

THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Nineteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

PART I

(16-20 February 2016)

REPORT

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Nineteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in the Blessed John Paul II Synod Hall of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia in the Catholicate Centre from 16 to 20 February 2016.

Day one was marked for the meeting of the HES with the Major Superiors of the Institutes of Consecrated Life of the SMCC. Day two was the “Reporting Day” of the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions. The formal session of the Synod began at 9 am on 18 February 2016 with the concelebrated Holy Qurbono in the morning. All who serve in the Major Archiepiscopal Curia took part in the Holy Qurbono.

The HES started with a prayer. 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 Bishop of USA and Canada, could not attend the Synod due to his visa problems in the US. He was granted leave of absence.

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. First of all, HB spoke about the liturgical context of the HES-in-session: “In the days between the two great feasts of our Liturgical Year, Christmas and Easter, we are gathered together to fulfill the sacred responsibilities entrusted to us. Christmas, the feast of the incarnation, marks the beginning of the economy of salvation in its temporal dimension on earth. Easter marks the fulfillment of the economy of salvation on earth through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, his triumph over sin and death to impart salvation for us and the world. It is entrusted to us, the Holy Episcopal Synod, to transmit the life-giving fruits of this economy of salvation to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and through her to the world. Let us be worthy of it and renew our life and commitment for the same!”

Then His Beatitude highlighted the meeting with the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions and the Major Superiors. Expressing the satisfaction over the discussion with the Secretaries of Synodal Commissions His Beatitude said: “The meeting with the Synodal

Commissions that coordinate the different apostolates in our Church reflects the status of our commitment through the various outreach programmes of our Church. Their reports also show that they are slowly getting organized to fulfill the apostolates entrusted to the respective commissions. But they need a lot of systematic administrative commitment as well!" His Beatitude also added that the meeting with the Major Superiors helped us to strengthen the bonds of communion within the Church. "The meeting with the Major Superiors was very helpful to strengthen the bonds of communion within the Church through our communion with the Religious of our Church. This meeting was a follow-up of the previous meetings. It was held in a very cordial open atmosphere and such dialogues strengthen our Church in hierarchical communion and apostolic commitment."

In this background, HB also urged the members of the HES to keep pace with the progress of the world. HB continued, "We see the changes in the world around. We confront daily, besides social changes, the rise of religious and political fundamentalism leading to terrorism and the threat to life and communal harmony and peace. The Church is called to share the fruits of the economy of salvation in a world of today, by going out into mainstream and the periphery of the society." Then HB congratulated all bishops for their commitment in their respective Eparchies/Exarchate. HB also said that the agenda of the HES-in-session will have time for an open sharing of pastoral matters in the Eparchies and invited all for the same.

Before concluding the opening message, HB invited the attention of the Synod Fathers to the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios. "I know that you are all participating in the programmes organized to commemorate the birth centenary of our beloved Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Successor of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios and the Second Metropolitan-Archbishop of our Church. His leadership of 41 years nurtured our Church to grow and branch out on its Apostolic foundations. His Grace steered our Church through the days of the Second Vatican Council and the days of the renewal of the Church after the Council. He consolidated the foundations of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church laid by Mar Ivanios and made her an instrument of ecclesial communion and social change in Kerala and India and beyond in the Universal Church. Let the commemoration of the 100th Birthday of this venerable Prelate of our Church be a blessing to us and strengthen our Church!"

HB invoked the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on all and prayed for the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church over the Synod. Then His Beatitude declared the HES open.

