

Mount Carmel province, Bhopal

St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara

St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara was a multifaceted ecclesial personality chosen by God to shed the rays of love, hope and wisdom in the blurred and darkened 19th century Kerala society. St. Chavara was born on 10th February 1805, to God fearing parents at Kainakary village in Kerala. At the age of 13, in 1818 he entered the seminary at Pallipuram and was ordained a priest on 29th November 1829. History has recorded St. Chavara, as a 'Karmayogi' who integrated contemplation and action harmoniously in his life and a 'sublime visionary' who acted with extraordinary courage to meet the challenges of his time. St. Chavara along with Rev. Fr. Thomas Palackal, and Rev. Fr. Thomas Porukara began the C.M.I. congregation in 1831. He was a great social reformer who established the first printing press of the Indian Catholic Church in 1844. He firmly believed that society could make progress only through education and knowledge. So he used education as an instrument of social mobility and launched a process of education at various levels such as theological education and systematic formation of clergy through seminaries and education of children through schools attached to all parishes. The first Catholic school of Kerala for educating the people of the lower ranks of the Indian society was begun in 1846 at Mannanam. In 1864 St. Chavara initiated mass education programs for the students of all category, irrespective of caste and sex.

In order to empower women to come forward as the catalytic agents for social reformation and for the integral development of women and children St. Chavara founded the first indigenous religious congregation for women, the C.M.C. in 1866 in collaboration with Fr. Leopold Beccaro O.C.D. In 1868 he started the first boarding house and school for girls in Kerala at Koonammavu, Kerala. St. Chavara founded the first 'Charitable

institution' in Kerala in 1869 for caring for the weak, the disabled, the sick and the aged members of the society. He was a prolific writer whose writings include Chronicles -a valuable historical record of the time, Spiritual-writings like 'Colloquies in meditation,The lamentations of a repentant soul,' poems like, 'The martyrdom of Anastasia, A poem to sing in the bereaved house', direction to families called 'Testament of a loving Father' and ten eclogues (shepherd plays). Finally he was called to eternal rest on 3rd January 1871. Drawn by St. Chavara's fame of sanctity and reputation of signs and miracles that God wrought through his intercession official canonization process started on 9th December 1955. He was declared 'Venerable' by Pope John Paul II on 7th April 1984 and beatified on 8th February 1986. Holy Father, Pope Francis canonized him as an intercessor and model of sanctity on 23rd November 2014 in Rome. This enthusiastic educationist was a powerful influence in the cause of Catholic education which in turn has influenced the entire nation. The spirit and enthusiasm St. Chavara has transferred into the minds of the C.M.C. sisters, continues to influence and inspire us to bring forth amazing fruits.