

## PARISH HISTORY PARISH HISTORY

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Peringazha is a small village just five kilometers away from Moovattupuzha. The present generation retains the memories about the sweetness, the sacredness and the smell of the village which have been bequeathed by their forefathers who in the long-forgotten past used to reap a harvest of gold from the fertile soil. The church dedicated to St Joseph stands there as the most important monument of the village and its proud history. The church bells have been beckoning the poor, the depressed and the destitute, to its shelter and comfort for the past one and a half centuries. The church has a history inspired by the Holy Ghost and endowed with all kinds of blessings from God. A peep into that will obviously provide illumination and encouragement to the members of the parish.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH

Our forefathers had the insight that Christians must shower the light of morality and truth forever. When they had to travel long distances through inaccessible forests they cherished the dream of having their own little church. In 1864, they convened a meeting to discuss the possibility of building a church here. In that meeting they selected Kakkoothanal hill as the site of the proposed church. Then they applied for the permission from the government. The application was rejected because the chosen site was very near Kaippallykkavu. It didn't depress the people who immediately chose the present site, the Thuruthikkattupurayidam of Madhathumchalil Elachi and submitted an application again. The permission was soon granted. Hindrances cleared one by one before the determination of the early Catholics. Ultimately, on 1 November 1864, the foundation stone for the new church was laid jointly by Marsilanos Mooppanachan, better known as the Little Bishop, and Kanattachan, as per the order of bishop Mar Louis Pazhayaparampil. Thus the first of November, the All Saints Day, became the Kallittathirunal for the parish.

At first Peringazha was a chapel of Arakkuzha forane church. There was a time of acute financial shortage when it was proposed to hand over the church to the Carmelite Mission. However, God had other plans for the church. After a little time the parish started getting financial support from its parent church. It also got the necessary wine, wax, and incense from the Arakkuzha church. In return the income from donations, special collections and the money remitted at the time of funerals went to the accounts of Arakkuzha church in those days. In course of time Peringazha became an independent parish. When the order for that came from the bishop house at Ernakulam, Rev Fr Mathai Kuruppumadhathil was the vicar of Peringazha.

There was a very generous son of Peringazha, Sri Uthup Malampurathu. Since he was not blessed with children he donated all his properties to the church at

the time of his death. The one thousand Rupees obtained through the sale of that property was utilized in building a two-storied priest home. The work was completed during the tenure of Rev Fr Koniyeckallumkal. The first church was too small to contain all the believers who flocked to the church for mass. So it was made bigger during the time of Rev Fr Rathappillil. The façade was built by Rev Fr Kurian Plathottathil. The various maintenance works were also done during his time.

The vicars of Peringazha had always been very conscious about the need for nourishing the spiritual wellbeing of the parishioners. They had also been interested in reforms, both in the buildings and in the practices. One great achievement had been the construction of the grotto of Lourdu Matha at Peringazha junction. It was under the supervision of Rev Fr Nedungattu. It was he who built the bell tower too. The grotto had at first been a small cross placed on 1 February 1975. It was elevated to the level of a grotto on 24 January 1976. Mar Mathew Pothanammoozhy, the bishop of Kothamangalam, blessed it and offered the first holy mass there.

### S D CONVENT

It has been widely recognized that the sisters of the Catholic Church are dedicated missionaries who work tirelessly in the vineyards of the Lord. Their contributions are very significant particularly at a time when most of the people turn a blind eye to spirituality. A convent of the sisters of the destitute was inaugurated at Chunangumvely on 11 July 1945. It was aimed at providing shelter to the deserted and the destitute. Rev Fr Jacob Madhathumchalil donated 11 acres and 61 cents of land to the convent. The work on the convent was completed very soon and it was blessed by Rev Fr Jacob Madhathumchalil himself on 8 September 1947. The orphanage was built by the parish. In 1949, the first holy mass was said in the convent chapel. The orphanage was inaugurated by Very Rev Fr Nedumpurathu, the vicar of

Arakkuzha forane church. The selfless and loving service of the sisters of the destitute has always been invaluable in the progress of the parish.

### THE DEVOTIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The various devotional organizations of the Catholic Church have been serving the church as well as the world through exemplary service programmes. Most of them have been functioning well at Peringazha right from the beginning. There is documentary evidence to prove that the parish council had been functioning exceptionally well even fifty three years ago. There are records to show that the practice of budgeting was in existence from then onwards. As early as in 1946, the Marian Sodality of Peringazha was adjudged the best in the Ernakulam Archdiocese. The former form of CYM, the 'Katholica Pravarthaka Sangham', was active here as early as 1936. There was a reawakening in the fields of catechism and devotional organizations during the period of Rev Fr Kavalakkattu.