Submission of the Catholicos Day Offering

It was the time for the submission of the offering of the Catholicos Day Offerings from the respective Eparchy/Exarchate. The offerings were expected from the parishes and institutions. The following is the sum total of the offerings by the respective Bishop of the Eparchy/Exarchate:

Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum	Rs 2,25,000.00 (offered)
Eparchy of Puttur	Rs 16,000.00
Archieparchy of Tiruvalla	Rs 2,85,000.00
Eparchy of Muvattupuzha	Rs 60,000.00
Eparchy of Mavelikara	Rs 1,00,000.00
Eparchy of Pathanamthitta	Rs 1,00,000.00
Eparchy of Bathery	Rs 2,00,000.00
Eparchy of Marthandom	Rs 75,000.00

Eparchy of Gurgaon-Delhi	Rs 35,000.00
Eparchy of USA & Canada	US \$ 7,558.66
Exarchate of Khadki-Pune	Rs 4,90,000.00

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. Submission of the Catholicos Day Offerings
4. Report of the Eighteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
5. Evaluation of the Meeting with the Major Superiors
6. Evaluation of the Meeting with Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions
7. Evaluation of the Major Seminary Academic Year
8. Planning of the Common Celebrations
 - a. 15 July – Mar Ivanios’ Day
 - b. 20 September - Sabhasanghamam
9. The Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia –
 - a. Appointing a Chancellor
 - b. Service of the Rev. Sisters in Curia
Service of the Regents for the coming academic year
10. The Second Malankara Catholic Assembly
11. Accounts of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia
 - a. Clearance of the loan
 - b. Budget for the coming year and its pooling
12. Eparchial Tribunals and the Implementation of the New Law on Marriage Nullity Cases
13. Briefing from the Eparchies and Exarchate
14. Matters Sub secreto
15. Reunion of Fr. Sunil Benedict from Bengaluru
16. A briefing on the canonization process – final stage
17. Other matters if any, with the consent of the President

To this the Synod Fathers added the following topics:

1. Dismissal of Fr. Thoppil from priesthood
2. Charter of Priestly Formation
3. Psalms that can be used in the Canonical Hours of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

The HES discussed the feasibility of completing the discussion on the topics of the agenda in the given time. It was also pointed out that, during the forthcoming CBCI Plenary Assembly convoked in Bengaluru from 2 to 9 March 2016, there would be a day, Sunday 5 March, set apart for the gathering of the Bishops of each *Sui Iuris* Church. All agreed that on

that day shall be convoked as Part II of the HES in-session. The topics prorogued for consideration were:

1. Charter of Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
2. Psalms that can be used in the Canonical Hours of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
3. Second Major Archiepiscopal Assembly
4. *Matters Sub-Secreto*:
 - a. Canonical Provision for the Malankara Knanaya Faithful now under the Archdiocese of Kottayam
 - b. Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia - Canonical Provision for the office of the Curia Bishop and Chancellor

The agenda was approved.

Report of the Eighteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

The report of the Eighteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod was read out. It was pointed out that in the report on the Reunion Day celebrations, the importance of Thirumoolapuram can be highlighted. Similarly, the Synod Fathers opined to delete two three other references. Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios proposed the report to be passed and Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom supported the proposal. The Report was passed.

THE DELIBERATIONS

After the completion of the initial procedures, deliberations on the agenda began.

Evaluation of the Meeting with the Major Superiors

In general, the members of the HES opined that the meeting was good. However, the absence of a few Major Superiors was a matter of concern. It was also pointed out that the Rev. Sisters came prepared for the meeting.

The Major Superiors and the members of their Councils were invited to the meeting this time. Evaluating the large number of participants, it was a common opinion that henceforth, the Superiors General and the Provincial Superiors and the Heads of Other Institutes of Consecrated Life ascribed to the SMCC shall be invited. It should be made mandatory that all Superiors General attend the meeting.

One of the concerns pointed out by the Major Superiors, namely, the provision of food from convents to parish priests, came up for discussion. The problems raised by them were evaluated. It was agreed that our presbyterium shall be informed of it.

The HES appreciated the varied forms of charitable activities undertaken by the religious communities. It was suggested that a quantumisation of the charitable activities could be done, for proper records and testimony.

Evaluation of the Meeting with the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions

The reporting shows that the functioning of the Synodal Commissions has improved. The infrastructure provided has also helped them a lot. It was observed that it is good to provide a format for reporting.

