

### **Message from Msgr. Benwell**

(excerpted from his homily last Sunday for the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ)

[...] May we never lose sight of the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ, but the Eucharist is meant to be something more—a living sign of unity and charity within the whole community of believers. Before the Gospels were written, St. Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth: *“The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? [And] because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf”* (1 Cor 10:16-17).

Every year parishes in our diocese are asked to put our belief in the Eucharist as sign of unity and charity into action by participating in the Missionary Cooperation Plan, assisting a community far from us geographically, but one with us as members of the universal Catholic family.

If you’ve been following the news recently, you know that the country currently suffering most from the COVID pandemic is India, and this year St. Mary’s has the opportunity to help the Indian Diocese of Marthandam.

Even before the pandemic, the Catholics of Marthandam were a struggling and suffering minority; as you can imagine, those struggles and that suffering have only increased. Because of the widespread and abject poverty in India, the role of parishes and dioceses is not merely spiritual or formational; people look to their parish and diocese for their *every* need. So the Diocese of Marthandam not only has a hospital (actually two) and Catholic schools like the Diocese of Metuchen, but operates trade schools, orphanages, homes for the aged, differently abled, mentally challenged and the hospices for the dying.

The Diocese of Marthandam is asking our assistance in three areas of need.

- The establishment of mission stations to reach Catholics, and to evangelize non-Catholics, in remote areas of the diocese, far from population centers.
- The construction of another home for the poor and neglected elderly of every creed and caste.
- Assistance with programs that support vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Unlike most dioceses in our country, the Diocese of Marthandam has abundant priestly vocations, but also unlike most American dioceses, the Diocese of Marthandam struggles to meet the expenses of its seminarians’ formation.

I have assured the Bishop of Marthandam, Bishop Vincent Mar Paulos that we are a very compassionate parish and he can count on our help. There will be a second collection for the Diocese of Marthandam this weekend, June 12-14—and you can send or drop off a donation via the Parish Office any time next week.

Bishop Mar Paulos asked me to share these words with you:

[The] Corona virus pandemic very much affected our diocese financially. We look forward to your generosity to extend a helping hand in its various needs. I thank you sincerely for your prayers and support. God bless you all abundantly. Please pray for me and for my diocese.