

THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Seventeenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

(23 - 27 February 2015)

REPORT

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Seventeenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Blessed John Paul II Synod Hall of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia in the Catholicate Centre from 23 to 27 February 2015. In preparation for the Holy Episcopal Synod (HES) the Synod Fathers concelebrated the Holy Qurbono at 9.00 am, on Monday, 23 February 2015. All who serve in the Major Archiepiscopal Curia took part in the Holy Qurbono.

After the Holy Qurbono and the refreshment the Synod Fathers gathered in the synod hall. The HES began with a prayer. After the hymn (*Nalla devane njangal...*), the Word of God, 1Tim 4:11-16, was read out by Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios. After a spontaneous prayer, His Beatitude the Catholicos Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, the President of the HES intoned the prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, "*Njangalude karathavaya Yesumisaha...*" (Our Lord Jesus, the Messiah...)

The members present at the Synod were: Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos (President of the Synod), Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos (Secretary of the Synod), Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios and Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebios, the Exarch of USA, whose journey from New York was delayed due to heavy snowfall, could attend the Synod only from the fourth session that started at 9 am on 24 February 2014. The HES considered the information given by His Beatitude the Catholicos and accepted the legitimacy of the absence. Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, the Bishop of Marthandom was granted leave of absence from the 10th and 11th sessions of the Synod (3 pm onwards on 25 February 2015) as he had to represent the Eparchy of Marthandom and our Church at the Episcopal Ordination of Most Rev. Jerome Das Varuvel, the newly created diocese of Kuzhithurai.

Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, the Bishop Emeritus of Tiruvalla is granted permanent leave of absence due to his old age health conditions.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, the Curia Bishop and the Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, recorded the minutes.

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos, gave the opening address. HB made a comparison and contrast of some of his recent experience. We

see a world that is touched by the Word of God through the life and message of the Holy Father. HB recalled an experience during a train journey to Kozhikod. A Hindu lady spoke about the life and message of Pope Francis and she asked his HB to convey her love and appreciation to the Pope. That was a touching event. In the recent visit of the American President Mr Barak Obama, he reminded the nation of the importance of religious freedom. He repeated the same at a prayer meeting in the US. Contrary to these experiences, we see today in India an attitude of religious fundamentalism that hurts the life of the minorities. It might be the international situation that prompted our Honourable Prime Minister Mr Modi to make the recent pronouncements on religious freedom... We are a small community. But the Word of God that we just now heard asks us to teach with authority. HB recounted his experience in the Consistory of the Cardinals where the financial accounts of Vatican were also presented. Cardinal Pell presented the accounts and it was the first instance in the history of the Church. The Holy Father wanted transparency in all these matters and he said that the balance is the portion for the poor. In the backdrop of this, HB said that, though a small Church, we too are called upon to lead the Church in India in our own way. HB also reminded the Synod Fathers of the dream of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios to preach the Gospel everywhere in India. He urged all to keep this dream close to our chest. HB also delved on the life and contribution of His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, whose birth centenary we are celebrating this year, for the growth and consolidation of the SMCC. Similarly the spiritual life of Mar Theophilos of venerable memory, whose 125th birth year we are commemorating has laid a solid foundation for the SMCC. HB concluded the inaugural address invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit on the HES. Confiding the HES-in-session to the protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, HB declared open the Synod.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE AGENDA

His Beatitude the Catholicos, the President of the HES, presented the following proposed agenda of the Synod:

1. Prayer
2. Inaugural Address by His Beatitude
3. Presentation of the Agenda
4. Submission of the Catholicos' Day Offering
5. Report of the Sixteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
6. Meeting with the Major Superiors and their teams of the Institutes of Consecrated Life in the SMCC
7. Common Programmes – July 15, Sept. 20, 2015.
8. The Synodal Commissions – Bye-laws prepared by the appointed Committee
9. Charter of Priestly Formation
10. Synodal Commission for the Youth – Role of the Eparchial Directors in the MCYM activities; Participation of the MCYM in KCYM Activities
11. Mar Gregorios Centenary Celebrations
12. Matters *Subsecreto*
13. Other Matters if any, with the consent of the President

