

THE HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION OF ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT AT ERAMALLOOR

It was on 28th December 1978 that His Lordship Rt Rev. Dr. Joseph Kureethara Bishop of Cochin, paid his maiden visit to the Carmel of Tiruvalla when his Lordship had to come to attend the consecration ceremony of His Lordship Mar Yuhannan Bishop of Tiruvalla and complying with the invitation of Very Rev Fr. Bonaventure ocd chaplain of Carmel. All the sisters were summoned to the parlor. During the visit His Exec: requested the community to found one cloistered Carmel in the diocese of Cochin promising to give a suitable site of about three acres of land. All that time though there were twenty members in Carmel of Tiruvalla, four of them were old, and vocations scarce. So Rev. Mother Teresa of Jesus, then Prioress, stated the impossibility of such a venture exposing the actual situation. Time passed by without any further concern about it.

In June 1980 came again a letter of invitation of the Bishop of Cochin. After getting the necessary permissions to leave enclosure, from His Exec: Mgr. Cornelius Elenjikal, Bishop of Vijayapuram and Rev. FR. Francis Gregory, delegate General on 13th July 1980, Mother Teresa of Jesus with her counselors Sr. Carmen of the Holy Family and Sr. Mary Antony of the Holy Ghost accompanied by Rev. Fr. Bonaventure to the Bishop's House in Fort Cochin, where they were received most warmly by His Excellency and the Rev. Fathers. After dinner His Excellency accompanied them to inspect the site. The result of the inspection was encouraging.

Permission for this Foundation was sought from Our Fr. General Very Rev. Fr. Philip Sainz de Baranda through our Delegate General Rev. Fr. Francis Gregory ocd who informed us that all transactions concerning the foundation is held in suspension until the proposed visit of Our Very Rev Fr. General to Kerala.

In the beginning of 1981, Our Fr. General visited Kerala and his lordship Joseph Kureethara was very alert on this occasion and visited Our Fr. General at the Carmelite Monasteries of Kolayad and Perumpadappu, and won the General to this noble cause which resulted in laying the foundation of the convent on the very next morning March 19th.

The construction of the enclosure wall progressed so rapidly that it was over by the end of April. The construction work of the convent progressed by leap and bounds. The east wing of the edifice, guest rooms, inside and outside parlors and pottery rooms and choir on the ground floor and the novitiate cells was ready for habitation by the middle of December 1982. By this time, the sisters to be sent to the new foundation

were nominated and the petition for permission was sent to the Holy See by our Delegate General. It was decided that the sisters should come on 28th December 1982 to prepare for the solemn inauguration by Our Fr. General Philip Sainz De Baranda who was to come to Kerala in those days.

The Bishop fixed 20th January 1983 for the solemn inauguration of the convent to be conducted by our Fr. General. From the morning crowds of people came from all over the diocese to see the first cloistered convent of the diocese. A bigger crowd gathered in front of the convent to witness and solemnize the functions of the day. A temporary altar, mounted on a platform under a decorated *pandal* in the site of the sanctuary of the proposed chapel. When the prelates and Fathers reached the altar our Bishop said a few words of welcome. Then Fr. General spoke to the gathering in Italian which was translated by Rev. Fr. Patrick Mootheril into Malayalam. Our Fr. General exhorted the sisters to be faithful to their calling by which they have to serve the diocese and the church and the whole world, giving stress on fidelity to the life of prayer which is to be fostered by a life of solitude and silence. The cloistered Carmel is brought to the diocese, the special mission entrusted to them is to pray for the sanctification of the priests. Then our Fr. General blessed the convent solemnly accompanied by the bishops, priests and religious. As the Fr. General and all those who accompanied went out after the blessing, the enclosure was established. The sisters who were the foundresses alone remained inside and locked the door and they returned to their choir to participate in concelebrated mass which followed, bishop of Quilon was the main celebrant, Rev. Fr. Dattusood preached the homily giving stress to the relevance of contemplative orders in the church as power houses and the great necessity of having such houses in each diocese. Thus the foundation of Eramalloor Carmel was established on 20th January 1983 in the diocese of Cochin.