Thereafter, the Chairman of the respective Commissions highlighted certain programmes.

1. **SC for Education**: The commission plans to organize an international Seminar on education.

2. **SC for Faith Formation** : The need to fix the age limit of the membership in MCCL was brought to the attention of the HES. After a discussion it was decided that the students upto and including Standard XII shall be members of the MCCL. The Commission informed that the theme of the MBOC for this year is the Sacrament of Marriage. The need to blend the MBOC and the BBS conducted by Bethany Ashram was stressed, so that there is a unity and continuity in faith formation of our children.

3. **SC for Vocation** : There came up a suggestion to observe a Vocation Week in our Church to promote vocations to priesthood and religious life. It was also suggested that the Chairman of the Commission shall issue a general circular urging the same.

4. **SC for the Youth** : It plans to conduct training and career guidance programmes for the youth and to organize “Fides 2016” as done last year.

5. **SC for the Family** : There were various suggestions in the light of the Roman Synod on Family. For the motivation and spiritual formation of couples married for 5 to 10 years, a course has to be arranged. Marriage Preparation Course has to be arranged effectively with a common syllabus and a book prepared for the same with a group of trained team of personnel in each Eparchy. Personal guidance and counseling has to be given to couples. It is good to have a Counseling Centre in each Eparchy.

6. **SC for Health** : The commission had suggested a Chaplaincy Course for those doing services in our hospitals. Though it did not materialize, the same would be arranged at Pushpagiri and Pirappancode. It was also suggested that our spiritual services can be extended to District Hospitals irrespective of religious differences.

7. **SC for Priests** : The SC proposes to focus on the on-going formation of our priests. It also expressed its wish to monitor the life of our clergy aimed at its spiritual renewal and motivation and as answer to the challenges of the modern times. Eparchial gathering of priests once in a year is recommended while the general gathering is to be arranged once in three years. Regional gathering of priests with on-going formation programmes are also on plan. There was also a suggestion that priests who are specially committed to long years of charitable work could be recognized on the ecclesial level on the recommendation of their respective Eparchial Bishop. Religious priests are also to be included in the list of recommendations. Jubilarians can be honoured at the ecclesial level.

The suggestion for intra-ecclesia (inter-eparchial) services / transfers was also considered by the HES. The possibility of intra-ecclesial service is now open. It can be reasonably fostered. However, regarding the intra-ecclesial transfers, the existing Canon Law concerning ascription of priests cannot be bypassed at the moment. It was also suggested that as the Common Pastoral Course for the Deacons of our Church, a common course for all our priests after five-years of pastoral life has to be arranged.

8. **SC for the Religious** : In this context, the problem of vocations to religious life came in for the special consideration of the HES. Vocations has to be fostered to Eparchial Clergy as well to Religious Life, The status-quo of the matter has to be studied, although we are aware of the global problems as well as the problems in our own country. Why there are no vocations from those parishes where there is the presence of Religious? Why are those parishes entrusted to the Religious alienated from the Eparchial centre?

The use of clerical habit is a matter of concern. This is to be dealt with at the Eparchial level.

9. **SC for the Liturgy** : The Chairman highlighted the positive effect of the introduction of the new liturgical books. It gives a unity to our liturgical life.

The participation of the members of the SC in its functioning was a matter of concern of the Commission.

Similarly due importance is to be given to preparation of the lectionary.

10. SC for Ecumenism : All appreciated the booklet prepared and published for use during the Unity Octave.

11. SC for Social Apostolate : Our Social Service Societies have to work together to avail the opportunities for government aid, subsidies, scholarship, etc. It is good to have an office in Delhi as well as in Trivandrum to coordinate such activities.

The Self-help groups have to be streamlined.

12. SC for the Laity : The Career Guidance Programme now organized at the ecclesial level has to be organized at the Eparchial level. Thereafter, the programme is to be coordinated at ecclesial level with from a list of participants approved by the Eparchial Bishop.

