



CARMELITES OF MARY IMMACULATE

CMI PRIOR GENERAL'S HOUSE

Chavara Hills, P.B. No. 3105, Kakkanad P.O.
Kochi 682 030, Kerala, India



Fr. Paul Achandy CMI
Prior General

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Feast of Pentecost, 2026

FROM THE UPPER ROOM TO THE PERIPHERIES

Beloved CMI Confreres,

Greetings and blessings to you on the solemn Feast of Pentecost and CMI Mission Day!

As we celebrate the solemn Feast of Pentecost, we find ourselves at the very heartbeat of the Universal Church's identity—its birth as a missionary movement. For our beloved Congregation, founded by the visionary sages Malpan Thomas Palackal, Malpan Thomas Porukara, Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, and Bro. Jacob Kaniyanthara, this day has a profoundly intimate meaning. In accordance with our long-standing spiritual tradition, we meaningfully observe this great solemnity as CMI Mission Day. It is a day to remind ourselves of our foundational charism, to look back at the radical missionary momentum of the Apostolic Church, and to gaze boldly forward into the new frontiers where the Holy Spirit is leading us today.

1. THE IMPERATIVE OF PENTECOST: NEED AND PREPARATION

To understand the absolute need for Pentecost, we must look into the hearts of the Apostles before the wind blew and the fire fell. They were men in isolation, locked in the Upper Room out of fear, grappling with their own limitations, frailties, and the gaping void left by the Ascension. They possessed the memory of Jesus, the instructions of Jesus, and the historical reality of the Resurrection; yet they lacked the vital power to proclaim it.

This reveals a timeless theological truth: human strategy, structural organization, and intellectual formation—while necessary—remain incomplete without the animating breath of the Holy Spirit. As St. Thomas Aquinas beautifully noted, *"The Holy Spirit is the interior master who teaches the heart, for where His unction is lacking, the word of the teacher is in vain."* The need for Pentecost is the need for divine strength to overcome human weakness. It transforms the Church from a localized historical memory into an active, living, and universal reality. Yes, there is the need of a Grace-filled Presence for the transformation of the World and the Church. In other words, only a Grace-filled Church can transform the world!

The School of Patient Waiting

The preparation for this outpouring was not a period of frantic activity, but one of prayerful and expectant waiting. Gathered in the Cenacle, in unanimous prayer alongside Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the early community modelled the essential posture of every missionary movement:

- **Contemplative silence:** silencing the noise of personal ambition to hear the whisper of the Spirit. *"All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (Acts 1:14).*



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- **Communal unity:** healing fractured relationships in order to become a single, receptive chalice for the divine gift. *"When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together"* (Acts 2:1).

For us CMIs, this reminds us that our activism must always flow from our *Darsana Veedu* (House of Vision). Without deep contemplative preparation, our missions risk becoming mere education or social work rather than the transmission of a living Christ-experience. Our founding fathers' prayer life activated their apostolate and their apostolate enriched their prayer life (CMI Constitution No. 4). Our apostolic activities, if rightly oriented, will become an inspiration and support for a life of prayer (CMI Constitution No. 59).

2. THE CHRONICLES OF FIRE: CROSSING THE BORDERS

The Book of Acts does not present Pentecost as a single, static event, but as a progressive and expanding reality that systematically broke down every socio-religious barrier of the ancient world. The Holy Spirit acts as a divine disruptor, guiding the early Church through multiple "Pentecosts" to establish true universality.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Jerusalem Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13)

The initial outpouring upon the core community in Jerusalem reversed the ancient curse of Babel. Where human pride divided language, the Holy Spirit united it. The Apostles spoke, and Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia heard the wonders of God in their own native tongues. This first Pentecost shows that the Gospel does not erase local cultures; rather, it enters into them, making itself at home in the vernacular of every human experience. *"At this sound they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language"* (Acts 2:6).

The Samaritan Pentecost (Acts 8:14–17)

For centuries, a deep theological and cultural chasm separated Jews and Samaritans. Yet, when Philip proclaimed Christ in Samaria, the people accepted the Word. Peter and John travelled from Jerusalem, laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit. This "Samaritan Pentecost" was a radical sign to the early Church that the Spirit refused to be confined within traditional borders of land and people. It healed ancient wounds and brought a despised people into the fold of Christ. *"Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 8:17).

The Gentile Pentecost (Acts 10:44–48)

The definitive breakthrough occurred in the house of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word—uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter's theology was forced to expand to keep pace with the freedom of the Spirit. *"While Peter was still speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word"* (Acts 10:44). He exclaimed, *"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"* (Acts 10:47). This event severed the exclusive boundaries of cultural Judaism, firmly establishing the Universal Church.



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Paul Laying Hands at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7)

When Paul encountered a group of disciples in Ephesus who had received only the baptism of John, he instructed them in the fullness of Christ. *"And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied"* (Acts 19:6). This manifestation shows that Pentecost is not a localized historical artefact; it is a living and dynamic experience that continues through apostolic ministry across generations and cultures.

3. THE APOSTOLIC MOMENTUM IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Driven by this multifaceted Pentecostal fire, the early Church moved with breath-taking momentum. We see this vividly in the pastoral and missionary journeys of the great Apostles:

- **Peter, the Rock of Proclamation:** He transformed from a frightened denier into a fearless herald. In Acts, he stands before the Sanhedrin with boldness. His epistles reflect the voice of a shepherd encouraging communities living as "aliens and exiles," anchoring their missionary identity in the reality of being *"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"* (1 Pet 2:9).
- **John, the Apostle of Communal Testimony:** His missionary spirit is rooted in the radical witness of love and fellowship. In his epistles, he reminds the Church that mission is not a theory but a lived reality: *"What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ"* (1 Jn 1:3).
- **Paul, the Vessel of Frontier Evangelization:** His life became a living map of mission. Spurred by his personal encounter with the Risen Lord, he crisscrossed Asia Minor and Europe, establishing domestic churches, engaging philosophers at Mars Hill, and pouring himself out like a libation. *"For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand"* (2 Tim 4:6). His epistles became theological engines for the mission, presenting Christ as the one who *"is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity through his flesh"* (Eph 2:14).

