O.C.D., THE THEN VICAR Ap. Of verapoly, used to say that those who looked at the face of Fr. Palackal, felt the holy ghost dwelling in him. He daily recited, with the seminarians, the syro-malabar office, which at that time had not a definite form and was rather long. His patience with and love of enemies were quite extraordinary. His life as the seminary rector actuated him with the desire of founding a religious community, which, he hoped, would prove an instrument in the hands of God towards the material, intellectual and spiritual welfare of Malabar.

5. Father Palackal had an intimate friend in the person of very Rev. Fr. Thomas Porukara, who also fostered the noble idea of inaugurating Religious life among the St. Thomas Christians. Father Thomas Porukara of Champakulam in the present Diocese of Changanacherry had received his ecclesiastical training in the seminary of Verapoly. He too was noted for his deep piety and before



mortified life. Vicar of his own parish, champakulam, Fr. Porukara was the apostle of the devotion to St. Joseph. The custom of preaching sermons in churches every Sunday. Owe its origin to him. He was a great friend of the poor Every Saturday

Before distributing alms-a long standing custom in the well-to-do families and churches of Malabar, - Fr, Porukara would gather the poor in the church, recite the Rosary with them and prepare many of them for confession. He introduced the holy custom reciting the Rosary in parish Churches every evening. His zeal for the salvation of souls was no great that his superiors appointed him to more difficult and more responsible posts.

6. In 1828, when Fr. Porukara was vicar of the lattan church of Thankacherry in the present Diocese of Quilon, Mgr. Maurelius stabilini, O.C.D., came to Malabar as vicar Apostolic ad interim of veropoly. Relieving Fr. Porukara of the care of souls, Mgr. Stabilini, reposing full confidence in him, appointed him his secretary.

7. Fr. Palackal and Fr. Porukara felt, with divine inspiration, that the time had come when they could realize their long cherished desire of founding a Religious institution where in to devote themselves entirely to the attainment of the evangelical perfection and to work for the social, moral and spiritual advancement of their brethren. Their idea they communicated to Mgr. Stabilini. He was very pleased to approve of it and to encourage them in their holy enterprise. Moreover, he contributed his share of a good sum towards the erection of a suitable Religious house, inviting the churches and the faithful of Malabar to follow his example, to bring the arduous endeavours of the two Fathers to a happy Success. His circular letter met with a hearty response from the leading Syrian churches, especially of Kuttanad as also from the people of Malabar; in a very



short time the two saintly fathers collected sufficient funds with which they could begin the work of the religious house they proposed to erect.

We Maririlius of St. Teresa, of the discalced Carmelite order, by God's grace and by the authority of the holy apostolic see, Bishop of Dolica and interim Vicar Apostolic of the Diocese of Malabar and of the Diocese of Cochin, benediction, grace and peace, from our Lord Jesus Christ, to all those who see read and hear this our letter, sent and published with great desire through the hands of the Revd. Priest, our coadjutors and co-operators in our spiritual work on behalf of those who seek the face of our Lord.

In the territory committed to our jurisdiction by the Apostolic see, we are ever on the alert to carry out all those things which are necessary for the welfare of the faithful and conducive to God's greater glory and the good of the Church. We know that you desire to see among you a community of men living like the holy souls who are continuously engaged in prayer and spiritual works, in other countries which were evangelized much later than Malabar and even in those which are not so extensive as Malabar, there are many monasteries for both men and women. You, who are ancient Christians requested the Holy church to establish for you also similar, Religious House. Yet so far no steps have been taken for the establishment of Monastery. There are no men and women here who have benefited by the example and labour of the Religious. The teaching about the choice of the Religious life is not known among lay men and women and even among the priest, our spiritual brethren we do not find many who are ready to embrace the Religious life. In order therefore to open a door for Religious life, the two priests who are entrusted with his letter. Desire to establish a church and monastery for those who are willing to embrace the