The Pastoral care of the migrants also came in for the consideration of the HES.

The Holy Qurbono organized at the Tomb of Mar Ivanios by the Commission in preparation for the Feast of Commemoration of the Servant of God was discussed. July 13 shall be the day for it.

A Legal Cell is to be organized to obtain the service of our Laity in related matters.

14. SC for Theology – The Chairman saw to the need of international opening up of the commission in matters of theological pursuits. The Commission has to be aligned with other Oriental Churches, especially the Maronites who have 3 universities.

15. SC for Evangelisation – The chief activity of the Commission now is the organization of the Suviseshasangham. The family visits organized by the SS has to be completed. The motivation-role of the Bishops is elicited for the same.

16. SC for Communication Media – The Chairman highlighted the need to improve the functions of the commission. The website of our Church is to be improved. The New Directory was ready for publication. However, the erection of the Eparchies and the Exarchate in our Church has called for the revision of the content of the Directory. It will be done at the earliest.

Common Celebrations: His Beatitude the Catholicos informed the HES that for the 63rd Feast of Commemoration of Mar Ivanios, Archbishop Timothy Dolan from the USA will be present. The programmes of the Feast remain the same.

September 20: Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, the Bishop of Puttur, the host of the Sabhasanghamam and the 86th Reunion Day Celebrations, informed the HES that in consultation with His Beatitude the Catholicos the date of the celebrations is fixed on 17 and 18 September 2016 according to the convenience of the venue of the celebrations, Noojibalthila. There are no holidays in Karnataka on any other days convenient to us. There will be a Youth Rally on 17th Evening. After that a common program, Kudumbasangamam (Family Gathering), of all our associations and apostolates together is envisaged. There will be a common class at that gathering. This will be followed by the Suviseshasandhya organized by the SS and a Gospel-based entertainment programme. There is no special forum for each association. On 18th, after the solemn concelebrated Holy Qurbono, a public meeting will be arranged.

The HES can be convoked from Sunday evening, 18th September onwards at KIDS, the social service centre at Puttur, on Monday there shall be a public reception at the Bishop's House.

His Beatitude the Catholicos said that we shall conduct successfully the celebration in the context of the Eparchy of Puttur. The success of the celebration is not to be measured in

comparison with other Eparchies but in terms of the boost it would give to the ecclesial and apostolic activities of the Eparchy.

Planning for the future celebrations, the Eparchy of Muvattupuzha was suggested as the next host of the Sabhasanghamam in 2017.

Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia

His Beatitude the Catholicos introduced the topic. Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios is now appointed as the Apostolic Exarch of the St Ephrem, Khadki-Pune. He has expressed his difficulty in managing the two offices, the Curia Bishop and Chancellor, which he now holds along with the new canonical provision. Hence we have to think of relieving him and of new provision of the offices.

After a brief discussion on the matter, all opined that the topic can be discussed more at the proposed Part II session of the HES-in-session.

The HES was informed that the term of service of the SIC Sisters in the Catholicate Centre is coming to a close. The DM Sisters are asked to lend their service for the next five years. The Mother General is making the arrangements for the same. They will take over the service from April 2016 from the Bethany Sisters.

Similarly, the availability of the service of Regents was sought for the coming year. His Beatitude agreed to provide one Regent from the Major Archieparchy. Most Rev. Mar Chrysostom said that one Regent from the Eparchy of Pathanamthitta could spend his regency at the Catholicate Centre in the next academic year.

A Briefing on the Cause of Canonization Mar Ivanios - Final Stage

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios, the Postulator of the Cause of Canonisation of Mar Ivanios narrated the progress of the work leading to the final stage. It is expected that the Definitive Closing of the Archieparchial Inquiry of the Cause can be held at the earliest.

Sharing from the Eparchies

It was time for sharing by the Bishops on their respective Eparchy or Exarchate.

a. Eparchy of Bathery

The consecration of the Cathedral is fixed for 8, 9 July 2016. An average of ten to fifteen families has reunited with the SMCC in certain parishes. It is a sign of internal growth. New missions have been started at Bandhadukka and Perunthalmanna.