4. THE CMI CONGREGATION: A MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

Our founding fathers did not establish a monastic structure merely for self-sanctification. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara and his companions recognized that the Church is, by her very nature, missionary. *As St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Patroness of Missions, profoundly wrote, "In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be Love." This love must drive us outward.* Our founders looked at the landscape of Kerala and saw that much good had remained undone due to the lack of a proper house of discipline (*Thapasu Bhavanam*) and a house of vision (*Darsana Veedu*).

Our charism is fundamentally rooted in this dual reality: a contemplative experience of God and prophetic, multifaceted missionary involvement. "The charism for evangelization was an essential factor of the Christ-experience and Church-experience of our founding fathers who understood that the Church... is by nature both evangelized and evangelizing" (CMI Constitution No. 63).



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From the historic milestone of the Chanda mission in 1962—the first mission outside Kerala entrusted to us—to our present presence across continents, our history from Besrauma to Brazil and Beyond is a living testimony to our missionary DNA. We are not merely a collection of individuals holding responsibilities; we are a missionary movement guided by the Holy Spirit. It's a matter of great joy that we, CMIs work today in more than thirty countries all over the world as missionaries. Let us pray for our missionaries so that they will be grace filled presence to transform the world.

5. CALL TO THE PERIPHERIES

"But he said to them, 'To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent'" (Luke 4:43).

As Jesus was deeply aware of his sense of mission to reach out to all people and places, we shall remind ourselves of our sense of being sent to the unreached. *"For the love of Christ urges us on..."* (2 Cor. 5:14) Today, the Spirit calls the CMI Congregation to move beyond the comfort of established structures and journey toward the existential and geographical peripheries. These peripheries are not merely distant places; they are sacred spaces where Christ waits for us in the poor, the forgotten, the wounded, and the spiritually searching. *We must echo St. Vincent de Paul, who said, "Go to the poor: you will find God."* The missionary journey is therefore not simply an expansion of ministry, but a path of involvement.

The greatest temptation before every religious congregation is to become comfortable within its institutions and past achievements. Yet the Spirit who inspired Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara was never a spirit of complacency. Chavara courageously responded to the needs of his time with creativity and prophetic vision. Today, the same Spirit invites us to cross new frontiers—especially toward developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the Church continues to reveal vibrant expressions of faith, suffering, resilience, and hope.

Our missionaries in these regions remind us that evangelization is humble sharing of our Christ experience and learning with Spirit given openness from every person and culture. By living close to the people, respecting their cultures, and sharing their struggles, missionaries themselves are transformed. The peripheries evangelize the evangelizer. The credibility of our mission lies not in power or efficiency, but in simplicity, fraternity, compassion, and communion with the Church. Every CMI can be a missionary by promoting vocation to our mission lands through our prayer, witness and advocacy.

6. THE NEW FRONTIERS: MEDIA

As we celebrate the Year of Media, a new frontier opens before us: the digital world. Today millions, especially the young, live in a culture shaped by media, technology, and constant connectivity, yet many remain deeply lonely and spiritually restless. The digital world has become the new Areopagus where people search for meaning, truth, and belonging. If the Church is absent there, a vast periphery is left without the light of the Gospel.

The Year of Media therefore becomes a missionary call. Following the creative legacy of Saint Chavara, we are invited to use digital media not merely as a tool, but as a ministry of presence and evangelization. We must create content that addresses real human anxiety, doubt, inspires hope, deepens faith, heals wounds, and speaks meaningfully to human anxieties and questions. *As St. Maximilian Kolbe, a pioneer in using media for the Gospel, remarked, "We must use every valid and*



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legitimate means for the salvation of souls. "Every CMI province and community should support and encourage members, especially the young ones gifted in this apostolate, recognizing media ministry as a vital missionary field of our times with the same seriousness and ecclesial value as a traditional parish or school ministry.

A PENTECOSTAL RENEWAL

Dear brothers, CMI Mission Day is a moment of deep personal and collective renewal. Let us ask ourselves: Has the fire of our first love grown dim? *"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first"* (Rev 2:4). Have we settled into administrative security at the expense of missionary zeal? Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit continually pushes the Church beyond closed doors toward courageous witness.

As a practical expression of our missionary commitment, every CMI community should actively engage in outreach ministries among the poor, migrants, youth, families in crisis, and those on the margins of society through mission visits, counselling, faith formation, and social empowerment initiatives. Along with traditional apostolates, we must also promote digital evangelization, youth accompaniment programmes, media training, and creative pastoral initiatives that bring the Gospel meaningfully into contemporary culture and everyday human struggles.

Let us open the doors of our hearts, our communities, and our institutions to the unpredictable wind of the Holy Spirit. May Saint Chavara and the other founding fathers inspire us not only to preserve their legacy, but to inherit their pioneering missionary spirit. Imitating them let's courageously journey into the unknown. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother and Patroness, who remained with the Apostles in the Upper Room, intercede for us, that the Holy Spirit may renew the CMI Congregation with fresh missionary fire—to journey toward the peripheries, to embrace the new frontiers, and to become a grace-filled presence of hope in today's world.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Fr Paul Achandy CMI
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