125 Years of History Written with Love and Wisdom

St. Mary's Tamil Academy

Papal Seminary, Kandy – Pune

If Madurai in the south is proud to have nurtured the *Muthamil* (the three indispensable characteristics of Tamil) by establishing the ancient Sangam, then our Papal Seminary Tamil Academy is proud to have enthroned Mother Tamil across the seas, in the soil of Sri Lanka and in the land of Maharashtra. Holding firmly and joyfully in its heart the noble motto **"Grow in Love and Knowledge,"** the Academy has crossed 125 years in the vast expanse of time and now celebrates its grand jubilee. With great joy, we present the historical footprints of this Academy before its beloved children.

Beginnings in Kandy

The Academy was founded on **3 September 1901** as a part of the Papal Seminary in the historic city of Kandy in Sri Lanka. Its founders were Brother Adaikalam and Brother Swaminathar, two noble men who cherished Mother Tamil as their very life. It took its first steps under the name **"St. Francis Xavier Tamil Academy."** Entrusting seminary formation to Mother Mary, who has a special love for priest, it was renamed **"St. Mary's Tamil Academy"** from **May 1909** and continued its work with a new name and a wider scope.

Following the path of the three Tamils (*Iyal*, *Isai*, *Nadagam*: literature, music and drama), the Academy's literary journey and its services deserve to be inscribed in letters of gold. It staged its first drama in **1910**. In **1911**, the handwritten magazine ***"Thangapputhagam"*** (The Golden Book) was launched to give students a platform for their thinking and writing.

The Silver Jubilee

When the Academy, founded with only a few members, celebrated its 25th-year Silver Jubilee on **3 September 1926**, its membership had grown to **32**. (The Silver Jubilee invitation and the minutes of the meetings are now displayed in the Papal Seminary Museum.) It flourished not only in numbers but also in its many activities. Monthly literary conferences were held, and learned Tamil scholars and renowned Tamil orators were invited to deliver lectures. From **1935**, *Kathaprasangams* (devotional discourses) brought spirituality and Tamil together to renew the spirit of the people.

The Academy's work was not confined within the seminary walls. It reached the hearts of Eelam Tamils from the north to the south, from Jaffna to Colombo, and became one with the people. After guiding the spiritual and intellectual growth of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and of its

fellow brothers for fifty years, the Academy was, as circumstances required, relocated in **1955** together with the Papal Seminary from Kandy, Sri Lanka, to **Pune, India**.

The 75th Anniversary Celebration

Continuing its work with distinction in Pune, the Academy celebrated its anniversary with great splendor over three days, **14, 15 and 16 January 1977**. The celebration was attended and blessed by the **Most Rev. Paul Arulsamy**, a former president of the Academy and the then Bishop of Kumbakonam, by the **Most Rev. S. Arulappa**, Archbishop of Hyderabad and a former member of the Academy, and by many priests. The programme included music, dance, a drama titled *"Unmaigal Urangaduvathillai"* (Truths Never Sleep), and a debate on *"Which is more beneficial to human society: religion or science?"*

The significance of this historic event was recorded by the magazine *Nam Vazhvu* and by the English newspaper *Poona Herald* (now *Maharashtra Herald*) in a report titled "Tamil Academy Diamond Jubilee!" (The invitation and notes of this celebration are even now preserved in the Academy library.)

The Centenary Celebration

The Academy celebrated its Centenary over three days, **27, 28 and 29 October 2000**, in gratitude to God for its history of continuous service and for guiding the children who came to it, in honour of the dedication of its forebears, and as a memory to inspire future generations. The **Most Rev. Edward Francis**, then Bishop of Sivagangai, presided over the celebration. Fr. Francis Xavier, the then Provincial of the Madurai Jesuit Province, took part, as did 24 priests who were former members of the Academy, along with the present members.

The Most Rev. Lawrence Pius Dorairaj, the then Auxiliary Bishop of Madras-Mylapore, was a member of the Academy from 1978 to 1982. Although unable to attend in person, he expressed his deep love and attachment to the Academy and sent his greetings through a letter. Thus, the Centenary Celebration was recorded as a golden chapter in the history of the Academy.

Living out the Purananuru's saying ***"Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir"*** (Every place is our home, everyone is our kin), St. Mary's Tamil Academy has shown that, though lands and people change, we are all one through language. It has spread new roots in Pune, continued its noble work without pause, and now stands proudly at the close of its 125th year.

Legendary Works of the Academy

The Tamil Academy with its humble beginning in Kandy has taken root in the soil of Maharashtra and spread its branches. The Academy's activities, carried out with the vision of its founders and in keeping with its aims, are many.

1. Academy Mass: On the second Friday of every month, the Academy deepens the spiritual life of the seminarians through the Holy Mass.