The scope of our apostolate in Nilgiris is depleting as the area is now declared protected for ecological reasons and the people are leaving the place.

Shreyas, the social service wing of the Eparchy needs reorientation and restructuring in tune with the changing scenario in the field of social development and funding. The Apostolate of education has been progressing in the Eparchy.

There are financial burdens for the Eparchy because of loan taken from the Bank.

b. Eparchy of Puttur

The Eparchy is progressing since its establishment six years ago. Four new missions have been started. Of the four Districts of Karnataka that compose the Eparchy four are still left untouched. More than the scope of Reunion there is scope for Evangelisation. The Eparchial Centre remains the same although efforts to put up a new one has been on the anvil. The efforts to purchase land continue.

The minor seminary functions at the present Eparchial centre. There are eight Major Seminarians. The apostolate of social service goes well. There is a house managed for the differently abled. Similarly the Mar Ivanios B.Ed College functions well.

We enjoy a good relationship with the Latin Church at Puttur and with the people of the locality.

c. Eparchy of Pathanamthitta

A particular phenomenon of the Eparchy is the presence of so many, approximately thousand, empty homes from where parents and children migrated to other countries. The policy on the protection of nature promoted by the government has affected life and inhabitation in the high ranges of the Eparchy. Hence, the number of our faithful in parishes has diminished.

The politics of the place also affects the functioning of our ecclesiastical organisations.

The Clergy Home for the elderly priests is under construction. It is hoped that it would be completed in three months. Eighteen priests are to be received in the Clergy Home. There is no new ordination this year. The clergy as a whole is very cooperative.

The new college and the Madonna School are going well.

There are financial burdens for the Eparchy because of loan taken from the Bank.

d. Eparchy of Marthandom

The Eparchy in general is on the go, in a growth process. Six new missions have been started recently – between Bhootapandy and Nagercoil. A mission is also started in Madurai where the DM Sisters are also engaged in the apostolate.

There is general growth and change in the people. They contribute generously towards church construction. Nine churches are under construction. The Curia has paid only Rs. 10 Lakhs each. However, there is an increasing tendency among the Laity to grab the temporal administration of the parish. Kuzhithura becomes a new centre in the Eparchy. There is a plan to begin a new school at Kuzhithurai.

The Apostolate of Education is progressing. 80% of the staff of our Colleges is our own Faithful. The Engineering College, because of its loan from the bank, is a financial liability so far. The situation may improve. The college maintain a good standard. There is a plan to start a Malankara College of Commerce.

There is a need to construct a Clergy Home, a Pastoral Centre and the Cathedral.

Some liturgical books have been completely translated into Tamil and published. Other translations are getting ready. CDs of some liturgical hymns are also published.

There are problems of membership in certain parishes. They are being settled.

There is a great amount of cooperation of the Sisters in the pastoral work of the Eparchy. Renewal course for the priests are being planned.

The financial situation is burdened with loans.

The Eparchy has a cordial relationship with the Diocese of Kuzhithurai. The TNBC is very positive in its approach to the Eparchy. This year the annual retreat of Trichy was preached by Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulose, the Bishop of the Eparchy. These are opportunities to witness the oriental identity of the Eparchy amidst Catholics who are otherwise skeptical of our Catholic identity.

There is a positive response to the “Mission Appeal” of the Eparchy.

The Eparchy has at present 55 Seminarians. More Particular Law is under preparation.

e. Eparchy of St. John Chrysostom, Gurgaon

The new Eparchy is trying to put in place an administrative system as per the Canon Law. Two Syncelli have been appointed. The More Particular Law is in codification. There are 22 parishes. A small plot of land is bought in Delhi. At Junahat 5.5 acres of land has been purchased. There are 10 Minor Seminarians this year. A new mission is started at Raipur. Orissa Mission flourishes. There are great expenses for the missions. There is a plan to start programmes like, "Adopt a Mission", "Send a Child to School" and "Accompany a Family to Mission".