religious life, and to raise the necessary, funds for their maintenance. But, if they are left to their own resources. They will not be able to accomplish the noble project. Contributions from many people will make it possible and easy accomplishment. He who makes a donation is happier than he who accepts it. Contributions for the present purpose will entitle the donors to innumerable divine favours and blessings. Hence we earnestly desire and recommend that donations be given from the churches and the people to the two Priests whom we send, so that they may raise the monastery, the church and the necessary funds for the maintenance of the Religious. Thus the way will be opened for the happy introduction of Religious life into this Diocese. and those who help this project will undoubtedly share in all benefits resulting therefrom. The example of the Religious will instruct the ignorant. Those who are willing to become Religious will have a chance to do so. The piously inclined who are now scattered here and there can live together in communities. The church will be glorified. The countries and the whole world will have peace. Those who are called to enter heaven by means of the Religious life, will be made perfect by the Lord of all things. They will be free from all worldly affairs and they will devote themselves entirely to spiritual things. By the zealous work of these elect souls, all possible blessings will be secured. Generous charity will ensure perseverance in virtue. We know that your zeal is such as will impel you to make donations for this purpose according to your means nay even beyond your means. We exhort you there for to make contribution according to your ability, to give with willing minds and extreme hands and with a charity which knows no murmur. We advise and command all of you to give with a generous mind, the required material alms, each one according to his means, the poor in imitation of the poor widow who cast in only two mites,



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and the wealthy in imitation of the rich man who cast in much; thus
will you reap a spiritual harvest.

May the grace of the almighty God and our own blessing and
benediction be upon you.

This decree is issued on the 1st of November 1829, after the birth of
Christ.

(Sd) F. MAURILIUS,

Bishop of Dolica

Interim Vicar of Malabar and Cochin.

To the two Priests, Fr. Thomas palackal and Fr. Thomas Porukara,
who are interested with this decree, We, Maurilius, Bishop of Dolica,
have handed over rupees two hundred (Rs.200) as our own
contribution for this excellent project mentioned in the decree.

(Sd.) F. MAURILIUS,

Bishop of Dolica.

In the accordance with these letters patent, from the parish church of
kallurkat, Rs. 200 handed over to the above mentioned Fathers.

(Sd) Fr. JOSEPH PUTHUCHIRA

Vicar of the Kallurkat Church.

According to these letters patent, four hundred rupees (Rs.400) are
handed over from the church of koilmuk to the above said fathers.

(Sd.) Fr. GEORGE THEKEDAM, (vicar)

In accordance with these letters patent, from the church of
Pulincunnu, with the consent of the parishioners, assembled in

council one thousand paras of paddy are handed over to the above mentioned fathers.

(Sd.) Fr. GEORGE MUNNUTTI NALPATHU (Vicar)

In accordance with these letters patent, from the church of the Holy Cross at Alaphey, with the consent of the parishioners, assembled in council, one hundred rupees (Rs.100) are handed over to the above mentioned Fathers.

(Sd.) Fr. LUKE THEKUMURI, (Vicar)

In accordance with these letters patent from the church of Vadacara, with the consent of the parishioners, assembled in council, one hundred rupees (Rs.100) are handed over to the above mentioned fathers.

(Sd.) Fr. AUGUSTINE, (Vicar)

In accordance with these letters patent, from the church of Arakusha with the consent of the parishioners, assembled in council, fifty rupees (Rs.50) are handed over to the above mentioned Fathers.

(Sd.)

In accordance with these letters patent, from the church of Anakallunkal, with the consent of the parishioners assembled in council for the present, two thousand five hundred chuckrams (Rs.87)

(Sd.)

In accordance with these letters patent, from the church of pallippuram with the consent of the parishioners assembled in council one hundred rupees (Rs.100) are given

(sd.) Fr. GEORGE (Vicar)

To the above mentioned Fathers, according to these letters patent, for the present two hundred rupees (Rs.200) are given by parayil Kunjavirab.

(Sd.)

8. The next step was to select a suitable spot whence they could, while serving god under a religious roof, radiate their activities throughout the whole of Malabar. Several hillocks were proposed; at last, Mannanam, exceptionally blessed by the beauties of nature, and easy of access from every part of Malabar, in the present Diocese changanacherry, was fixed upon.