To this the Synod Fathers added the following topics:

1. Matters of St. Mary's Malankara Seminary
2. Meeting with the Staff of the Seminary
3. Matters of Synodal Commission for Faith Formation
4. *Suviseshasangham*
5. Report on the progress of the Cause of Canonisation of the Servant of God Mar Ivanios

6. Response of the SMCC to the Political Scenario in India
7. The Forthcoming Roman Synod
8. Amendment of Certain canons of the CPCSMCC

Next on the agenda was the submission of the offering of the Catholiscos Day to His Beatitude the Catholicos. All the Eparchial Bishops and the Apostolic Visitor of the ETRI submitted the offerings collected from the respective places. The following day, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebius also submitted the offerings from the Exarchate of USA to His Beatitude the Catholicos.

Report of the Sixteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

The report of the Sixteenth Holy Episcopal Synod was read out. A few inaccuracies and corrections were pointed out and corrected. Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom proposed the report to be passed and Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios supported the proposal. The Report was passed with applause.

THE DELIBERATIONS

The Meeting with the Major Superiors of the Institutes of Consecrated Life

The Synod discussed the *modus operandi* of the meeting of the HES with the Major Superiors of the Institutes of Consecrated Life. It was informed to the Synod that for a wider participation, all the Superiors General and their team and the Provincial Superiors and their teams of the OIC, SIC and DM Congregations were invited. Besides them, the Abbot of Kurisumala Ashram, the Provincial of the Franciscan Brothers, the Superior of the Sisters of Mount Tabor Ashram, and the Leader of the OSS were also invited. The report of the last meeting of the Abbot and Superiors General or their representatives was sent to them.

The meeting was arranged in the Patriarch Moussa Daoud Hall of the Catholicate Centre. The meeting began at 9 am. The meeting was in two sessions with a coffee break at 10.30 am. Of the invited 88 were present.

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, the Father and Head of the SMCC and the President of the HES welcomed all to the meeting.

The Agenda:

1. Propose new ways and means to strengthen the apostolic activities of the SMCC in this age of New Evangelisation
2. Share the issues and concerns of the Institutes of Consecrated Life that are to be addressed by the SMCC
3. Propose ways and means by which the Institutes of Consecrated Life in the SMCC can live the lifestyle and spirituality proposed by His Holiness Pope Francis.

The meeting helped a lot to communicate and share the thoughts of the members of the religious with the members of the Synod. All were happy of the gathering and looked forward to such sharings in the future. The report of the meeting is made extra.

Mar Ivanios Day 2015

The Synod Fathers expressed their general appreciation of the spiritual milieu of the *padayatra* from various centres of our Church to the tomb of the Servant of God. Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, the Bishop of Pathanamthitta, told the HES that the Eparchy would make the necessary arrangements for the *padayatris* to spend the day previous to the Padayatra in prayer and retreat.

It was suggested that the route of the Padayatra from Perunadu on the second day could be rerouted. The route could be Pathanamthitta – Kaipattur – Chandanappally – Kodumon – Adoor – Puthusserybhagam. The padayatris from Anandappally and Thatta could

join the padayatra at Adoor. The HES left the final decision to Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom in whose Eparchy the Padayatra begins and goes through. The sentiments of the parishes have to be considered.

The *padayatris* should be eco-friendly and shall not litter the roads and the surroundings the *padayatra* passes through. The leaders have to take care of this. The prayer of the respective hours (morning, noon and evening) shall also be said along with the *dhupaparthana* when the *Padayatra* reaches a church.