Bhopal Nursing School is progressing. The formation of Societies for apostolic activities as per civil law is being worked out.

f. Eparchy of Muvattupuzha

It is ten years since the erection of the Eparchy. There are 53 priests in the Eparchy. Subtracting those sent for studies and pastoral activities outside the Eparchy 40 priests are active in the Apostolates of the Eparchy. There are 11 Major Seminarians and 11 Minor Seminarians. Sisters are very active and cooperative in the apostolate of the Eparchy.

A new parish with 30 families is started at Muringoor. So also a new mission is inaugurated at Pattikkadu. Mission activities are flourishing in Coimbatore.

The social apostolate is reviving. 25 houses have been constructed for the homeless. Scholarship is disbursed to 30 professional course students.

MCA and MCYM are functioning rather well. There is an elite Laity. But their leadership is still to emerge.

Apostolate of Education is going good. The School at Piravom has to be renovated. At Attappadi, a bio-agriculture is to be promoted in 20 acres of land.

g. Eparchy of Mavelikara

The Eparchy is getting stabilized. Two new missions have been started. The apostolates are going well. With the inauguration of an unaided college, the apostolate of education is also getting rooted. There are 40 seminarians now; 20 Major Seminarians and 20 Minor Seminarians.

h. Exarchate of St. Ephrem, Khadki-Pune

After the inauguration of the Exarchate on 30 May 2015 every attempt is made to respond to both administrative and infrastructural needs. There is lack of personnel, especially priests to be appointed as parish priests. The Exarch thanked the Eparchies that have lent the service of priests. The Bethany Fathers, the Bethany Sisters and the DM Sisters are all cooperative in the apostolic works of the Exarchate. Missioadgentes is the priority of the Exarchate. However, our potentials are scanty.

The Exarchate is blessed with a group of Laity who is always in the forefront of leadership and who help the Exarchate with their spiritual and temporal wealth.

The construction of churches in Padi, Aypakkam, Singasandra, etc. has to be completed. There are financial strains. There is possibility of beginning a mission in Goa.

The Curia has started functioning. A Protosyncellus (Rt. Rev. Msgr. Varghese Mattamana), a Finance Officer (Very Rev. Fr. Varghese Kaithon) and a Chancellor (Rev. Fr. George Mathew OIC) have been appointed. Fr. George Mathew also the Rector of the Seminarians. Rev. Fr. Varghese Valikodath is the coordinator of the apostolates and organizations. Though there is scarcity of priests, this appointment gives a good start to all our apostolates and organizations. The Suvisheshasangham is active and is in the formation process.

i. Archieparchy of Tiruvalla

The Year of Mercy has been inaugurated in the Archieparchy. Renewal programmes of the year are progressing.

The apostolate of Education is progressing. The unaided college at Kumily helps us to reach out to the people of the high ranges. Similarly the Chengaroor College is on the track of growth and development.

j. Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum

The shortage of priests is one of the problems faced by the Major Archieparchy. Three new missions – Muthakkal, Aruvikkara and Kalathara – have been started. The Suviseshasangham has a very positive influence. Rev. Fr. Godjoy gives efficient leadership to the Suviseshasangham. The night vigils started in the Cathedral is very effective for spiritual awakening. The Major Archieparchy makes it a point that the Ordinations and First Holy Qurbano be celebrated with simplicity.

Eparchial Tribunals and the Implementation of the New Law on Marriage Nullity Cases

Rev. Fr. Varghese Manackalett, the President of the Ordinary Major Archiepiscopal Tribunal was called into the HES to present the New Law on Marriage Nullity Cases and to suggest ways to implement the law. He highlighted the salient features of the new law and how the new law differs from the old process. While the law on marriage and its application in judging the validity/invalidity of marriage remains the same, the process has been simplified but with strict rules for its application. The Bishop has to assume a greater role and responsibility in the process.