2. "Nila" Literary Magazine: Nila continues to shine as a treasury of the seminarians' thoughts and an outlet for their creative writing. It stands as a record of the Academy's service and of its members' growth. KLindly Refer "Unforgettable Memories of Nila" below.)

3. Tamil Art and Culture: The Academy makes a distinctive contribution to passing Tamil art and culture to successive generations. Until the 1990s, a Pongal festival was held every year, and cultural programmes and a drama were staged once every two years. In the years when the cultural programmes were held, the Pongal festival was celebrated together with them, so the Academy presented two major events in those years. Over time, the cultural programmes and dramas were changed to once every three years. They remain an excellent platform for nurturing the artistic talent, creativity and personality of the brothers. In the academic year **2024–2025**, the Academy presented its cultural programme on the theme **"Aram"** (Virtue).

4. Support for Mission Work: In the 1990s, students of theology came together to prepare Stations of the Cross reflections and meditations for the brothers going on mission during the summer and Easter seasons. In the same spirit, the Academy arranges special training in liturgical songs so that the Holy Week services may be conducted with devotion. In this way the Academy contributes to the spiritual preparation and mission skills of the brothers.

5. Public Speaking and Homiletics: Seminarians who will be doing their pastoral ministries in Tamil Nadu receive training in public speaking and preaching to prepare for their future Tamil priestly ministry. Literary sessions are also organised every year.

6. Academy Feast: The Academy was planted as a small seed and has worked vigorously through many hardships. In thanksgiving to Mother Mary, who has guarded it like the apple of her eye through her ceaseless intercession, the Academy celebrates its feast every year on **8 September**, her birthday.

7. Pongal Festival: Every year at the seminary, the Academy celebrates Pongal, the harvest festival of Mother Tamil, on the Tamil festival of Thai Thirunal. The celebration includes dance, short cultural programmes and a banquet with various traditional dishes (around 19 kinds of traditional dishes), is prepared for the whole community in order to remember Tamil heritage, culture and traditional arts.

8. Ministry in Parishes: The Academy, which has been crowned in Maharashtra as Madurai was in the south, has not confined itself within the seminary walls. Its beloved children serve in more than ten parishes, including **Ramwadi, Khadki, Shanwadi, Solapur Bazaar, Ghorpuri,**

Sainikwadi, Dehu Road, Chinchwad, Dharavi and Wanowrie. There, our brothers actively preach the Word of God at Sunday liturgies; coordinate choir practice for the liturgies of Sundays, Christmas, Lent and parish feasts; lead the celebration of Thai Thirunal in the parishes, bringing together the Tamil hearts Of Pune; in June, the month dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and in September, the month of Our Lady of the Rosary, visit families and pray with them, strengthening their spiritual life and becoming instruments of the Sacred Heart's grace.

Unforgettable Memories of *Nila*

To many, "Nila" brings to mind the moon shining in the sky, or a metaphor for beauty. But for us, the members of the Academy, *Nila,* has given countless lasting memories. This magazine, full of noble thoughts and treasured memories, has rendered immeasurable service to the growth of the Academy and to the intellectual development of the seminarians.

Nila began in **1911** as the handwritten magazine ***"Thangapputhagam,"*** created to give Tamil Academy students a platform for their thinking and writing. It is the same magazine that today works to make us wise and enlightened people.

We have the issues of Nila from **1950** to the present day. Turning each page, one experiences not only words but the life, the quest for knowledge and the youthful energy of a generation. Some pages move us to reflect through deep spiritual thought. Some beautifully capture the realities of life. Others surprise us with playful critiques and humour about the seminary, its activities, and the Academy itself.

In particular, the brothers of earlier years recorded their spiritual experiences, theological reflections and views of life in poems, essays, short stories, reflections and artworks. These appeared in issues of *Nila* published every year on occasions such as Christmas and Pongal. Each issue, a meeting of many talents, carries a character of its own. Following the footprints of the generations who have travelled with us through the pages of *Nila*, the children of Mother Tamil continue to give life to their intellect and imagination through the magazine.

Bishops and Leaders from the Academy

It is impossible to name all the beacons of this Academy who introduced remarkable personalities to the world. Papal Seminary's Tamil Academy in Pune is a wondrous cradle that gave birth to great witnesses and leaders who guided the universal Catholic Church.

- In **1931**, the Academy gave its first Tamil bishop, the **Most Rev. Peter Francis**, former Bishop of Kumbakonam.