Reunion Day and Sabha Sanghamam 2015

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios, the Bishop-in-Charge of the common celebrations in the Church read out the report of the meeting he attended in the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla to plan the Reunion Day and *Sabhasanghamam* 2015. He highlighted the following:

- The *Sabha Sanghamam* is envisaged to be focused on the theme: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).
- To share the blessings that the Church received from God for the last 85 years, with the poor and marginalized, the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla plans a series of outreach programmes:
 - 85 Heart operations (commemorating 85 years of Reunited ecclesial life)
 - 3000 dialysis (in honour of the departed Bishops)
 - 10 Houses for the homeless
 - Marriage aid for ten women.
 - An initiative for organ donation – to get the *sammatha pathram* (document of consent) from a lakh of people to donate their organs and submit it to the Chief Minister of Kerala.
- To construct a *Smriti Mandapam* at Thirumoolapuram-Tiruvalla, the cradle of the SMCC, commemorating the life of the SG of Archbishop Mar Ivanios and Bishop Mar Theophilos and others at the initial epoch of the Reunion Movement.
- For the spiritual preparation and renewal of the entire families and parishes of the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla a team of 75 persons are trained and formed and sent to visit each family and share with them the Word of God and the spirit of the commemorations. A prayer is prepared and distributed.
- To substitute the traditional *preshita* rally with a procession similar to *perunalrasa*.

In the light of the discussions at the meeting, the following programmes suggested at the meeting in Tiruvalla were confirmed. The Synod Fathers also considered the feed back given at the meeting in confirming it. The suggestion to conduct a perunal like rasa was appreciated.

As regards the concrete planning, the meeting came to the following broad consensus:

- **19 September 2015**
Evening
 - The *chayachithra*, the *pathaka* and *deepasikha prayanam* as usual. The *chayachithram* of His Grace Mar Gregorios is proposed to be included as this is his birth centenary year. The *chayachithram* of His Excellency Mar Dioscoros whose mortal remains are entombed in the Thirumoolapuram church is also to be included in the *vilambara* rally
 - They converge at the Cathedral Campus and the *vilambara* rally is conducted and its finale.
 - MCYM Quiz
- **20 September 2015**
 - Common concelebrated Holy Qurbano at the main pandal
 - Seminars of MCA, MCYM and MCCL at separate venues

- Afternoon – *Sanyasa Sammelanam*. The meeting shall have an ecumenical nature, with Hindu, Orthodox and Catholic Speakers giving input sessions.
- Evening – *Suvisesha Sandhya*
- The participant of the *Sanyasa Sammelanam* and *Suvisesha Sandhya* go in a candle procession to Bethany Convent Thirumoolapuram, the cradle of the woman-sanyasa in Malankara.
- **21 September 2015**
 - 8.00 – Liturgical Reception to the Bishops, Morning Prayers
 - 8.30 am. – Holy Qurbano
 - 11.30 am – Public Meeting – The Catholicos addresses the Church. The Chief Minister of Kerala will be invited to the meeting. The *sammatha pathram* (document of consent) from a lakh people to donate their organs will be submitted it to the Chief Minister of Kerala. Fr Chiramel will also be invited to speak at the meeting on organ donation.
 - 12.30 - Lunch
 - 1.30 pm – Rasa to St. John’s Cathedral.

The VIP invitees for the celebrations are yet to be decided.

St Mary’s Malankara Seminary

The visit and meeting with the staff of St Mary’s Malankara Seminary was slated to be at 6 pm on Wednesday, 25 February. In view of this, the HES took up for consideration the topic “St Mary’s Malankara Seminary” from the agenda.

This year the faculty of philosophy comes to an end. The philosophy block of the seminary buildings is also free. The block needs thorough maintenance.

How do we make use of the Philosophy block of the seminary? The HES considered this question in the light of the various proposals and needs raised by the Laity and the Religious and the Clergy at various times. For the Laity there was a need of a basic theological orientation course for lay leaders; the Religious had proposed the need of a common institute for their ecclesial, theological and pastoral formation; the Clergy need a place for their on-going formation; the *Suviseshasangham* needs a centre for the formation and on-going formation of its members. Considering all these, it was opined by the Synod Fathers that a Theological-Missiological-Spirituality Institute could be established in the Philosophy Block in such a way that it does not affect the discipline of the Seminary. It was also suggested that, in that case, Rev. Fr Antony Kakkanattu, presently the Working Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Evangelization and the Director of the *Suviseshasangham* could be appointed as the Director of the proposed institute. Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios was asked to formulate a vision statement for the institute and Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC to formulate the statutes of the institute.

