



Episcopal Motto

“Ad Jesum Per Mariam”

“To Jesus through Mary”



Bishop Justin Bernard Gnanapragasam

Bishop Justin Gnanapragasam was born on May 13, 1948 in the Parish of St. Mary’s Church, Kayts. He received his early education at St. Antony’s College, Kayts, joined St Martin’s minor seminary in 1959 and received his secondary education at St. Patrick’s College, Jaffna. He completed his priestly formation at National Seminary, Ampitiya, Kandy and Papal Seminary, Pune, India and was ordained a diocesan priest of the Jaffna Diocese by Bishop Deogupillai at the Church of Our Lady of Refuge (OLR), Jaffna on April 24, 1974.

Bishop Justin’s educational qualifications include B.Th (Pune), MA (Th)(Lon) and PhD Educ. (Lon). He served as Asst. Parish Priest at Kilinochchi and Valaipadu (1974 – 1975), Vanni (1975 – 1976) and St Anne’s Church, Ilavalai (1976 – 1979) and as Parish Priest at Mareesankoodal Mission, Ilavalai (1980 – 1985) and St Jude’s Church, Ilavalai (1989 – 1990). While serving as Asst. PP and PP, Bishop Justin also served as Asst. Director of Long Tech. Institute (1975 – 1976), Vice-Rector (1976 – 1989) and Rector (1989 – 2002) of St. Henry’s College, Ilavalai. In 2002, he was appointed as Rector of St Patrick’s College, Jaffna.

During his rectorship of St Henry’s and St Patrick’s, Bishop Justin displayed his organising and administrative skills by contacting, involving and building lasting relationships with the diaspora of old boys of the colleges and the many alumni associations which had been established in many parts of the world. The rapport he built with them has ensured that many of these entities have created perpetual / trust funds - the income from which is remitted to the Colleges for their various scholarship and/or sports activities. Additionally, as an educationist, he introduced many new contemporary courses to enhance the students’ education and thus, their future prospects.

Bishop Justin was a member of the Council of the University of Jaffna from 1998 to 2014. He retired as Rector of St Patricks in 2008 and was appointed as the Vicar-General of the Jaffna Diocese. On November 28, 2015, he was consecrated as the 8th Bishop of the Diocese of Jaffna at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Jaffna.

In his Episcopal Coat of Arms, Bishop Justin has included the dove - representing the Holy Spirit, Our Lady of Fatima - to thank God for “bringing me into this world on the 13th of May, the Feast Day of Our lady of Fatima”, Palmyrah trees - to recognise that the reason for the environmental prosperity of Jaffna is the palmyrah tree and the Lute (“Yarl”) - Yarl is the symbol of the city of Jaffna (*Jaffna is Yarlpaanam in Tamil*).

Compiled from the souvenir publication on the occasion of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Justin