Many gems have followed in his footsteps

- The **Most Rev. Ignatius,** former Bishop of Trincomalee–Batticaloa (1947)
- The **Most Rev. Savarimuthu**, former Bishop of Coimbatore (1950)
- The **Most Rev. Rayappan Antonymuthu**, former Archbishop of Pondicherry–Cuddalore (1965)
- The **Most Rev. Paul Arulsamy**, former Bishop of Kumbakonam (1955)
- The **Most Rev. Amalanathar**, former Bishop of Thoothukudi (1981)
- The Bishops of Jaffna who led the Church in Eelam: The **Most Rev. Antonimuthu, the Most Rev. Deogupillai, the Most Rev. Savundaranayagam (Thomas), the Most Rev. Savarirayan** and the **Most Rev. Justin Bernard Gnanapragasam**
- The **Most Rev. Lawrence Pius Dorairaj**, former Auxiliary Bishop of Madras-Mylapore and the present Bishop of Dharmapuri.

The Academy has given many archbishops and bishops to the Church and earned imperishable honour. It continues to form many such leaders today.

125th Jubilee: Special Activities

One hundred and twenty-five years is not merely a count of time.

It is the Tamil devotion carried by generations, the dream sown by forebears,

the growth born of the dedication of many,

the pride celebrated by today's generation,

and a noble responsibility to be handed on to tomorrow's generation.

With this historic pride, St. Mary's Tamil Academy is celebrating its 125th-year Jubilee in the academic year **2026–2027**, with gratitude, renewed spirit and many special initiatives.

- **First,** on **8 September**, the birthday of Mother Mary, the Academy's patroness and guide, the whole seminary family gathered for a special Mass and joyfully celebrated the Academy Feast, in thanksgiving to Mary and to God for guarding and guiding the Academy with a mother's love. The theme was **"Mary Makes Humanity Human."**
- **Second,** on **20 September 2026**, the Academy gathered the Tamil families living in Maharashtra for a special Tamil Gathering, with cultural programmes and group games, so that they could share in the joy of the 125th anniversary.
- **Third,** a **Priests' Gathering** is presently held on **25 November 2026**. It reunites former members who worked for the Academy's growth and honour in different periods and remembers their dedication. To carry this joyful, historic moment across the world, an **informative, inspiring website** for the Academy is being created and launched. The **Academy anthem**, enriched with music, is also being released, expressing the Academy's identity and unity in a new dimension.

- **<u>Fourth,</u>** the 125th Pearl Jubilee will conclude with the **Pongal Celebration, (2027)**, with special programmes that unite Tamil heritage with the Academy's historic pride. In particular, the Academy plans to release a new dance song expressing its glory through music and dance. It also plans a special anthology titled ***"Nila Padaippugal"*** (Writings from Nila), carrying the thinking, writing and creativity of the seminarians to the next generation.

Thus, remembering past glory, celebrating present unity and creating new works for future generations, the Academy's 125th-year celebration continues as a historic journey filled with gratitude and innovation.

In keeping with the Greate poet Thiruvalluvar's words, ***"Thondrin Pughazhodu Thondruga"*** (If you are born, born with fame), we, with love and wisdom as our motto and a fearless heart, are part of a noble epic written through the sweat of our forebears, the dedication of many guiding fathers, the lifeblood of Tamil hearts and the boundless blessing of Mother Mary. Let us give thanks to God together with St. Mary's Tamil Academy as it completes 125 years and let us build a world where Tamil resounds across the earth.

Long live Tamil!

May the Tamil Academy flourish!

Members of the Academy, 2026–2027

No.	Name	Year of Study	Diocese
1	Bro. Arul Sagayaraj L.	3rd Year Theology	Tiruchirappalli
2	Bro. Christus Amala Deepan	"	Tuticorin
3	Bro. Sam Brimmer	"	Kuzhithurai
4	Bro. Lourdhu Abith	"	Palayamkottai
5	Bro. Nirmal Savio Paul	2nd Year Theology	Kottar
6	Bro. Motcha Perdinand M.	"	Palayamkottai
7	Bro. Joseph Vinith C.	"	Kottar
8	Bro. Snowin	"	Tuticorin
9	Bro. Alex	1st Year Theology	Thanjavur

No.	Name	Year of Study	Diocese
10	Bro. Andro Vasanth	“	Kuzhithurai
11	Bro. George	“	Thanjavur
12	Bro. Josever Gibston	“	Kottar
13	Bro. Surya M.	“	Palayamkottai
14	Bro. Dennis D.	3rd Year Philosophy	Tuticorin
15	Bro. Leo Anandaraj S.	“	Tiruchirappalli
16	Bro. Adrin	2nd Year Philosophy	Palayamkottai
17	Bro. Anthony Edison	“	Tuticorin
18	Bro. Jerin	“	Kottar
19	Bro. Rosan	“	Kuzhithurai

Rev. Fr. S. Stephen Jeyard

Animator St. Mary’s Tamil Academy

Rev. Fr. Nishanth Alphonse

Honorary Member of the Academy

Bro. Christus Amala Deepan

President

Bro. Dennis

Secretary

Historical Notes of the Academy Prepared By

Bro. Leo Anandaraj S

25.11.2026 – Gathering of the Alumni of the Academy

Thank You