The lack of sufficient number of staff for the Faculty of Theology came under the consideration of the HES, especially in the context of the application for recognition submitted to the Holy See. Department of Moral Theology needs a resident staff. In this context the HES also considered the contribution that could be given to the Faculty of Theology by Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos and Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC who served the Seminary earlier on its staff.

The HES also took note that the Seminary needs another expert in Liturgy and liturgical formation to substitute Rev. Fr Isaac Parappally who is transferred from the seminary and given a new pastoral assignment in the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla. Rev. Fr Mariadasan from Marthandom who was serving the Faculty of Philosophy which now comes to an end was looking forward to a change and some pastoral assignment in his Eparchy of Marthandom. The HES considered whether he could be asked to continue.

The spiritual formation and the role of the Spiritual Fathers of the Seminary came in for analysis and evaluation in the context of the available information. The need of accompaniment in spiritual formation was stressed in the context of lack of in-depth awareness of the need of spiritual direction from the part of the students.

Some seminaries to which our students are sent for the study of Philosophy demand a bachelor degree as a basic eligibility for admission. What shall we do in this context? From the discussion that followed, it was concluded that, if +2 students could not be promoted to the study of Philosophy, we shall think of other solutions and policies.

The Visitation of the Seminary

The visitation of the Seminary started at 6 pm. The Synod Fathers joined the Evening Prayer of the Seminary. His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, the Father and Head of our Church and the President of the HES imparted apostolic blessing to the staff and students of the seminary together with the other Synod Fathers at the end of the Evening Prayer.

The meeting with the staff began at 6:45 pm at the Library Hall of the Seminary. All the members of the Resident Staff were present. Rev. Fr Daniel Manikulam, the Rector of the Seminary, welcomed the Catholicos and other members of the HES to the Seminary and the meeting and he thanked the HES for its great solicitude for the seminary.

Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, the Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for St Mary's Malankara Seminary was asked to give an orientation to the meeting. Welcoming everyone to the gathering, he highlighted the following:

- The meeting is a sign of the solicitude of the HES to the priestly formation in our Church.
- The professors who are relentlessly committed to the seminary are committed to the Church
- A disciplined staff imparts discipline to the seminary and students
- The lack of qualified staff affects the seminary
- The lack of finance affects the library of the seminary
- When the community is small, better quality of formation can be ensured
- The dedicated service of the reverend sisters and the domestic staff contribute towards achieving the aims and objectives of the seminary.
- The financial resources are depleted as the number of students has decreased and the subsidy is reduced and the rubber plantation, the dairy etc are in loss.
- The Rector through his efforts could raise an amount of Rs 30 lakhs for the seminary

His Beatitude the Catholicos declared the meeting with a word of welcome to all and appreciation for the staff for their committed service to the seminary. HB invited all to a meaning sharing on the life of the seminary.

From the sharing of the members of the staff, the following points emerged:

- The situation and the strength of the staff of the seminary, when Rev. Fr Mariadasan and Rev. Fr Isaac are transferred
- There is shortage of professors. The Department of Moral Theology needs a resident staff. No one was appointed in the place of Fr Madathikunnath who was relieved from the staff of the seminary.
- The service of the reverend sisters is not sufficient.
- Limiting the Sunday ministry of the Students to Sunday alone does not help much
- With regard to the general discipline, the impression is that it goes well, although two students had to be sent out for lack of discipline.
- Since the Faculty of Philosophy comes to an end, that building block has to be maintained and meaningfully used.
- The next batches of the students of Theology will have an average number of 30.

- The library is affected because of the lack of funds
- The approach of the students to spiritual direction has to be positive
- There is the need of a counselor for the students.

The accounts of the seminary were presented by Rev. Fr S Varghese. He explained the amount spent under various heads.

From among the staff, Rev. Fr Philip Chempakassery published book titled “Marriage and Family in Biblical Perspective”. He was complimented for this.

A few of the Bishops shared the following points:

The new priests who pass out of the seminary heralds a positive sign.

The MBOC texts prepared from the seminary are excellent and the SC for Faith Formation is thankful to the seminary for it.

