News
Ministry



(GSR graphic/Olivia Bardo)



by George Kommattam

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Kozhikode, India — July 9, 2026

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Joseph Mathew and his wife, Nimmy Jose, express gratitude to the Maria Bambina nuns for the gift of their daughter*, who has transformed their lives.

"Our home used to be silent and empty as we had no child. The sisters gifted us [our daughter], and our life changed," Mathew, the circulation manager of a Catholic daily in Kerala, southwestern India, told Global Sisters Report in May.

Mathew's daughter was a 1-year-old in 2015 when her parents adopted her from St. Joseph's Foundling Home, which is managed by the Sisters of Charity of Sts. Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa (Maria Bambina Sisters), at Kozhikode, a major city in Kerala.



Sr. Jain Augustine Adackkanattu, president of St. Joseph's Foundling Home in Kozhikode, Kerala, India (Courtesy of Jain Augustine Adackkanattu)

The adoption center has placed more than 1,000 orphans with families like the Mathews since its inception in 1974. "Our mission is to promote and protect life," Sr. Jain Augustine Adackkanattu, the center's president, told GSR.

The center, which is authorized by the Kerala government to handle adoption cases, is part of the congregation's St. Vincent's Home, a social service institution. It now shelters 127 women and children through St. Joseph's Foundling Home (for children up to 6 years old), St. Vincent Girls' Home, St. Bernadette Home For Women, as well as a family counseling center and a tailoring institute.

The Mathews told GSR that they had lost hope after Nimmy had several miscarriages. And after years of unsuccessful medical treatment, doctors and colleagues advised the couple to consider adoption.

"We didn't know where to begin. Adoption sounded complicated," Joseph Mathew recalled.

His colleagues directed the family to the Maria Bambina nuns' center.

"We went with anxiety. But the sisters listened to us before speaking about procedures," he said.

After two months of counseling and preparation, their daughter entered their lives.

"Our home changed overnight. Life moved from emptiness to happiness," Mathew, now 58, said. Now, his wife is eager to get home from work to listen to their daughter's stories from school.



Sr. Archana Kunnapally, superintendent of St. Joseph's Foundling Home, Kozhikode, Kerala, southwestern India (George Kommattam)

Sr. Archana Kunnapally, 58, superintendent of the center since 2023, says preparing couples for adoption is a healing ministry and a blessing. She said the center receives around 20 adoption queries a month from couples facing infertility, old age or repeated pregnancy losses.

"Many come with deep sadness, but slowly discover joy," she said.

Harison David and his wife Regina are another couple helped by the center after years of waiting for a child.

"We thought adoption meant helping a child. The sisters helped us understand that adoption means becoming a family," Regina told GSR.

The nuns prepared the family for parenthood through counseling, home visits and talks on responsibility.

"When we first held our daughter, all our doubts disappeared. We can't live without her even for a moment now," Regina said.

Kunnapally said fear about bonding is common among those seeking adoption.

"But love grows through feeding, comforting and guiding a child," the nun explained.



A partial view of the crèche at St. Joseph's Foundling Home, part of St. Vincent's Home in Kozhikode, Kerala, India, where infants awaiting adoption receive care. (George Kommattam)

Adackkanattu said their work is monitored by the Central Adoption Resource Authority, a statutory body of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

"We have regular meetings and inspections from all the offices under the department. So far, we have not faced any problems from them. But sometimes we think they do not recognize our hard work," Adackkanattu told GSR.

Kunnapally said they receive infants in many ways. Some are abandoned by unwed mothers or women who cannot support them. Various government authorities also bring the infants they rescue to the center. For example, the Kozhikode Municipal Corporation has installed an *Ammathottil* ("mother's cradle") in the city, where mothers can safely leave their children.

The cradle alarm rings as soon as an infant is placed in the cradle, and the authorities bring it to the center, which places children for adoption up to the age of 6. After that, they may be transferred to other orphanage facilities.

Kunnapally said the center currently has 12 babies for adoption, adding that six caregivers provide medical care, nutrition and emotional attention to the children.

"Our caretakers won't get much time to sleep. Some of them are students preparing for competitive exams. They volunteer to take care of babies whenever they get free time," she said.



Sr. Archana Kunnapally, superintendent of St. Joseph's Foundling Home (Courtesy of Jain Augustine Adackkanattu)

She added that couples have to wait for years to get a child after registering on the adoption portal. Meanwhile, the nuns prepare both parents and children for a new life together. "Adoption succeeds when readiness grows together," she said.

The nuns also accompany women facing a pregnancy crisis.

"We help women move from fear to informed choice. Some decide to raise their children; others choose adoption after reflection. Our role is accompaniment, not pressure," Kunnapally said.

At the same time, she is worried that many women remain unaware of such support.

"Only 1% of cases are women undergoing a pregnancy crisis," she added.

Kunnapally said her congregation came to Kozhikode in 1923 at the invitation of church leaders to take care of vulnerable women and orphaned children.

"At that time, many had nowhere to go. Our sisters responded to human suffering with compassion," Adackkanattu said.

She said when the sisters established the center in 1974, adoption carried a social stigma, as people did not know the formalities of adoption and how to deal with inheritance.

"Our sisters helped society understand that family is created through love, not biology," she said.

Advertisement

She said their center is supported by government funds, donations and community help. They also use the pensions of sisters who are former schoolteachers.

Help often comes from unexpected places. "Once, our baby milk supply ran short, and someone came with a supply. It is an everyday miracle that convinces me that God takes care of widows and orphans," she said.

The local people are "extremely generous," she said. "Many celebrate their anniversaries and birthdays with us and sponsor a meal."

The nuns keep in touch with their former children and their adoptive parents. "We never break the umbilical cord. Our children keep coming back."

Nimmy Jose agrees. "Whenever we need support, we run to them. They always walk with us," she said.

Alphonsa Mathew (not related to the Mathews), who was in the center as an infant, said she owes her life to the sisters.

"St. Vincent's Home is my ancestral home," said the now teacher and local municipal councilor.

Sana Maria, who was placed for adoption when she was a 30-month-old, visited the center after securing a job with a degree in social work.

"I don't remember anything, but something keeps calling me here," she told GSR.

Akshay Ramesh, another former resident, celebrated his wedding at St. Vincent's Home in 2022.

"They are my family," said the 31-year-old physiotherapist working in Karnataka, Kerala's northern neighbor.

The former residents organize annual gatherings and online groups to share experiences.

"Adoption does not end when a child leaves," Kunnapally said. "The bond grows stronger with the child."

The Mathews' daughter attends reunions at the center to meet former residents. She said she is grateful to the nuns for giving her "sweet parents."

Kunnapally said each adoption represents more than a successful placement. "Every child who finds a family is a victory for life," she concluded.

**This story has been updated to protect the identity of the adopted child.*