Now there are a number of organizations which function admirably well. The mothers' union strives to ensure the honour of motherhood and womanhood and to progress with a solid foundation on morality and piety. The society of St Vincent de Paul, Cherupushpa Mission League, Marian Sodality and Thirubalasakhyam provide significant contributions to the overall progress of the parish.

### EDUCATION

The role of Christian missionaries in the educational sector in India has been acknowledged everywhere. The idea that there should be a school wherever there is a church came from Blessed Father Chavara. Following that there came

schools beside every church. An LP School was established at Peringazha way back in 1916.

In those days Perumballoor, Anikkad and parts of Randar were parts of the Peringazha parish. In 1921 an LP school was established at Anikkad and that gave education to the people of Anikkad and Randar. Since the grants from the government were meager, the schools functioned with substantial financial help from the church. In 1979, Peringazha LP School was upgraded as a UP school. For that a large two-storey building had been constructed under the supervision of Rev Fr Mulanjanani. The formal inauguration of the UP school was done on 30 January 1980 by Mar George Punnakkottil, the bishop of Kothamangalam, in a meeting attended by Sri K M Mani, the Finance Minister, and Sri P J Joseph, the Education Minister.

### SOCIAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

The modern days are noted for the infiltration of narrow-minded sectarian perspectives on the basis of political ideologies, religions, and castes. In such a context our forefathers have demonstrated that the sources of social service and patriotism have not dried up. The historical records of the parish give enough to show that, over the years, the vicars as well as the parishioners had always worked jointly to benefit the society at large. They had always stood for favorable changes in the society and put in selfless service for that. In the early years roads were very few and the people knew the difficulties it caused. Most of the roads we find in Peringazha today had been made by the people jointly. Records kept in Peringazha church show that on 25 March 1936, the construction of the road from Peringazha church to Arakkuzha road started and that the road was opened for traffic on 3 December of that year. It is recorded in the church register that around two thousand people had assembled at the P O junction after a procession and after the inauguration of the road went in a procession to the church and gave a sumptuous meal to the poor. That road is the Mar Augustinos road of today. The records also show that a road was constructed to Anikkad. Thus we find that many roads that we

see today were begun by the forefathers. It was mainly due to the initiative of Rev Fr Nadungattu that a bus route was sanctioned between Peringazha and Perumballoor.

Of all the teachings of Christ, one of the most prominent has been the doctrine of service. The church has always practiced it too. In that area Peringazha parish was also dedicated. The various organizations functioning in the parish have contributed significantly towards the amelioration of the problems that beset the public. For instance, there was a great drive to provide houses to all the needy under the initiative of Rev Fr Paul Vazhuthalakkattu. He was also instrumental in making several roads.

### VOCATION

As a result of the careful attempt to guide the youth through the correct path without deviating to ignorance and immorality, a large number of the young boys and girls have chosen God's vocation. There are six priests from the parish serving the Kothamangalam diocese and 11 mission fathers serving the people outside the state and in foreign countries. There are also 41 sisters from this parish.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

When there is a Catholic community united in prayer and when that is supported by the Lord, good results will follow. It had been the long-cherished dream of the parishioners to rebuild the church. Then there came the apt persons to lead that attempt. It was Rev Fr John Ilanjedathu, a very pious man who showered the flowers of goodness wherever he went. He had the unique gift of hiding his dislikes behind a sweet smile. It was he who led the reconstruction work. The bishop of Kothamangalam laid the foundation stone for the new building on 19 March 2003. The vicar got the support of two efficient assistant vicars also. Though Rev Fr Jince Pulickal was here only for a short while his leadership was excellent. Then came Rev Fr Antony Ovely, the

present vicar. It was mainly because of the wholehearted support of the parishioners that the new building was completed so quickly. We should also remember the contributions we received from a lot of generous people. The services rendered by the trustees James Paikattu, George Pannarakunnel, Biju Thottupuram, and Manuel Kodamullil will also be remembered for a long time. The new church was complete on 1 May 2006. On that day the new church was consecrated. The new priest's home was also blessed that day. The chapel in the name of St Joseph, the stone cross, and the flag post were blessed the same day.

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