In the concluding address, HB, on behalf of the Church, thanked everyone for the open and cordial conduct of the meeting and praised the committed service of the staff. HB also brought out the following points:

- The professors have to get settled in the seminary. That is, they should feel that their ministry is a lifelong commitment. When urgent or needed they get a transfer; but when committed, they should be steadfast.
- Ad-hoc arrangements would not work. We look forward to permanent solution. So recommend students who are qualified and committed, that they can be trained to be on the staff of the seminary.
- The social commitment of our students has increased qualitatively; thanks to the leadership of Fr Isaac Parappally and other staff of the seminary.
- Refrain from casual comments that can be interpreted negatively by your hearers.
- Special thanks to Most Rev. Mar Julios and other Bishops of the Episcopal Commission for the Seminary, Rev. Fr. Daniel Manikulam, the Rector and the team of staff and all others who engage in the life and functions of the seminary.

At 8:15 pm the meeting concluded with a prayer. All went to the refectory and had supper with the seminarians. The Bishops also met the Rev. Sisters and the domestic staff of the seminary after the supper.

When the HES met again the next day, some of the points were again discussed. The outgoing staff members like Fr Isaac Parappally and Fr Mariadasan are to be relieved as per the understanding they have reached with their respective Eparchial Bishop. On discussing about the ways and means to improve the standard of formation in the seminary, it was pointed out that while the approach should be holistic, a step by step planning in particular aspects according to a priority of values has to be introduced. To start with, training of the members of the staff specially chosen and sent for studies to serve ‘lifelong’ the seminary is to be the priority.

Synodal Commissions

The sixteenth Holy Episcopal Synod of our Church that was in session from 20 to 22 September 2014 asked Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios, Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos and Most Rev Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC to study the draft of the byelaws of the Synodal Commissions that was circulated to the members of the HES and other SCs and to present it to the Seventeenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod to be convoked from 23 to 27 February 2015. After studying the draft of the byelaws and the drafts submitted by certain SCs, the group opined that the present draft was good enough. Hence it was finalized as a draft to be presented to the HES. Based on this, each SC can elaborate its aims and objectives and elaborate the guidelines, if needed. The HES discussed the proposals made by the group as a prelude to the draft

1. Proposal: *“There is no need of a separate SC for Publication. As the nature of the apostolate dealt with by the SC is the same, it is better to have a separate Desk of the*

SC. However, for good coordination, it is better that the Chairman of the SC himself chair the Desk too”.

Response: The HES decided that the History Desk of the SC for Theology can be combined with the present commission for publication, museums, archives etc and formed as Synodal Commission for Publications and History

2. Proposal: *“It is good to bifurcate the Synodal Commission for Social Activities and Dalit Christians. It should at least have a Desk within the SC”.*

Response: The proposal was accepted creating a special Desk for Dalit Christian affairs within the Commission.

3. Proposal: *“Is it a workable arrangement to have a SC for the Pastoral Care of the Faithful outside India? Shall we not drop it? Or can this be combined with another SC of similar nature?”*

Response: Taking into consideration the *de-facto* situation, the HES agreed to the proposal to discontinue the Synodal Commission for the Pastoral Care of the Faithful outside India. Instead, the Apostolic Visitor to Europe Most Rev Thomas Mar Eusebios will set up a pastoral committee for the region/s. Separate Pastoral Committees shall be formed for the Middle East and Asia Pacific Regions.

4. Proposal: *The scope and role and function of the Synodal Commission for Seminary Formation have to be integrated with the role of the Episcopal Commission for the Major Seminary.*

Response: The Chairman of the Episcopal Commission is also the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Seminary Formation. He should see how to liaison their activities. It was also decided that for effective participation of the members of the Episcopal Commission for the Major Seminary, there shall be a division of work among them – academic, discipline and finance. The members of the Episcopal Commission shall meet together at least once in three months.

5. Proposal: *There is need of a budgetary allocation for the SCs. To start with, we propose an amount of Rs. Five Lakhs.*

Response: The HES favoured the proposal though there was no concrete suggestion to find out the means for the same.

