I thank you very much for helping my diocese through MCP for the Socio-economic, medical and educational ministries focused on the pastoral development of God’s people. The following three ministries serve as spiritual power-houses, reflecting God’s abiding love and care for the poorest of the poor and marginalized in a tangible form in continuation of the miracle of the multiplication of bread.

**1) Sacred Heart Leprosy Hospital in Kumbakonam**:- established in 1914, has served the welfare of lepers of all religious faiths with exemplary dedication. This hansenorium has separate quarters for men and women, for treatment and residence, a centre to teach them a trade to enable them regain their worth and self-respect; a school exclusively for their children, etc.

**2) Helen Keller School for Deaf and Dumb :-**  22 years ago the Diocese started a school and home for 226 physically challenged children, assisted by 5 dedicated nuns and 8 lay special ed-teachers. All these children with speech and hearing impediment are from poor families, most of whom would consider them as curse from God and therefore easily get rid of them or neglect them.

 **3) Added to 136 Catholic schools, the diocese runs 36 orphanages** for 4860 orphans. Most of these children from families of single mothers and widows, and families with an addictive and abusive father, are forced to tend cattle and child-labour, in order to eke out a living for the family.

**4) Diocesan Pastoral Center :** coordinates 12 different ministries each headed by a priest or a nun viz. Bible, Catechetics, Liturgy, BCC, Youth, Women-empowerment, Ecumenism, Vocation, Family, Education, Social Development etc. The diocese needs funds to continue the missionary endeavours and pastoral ministry to 113,000 Catholics (6% of the total population) in 94 parishes and 618 missions, served by 278 priests, 612 nuns 12 trained catechists and 600part time untrained catechists.

**Diocese needs build eleven parish churches and 216 mission chapels.**  65 % are Dalit Catholics socially segregated, economically down trodden and discriminated and oppressed, on all counts. Government compels Dalit converts to return to Hinduism( reverse conversion) by denying them all the socio-economic, educational and medical benefits and job opportunities, thus driving converts to despair.

**Causes of Persecution** : - 1) **Religious discrimination**: This denial of socio-economic, educational and other benefits **serves as obstacle to evangelization among the poor and the Dalit.**

**2) Onslaught on Catholics** unleashed by Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, funded from abroad. **3)Adverse impact of social media, other secular forces and anti-Christian movements**, taking advantage of the poverty of Catholics and the consequent ineptitude of the diocese to cope with the escalating obstacles to evangelisation, faith-formation and missionary endeavours of the diocese.

**Due to acute poverty of 65 % of the Catholics, the diocese depends mostly on funds from annual mission appeal for the pastoral, educational, medical and socio-economic ministry of the marginalized and poor converts. Whatever you give becomes much when placed in the hands of Jesus.**

**Your Christ-like intervention and sacrifice of :-**

1) **$ 20** will feed a poor child or an orphan for a month. ($200 annually)

2) **$ 50** will enable a single mother or widow feed her family of 3 for a month.

3) **$ 100** will go for monthly pay for a catechist **4)** **$ 250** provides 4 goats to maintain a family of four.

5) **$ 500** will educate a physically challenged child (annually)

6) **$ 600** will pay the bill for healthcare and family maintenance of a leprosy patient for a year.

7) **$ 700** will fix the roof of a poor man’s hut. **8) $ 800** will provide a cow to feed an entire family of 5 or more.

9) **$ 900** For a grocery store, to provide employment and feed a family of 10 with elderly parents and grandparents.

10) **$ 1000** will provide medical treatment and rehabilitation of a leper.

11) **$ 5000** will provide a home for a family. **12) $ 25,000** will build a mission chapel.

 Your sincerely in O.L



 **Fr. M. S. Selva Raj**

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**Spiritual and Missionary Productivity of MCP : Personal witness of Rev. M.S.Selva Raj:-**

I was pastor (1980-1984) of St. Paul’s mission, at Kulumur, founded in 1935 by a holy priest and some dedicated nuns, with 18 sub-stations, spread over an area with a radius of 28 miles, located in a jungle. Around midnight one day Kumar a Hindu adult was rushed to my rectory, at the point of death due to cobra-bite on his shoulder. After giving him a powerful, herbal anti-venom stand-by medicine, I had to rush him, already unconscious, to a hospital, 30 miles away, three of us on my motor cycle, to give him anti-venom injection to be doubly sure of saving his life. A year later, the Hindu fundamentalists had the police arrest Kumar and 22 other Hindu catechumens to prevent their conversion. Meanwhile the Holy Spirit had transformed Kumar to put up a bold defence through his powerful, personal and convincing witness: ***“It is through the selfless ministry of the priests and the nuns during the past 50 years that this entire area is booming with life (in the jungle) through good education, medical care, moral standards, culture of life and civilization of life, provided by them. But for the Catholic Missionaries we would still live in dark ages. Whereas you, the zealots of Hinduism and your government have never cared for us in our misery and distress. My family and I would have vanished into oblivion had the priest not intervened t the right time to save me from death. As for me and my family Jesus is the only Saviour and true God. Any amount of your vile tactics of physical extortion, deprivation of social and economic benefits and social castigation, cannot prevent me from embracing Christianity.”***

 His personal conviction and courageous witness, supported by 22 of his peers, saved our mission from further harassment. Undoubtedly this powerful endorsement from a group of Hindus delivered a rude shock to those who opposed our missionary work. In truth such a manifold ministry through mission school, clinic and orphanage for boys and girls, mostly non-Christians, trying to mirror God’s love for the poor and forsaken, was made feasible mainly through Mission Appeal and Propagation of Faith in U.S. and Rome.

**Reflection on the Gospel for the Week-end of Aug.1/2:-**

**Today‘s Gospel presents an actual life-situation in which Jesus feeds five thousand people. The compassion which flowed from the meek and humble heart of Jesus, the number of people who enjoyed the divine providence and the number of baskets left over amply indicate the super abundance of God’s unfailing mercy and unconditional love. The Gospel reflection powerfully propels us to be God’s powerful instruments to enable the poor and the destitute of our times to experience God’s unconditional love and unfailing care through our ministry of presence, care and outreach especially to orphans, the elderly, the lepers, the physically –challenged, single mothers, widows, women who are battered and abused, the poor and the marginalised in the community we serve.**

 **Just like the disciples who were faced with an apparently insoluble problem: the challenge of feeding a large crowd, in a lonely place, at a late evening, we too feel, like repeating the words of the Apostles ,”Send the crowd away”, particularly during this terrible pandemic and the resultant loss of jobs and severe poverty and despair. Enabled by your timely generosity today we will be able to live the words of Jesus to his disciples by assisting those in need through compassion, care and financial help just as Jesus did. The spectre of hunger stalks our world. We certainly cannot solve a problem of world hunger ourselves but we can bring what you give us today to Jesus. Anything placed in his hands, is always much.**

**He works a miracle. Jesus breaks through into our lives by giving his body and blood. We cannot break through to those in need without in some ways breaking ourselves. May His love inspire us to care and to share.**

**Fr. M. S. Selva Raj, Director, Diocese of Kumbakonam, India.**