9. from the very beginning Rev. Fr. Chavara of Kainakary in the present Diocese of Changanacherry, a disciple of Fr.Palakal, Rev. Fr. Pascal of the Ltin Rite from Arthungal and a layman, Jacob Kanianthara, a neighbor of Fr. Porukara,were associated with the founders in the noble work of erecting the new house of God.

10. May 11, 1831, was the day fixed for the blessingof the corner stone of the Mother House of the future Carmelite Congregation of Malabar.Mgr.Stabilini came to Mannanam to perform the function personally, but, being impeded by an unexpected indisposition, left the desirable task to either Fr. Palakal or Fr.Porukara. Owing to mutual deference neither of them would undertake to perform the ceremony. At last Fr. Porukara yield edthere then arose the question as to the name the foundation stone should bear. Mgr. Stabilini suggested the name of St. John the Baptist Fr. Palakal that of St. Dominic and Fr. Porukara that of St. Joseph. Finally, Fr. Porukara's suggestion was accepted and the foundation stone bore St. Joseph's name. whereupon, Father Porukara, in the presence of Mgr. Stabilini Fr. Palakal and a multitude of priests and layman during the pontificate of pope George XVI and the reingn of Rama Varma

Kulasekhara PerumalRaja of Travancore laid the foundation stone of the first church and mother house of the congregation in the name of St. Joseph the great Patron of Carmel. With the hearty co-operation of the Malabar clergy and laity the work progressed under the direction of father Porukara and Fr. Chavara. Fr. Palakkal had to return to Pallippuram Seminary where he was Rector. All that he could do was to direct from afar the work at Mannanam. Fr. Porukara had to go round collecting alms, chiefly from Muvattupuzha Thodupuzha and Meenachil, while Fr. Remained at Mananam to conduct the work. The Catholic Families of Thayyil and Perumalil and the Nair family of Kalampucad were of great help to the Fathers who were strangers to the place. The neighbouring parishes of Athirampuzha kaipusha and Kudamaloor and some of their parishioners also contributed their share for the work at Mananam mass was said on Pentecost Sunday of the same year in the newly built chapel. It is worth of mention that Fr. Porukara and Chavara were often found with the workmen carrying stones and mortar for the building of the chapel and the adjacent Monastery-an example followed by the Fathers who succeeded them

11. Ever since the foundation of the Monastery at Mannanam, Mannanam has been the centre of religious life and Catholicity in Malabar. The visitors Apostolic and papal representatives have been given official and solemn receptions, in the name of the whole laity of Malabar gathered at Mannanam to deliberate and social questions.

12. The royal families of Travancore and cochin have always been kind and benevolent towards the congregation. His highness sir Rama Varma Ayilliam Tirunal had often expressed his satisfaction at the rapid growth of the new-born "Asrama" at Mannanam H.H. Visakham presented to the house a large oil painting of the Madonna which is still kept in a prominent place in the Monastery. H.H Prince



Aswati Tirunal B.A, was pleased to pay a visit to Mannanam. His highness Sri Tirunal of happy memory, looked upon some of the members of the congregation with special veneration and the new magnificent buildings of the St. Joseph's press, have been inaugurated as a memorial of the shashtiabdapurthi of his highness H.H. Kerala Varma Valiya koil Thampuran C.I.E. was likewise a great admirer of the congregation his highness's visit to Mannanam and also the assumption of the patronage of the St. Ephrem's high school are only a few among the many tokens of the sincere esteem of the illustrious scholar for this Religious institution. the circular letter issued by the prior general of the congregation on the occasion of the installation of H.H Sri Chittira Tirunal the present Maha Raja amply bears witness to the deepseated loyalty of the congregation towards the royal house.

13. The attitude of the royal family of cochin towards the congregation has been equally sympathetic. His highness sri Rama Varma the late Maha Raja contrary to all precedents even paid a visit to the Monastery at elthuruth and himself laid the foundation of present English school there. H.H. the present Maha Raja is also evincing a similar interest in the well being of the monasteries in the state. It is worth mentioning in this connection that the residents as well as the Dewans and the other public officials of the two states have without exception contributed much towards the progress and prosperity of the Congregation.