6. Proposal: *The SCs are permanent offices of the Curia unless they are suppressed or dissolved. Hence reconstituting all SCs and each of them at one time affects the role and function of these commissions in the Church. We do not reconstitute the SC. We only substitute the office bearers from time to time for its smooth functioning. It is better not to appoint the office bearers for a stipulated period of time. We can take the dicasteries of the Roman Curia as a model.*

Response: The HES agreed to it in principle.

7. Proposal: *There should be a mechanism to ensure that the Chairman, the Secretary, the Office Assistants and the Consultors are accountable to the HES and the Church in the discharge of their duties. The tree is judged by its fruits. There has to be a thorough evaluation for a workable arrangement.*

Response: No concrete proposal emerged.

8. Proposal: *The scope of a SC is more than that of an association that comes under the purview of the commission. Hence they should not be identified. For example, the SC*

for the Laity is not equal to the MCA. There are also other associations of the Laity which the commission has to take care of.

Response: During the discussion, the consensus was that the organizations like the Legion of Mary, Vincent de Paul Society, Kolping, etc come under the purview of the Synodal Commission of the Laity.

9. Proposal: *It is good to fix the Order of listing the SCs according to a certain criteria, for example, in accordance with the relative importance of the SC in the life of the Church or ecclesiological / theological importance.*

Response: The suggestion need to be attended.

New Secretaries of certain SCs. A few Secretaries of the SCs had, through their respective Chairmen, informed the Synod of their difficulty to continue their service as they are burdened with other offices too. The HES considered their requests and relieved them from the office of the Secretary of the SCs. As per the proposal of the HES, His Beatitude the Catholicos has appointed new Secretaries in their stead. The new Secretaries are:

- Rev. Fr George Thomas Kochuvilayil is appointed Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Catechism (Faith Formation) in the place of Rev. Fr Thomas Kanjiramukalil.
- Rev. Fr. Mathew Arackal from the Eparchy of Muvattupuzha is appointed Director of the MCCL. He succeeds Rev. Fr Geevarghese Nedumpurath.
- Rev. Fr Cherian Thazhamon is appointed Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue in the place of Rev. Fr Varghese Madathikunnath.
- Rev. Sr Ancelet is appointed Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Health Care in the place of Very Rev Mother Lilly Thomas who is elected Provincial Superior of St Joseph's Province of the DM.
- Rev. Fr Joseph Venmanath is appointed Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Family in the place of Rt Rev. Msgr Chacko Thadathil.
- Rev. Fr Benny Nedumpurath is appointed Secretary of the Desk Dalit Christians, a subsection created in the Synodal Commission for Social Apostolate and Dalit Christians.

1. **New Chairmen of Certain Synodal Commissions.** There are two changes in the Chairmanship of the SCs. Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios took over as the Chairman for the Synodal Commission for Vocation while he handed over to Bishop Thomas Mar Anthonios the office of the Chairman of the SC for Communication Media. These changes were effected by the Catholicos as per the consensus of the last HES.

The New Timings of Synods

The members of the Synod pondered over rescheduling the convocation of the HES. It proposed that for the sake of convenience of the members of the HES to attend the Synod, it could be convoked from 21 to 23 September every year, after the Reunion Day Celebration and *Sabha Saghmamam*. The Lenten Season Session shall be a weeklong session. With this session there will be the meeting with the Major Superiors of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Reporting session of the Synodal Commissions. **One day retreat**

The MCYM

Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulose, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for the Youth and brought to the attention of the HES that the participation of the MCYM in the Kerala Catholic Youth Movement (KCYM) has become very poor. He also pointed out that the active participation of the Eparchial MCYM Directors in animating the youth is also very poor. They don't take the office as an essential part of their ministry.

Faith Formation

The HES congratulated Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos for his dynamic leadership in building up the MCCL and for giving effective leadership to faith formation in our Church.

It was suggested that an ecclesial level meeting of the Headmasters of Sunday Schools would be good while the teachers should be given chances for gathering and training at the eparchial level.

Many suggested that a basic text of SMCC catechism would be good. To this suggestion Most Rev. Mar Barnabas pointed out that Rev. Fr. John Berchmans OIC was preparing such a text for the ETRI and the same could be used in Kerala too. All opined that Fr Berchmans could be motivated to complete it.

Some Synod Fathers also enquired whether the SC for Catechism could coordinate the MBOC (Malankara Bible Orientation Course) and the BBS (Bethany Bible Studies) the summer vacation programmes for faith formation by the Church and Bethany Ashram respectively. To this it was pointed out that both use the same theme every year. However, the texts books are prepared separately because BBS text books should be available in October every year as Bethany Vedavinjanapeeth conducts vacation camps during the Deepali holidays in North India.

Liturgy

The preparation of the lectionary came in for discussion and analysis. Many voiced their opinion that in accordance with the liturgical seasons, the biblical passages could be chosen, so that the same periscopes are not repeated every year and for different occasions. The reading shall be selected in such a way that the whole Bible is used and read in a year. Similarly, only 13 Psalms are used in our Liturgy; why can't we use other Psalms too? The Synodal Commission for Liturgy was asked to study the proposals. **Mar Julios was asked to study**

Similarly the need to bring together the text for the liturgical services of the pontifical and to print them together as an official text was discussed.

The need to reprint the *Thakso* and the *Koodasakramam* was also discussed.

Substitute for the Catholicos at the forthcoming Synod of Bishops in Rome.

His Beatitude the Catholicos told the HES that in case, he is not able to attend the forthcoming Synod of Bishops in Rome, someone else can be sent to represent the Catholicos and our Church at the Synod. Archbishop Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos was proposed and the Synod Fathers supported the proposal.

The Synod also directed that the questions dealt with by the Synod shall be discussed at all levels and the synopsis of the eparchial level discussions shall be sent to Most Rev. Mar Julios who would collate them to be sent to Rome.

Birth Centenary Celebrations of Mar Gregorios

HB introduced to the Synod the various programmes chalked out for the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Archbishop Mar Gregorios.

In this context, the need of participation of all, especially the Bishops, in the Feast of Commemoration of Mar Theophilos of venerable memory was highlighted. All agreed to the reminder.

Amendments to the CPCSMCC

A few members of the HES were of the opinion that certain canons of the CPCSMCC need revision and updating. So a committee comprising of Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios and Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios was asked to consult the Eparchial Bishops and form a draft of the proposed amendments.

Report of the *Suviseshasangham*

Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas presented the report of the *Suviseshasangham*. He expressed satisfaction at the formation of the *Suviseshasangham* at various levels and urged that at least a lay faithful form each parish should be well formed to lead the parish-level *Suviseshasangham*.

Matters *Subsecreto*

- **Erection of the Eparchy of St John Chrysostom Gurgaon and the Exarchate of St Ephrem Kadkhi.**

His Beatitude the Catholicos briefed the HES of the latest developments made in this regard to the Apostolic See. The above mentioned canonical provisions and the names of the Eparchy and the Exarchate respectively were the final proposals by the Holy See. The territorial demarcations are yet awaited.

The proposal that Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC be appointed the Bishop of the Eparchy of St John Chrysostom and Most Rev. Thomas Anthonios OIC be appointed the Exarch of St Ephrem was unanimously endorsed by the HES.

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Next Synod

It was agreed that the next HES shall be convoked from 21st evening to 22nd evening of September at Marygiri, Tiruvalla.

Conclusion

HB the Catholicos concluded the HES. He gave the valedictory address highlighting the abundant grace the Lord is showering upon us. He also said that the spread of the *Suviseshasangham* is a sign that we take the Word of God seriously and live it. Hence, it has pleased the Lord, to shower further grace on our Church. Taking refuge in the intercession of our Fathers-in-faith, we go ahead with the *Sabhasanghamam*. He thanked every Bishop for his wholehearted participation in the Synod. He also thanked the office-bearers of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia and the Catholicate Centre for their dedicated service to the Synod and to their respective offices. Invoking the love of the Father, the grace of the only Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

✠Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

✠Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC
Chancellor