The HES asked Rev. Fr. Manackalett to prepare a handbook on the subject together with Rev. Fr. George Thomas. It was advised to call a meeting of the tribunal personnel of our Church to acquaint them with the new law and the process.

Reunion of Fr. Sunil Benedict from Bengaluru

His Beatitude the Catholicos asked Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios, the Exarch of St. Ephrem, to share with the HES on this topic. For the last six months, Rev. Fr. Sunil Benedict, a Russian Orthodox Priest belonging to the Diocese of Australia had expressed his desire to join the Catholic Church. His request had been considered favorably under the guidance of His Beatitude the Catholicos. He is also working with the Deutsche Bank and thus he supports his family. He is convinced of the Catholic faith and has a genuine interest in the liturgy of the Malankara Church and has the talents for the same.

The members of the HES expressed their opinion in favour of accepting Rev. Fr. Sunil Benedict into our Church ascertaining his intentions and giving him enough time for the spiritual preparation.

The Reduction of Fr. Thoppil from the Clerical State

Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, the Bishop of Muvattupuzha, explained to the HES in detail the circumstances leading to the dismissal of Rev. Fr. Thoppil.

Accounts of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia; Clearance of the Loan; Budget for the Coming Year and its Pooling

Rev. Fr. Varghese Angadiyil, the Finance Officer of the Curia was invited to present the financial statement of the Curia and he presented it. After giving clarification to the members of the HES and evaluating the financial stand of the Curia, the accounts were accepted and passed.

The HES pondered over paying back the loan of the Curia. His Beatitude agreed to find out the means of clearing it.

The Budget for the coming financial year was presented. In the present context, we cannot expect any other source of income; hence it was proposed that the expenses have to be shared by each Eparchy and the Exarchate proportionate to their financial status. It was accepted. The following is the list of the proposed amount and the amount agreed upon:

Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum	755000.00	1000000.00
Archieparchy of Tiruvalla	655000.00	600000.00
Eparchy of Bathery	555000.00	500000.00
Eparchy of Marthandom	455000.00	300000.00
Eparchy of Muvattupuzha	255000.00	200000.00
Eparchy of Mavelikkara	355000.00	355000.00
Eparchy of Pathanamthitta	355000.00	355000.00
Eparchy of Puttur	155000.00	150000.00
Eparchy of Gurgaon- Delhi	155000.00	200000.00
Eparchy of America-Canada	155000.00	650000.00
Exarchate of Khadkhi-Pune	155000.00	200000.00

This amount is to be remitted to the account of the Major Archieparchial Curia every year. All pointed out that the Catholicos Day Offerings have to be collected earnestly and used for the apostolic activities of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia.

Evaluation of the Major Seminary Academic Year

Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, the Chairman of the Seminary Commission, informed the HES that the authorities of the Urbanian University, Rome conducted an inspection of the Faculty of Theology of St Mary's Malankara Seminary with regard to its affiliation. They got a positive impression of the Faculty: the documents were up to date; the professors were well prepared for the classes; the response of the students during interaction with the professors was good; the library is well maintained; the ambience is good and tidy.

They suggested that the description of the courses should be with bibliography and that smart class rooms are recommended. There is a need of integration of liturgy and theology, especially Trinity oriented theologizing; doctrine has to be integrated with praxis. Human formation is to be stressed with sufficient feminine characters / participation in the Church.

Then the Members of the Staff of the Seminary were called in to the HES for an interaction. His Beatitude the Catholicos addressed them. HB welcomed them to the annual meet of the staff of the Seminary with the HES. HB complimented them, on behalf of the Church, for their dedication to the formation of the priests of our Church. The Seminary is the heart of the Church. HB invited the members of the staff to share their ideas on the progress of the Seminary, especially in the context of the inspection from the Urbanian University Rome. HB again thanked the Rector and Staff of the Seminary, who take care of the Seminary as centre of formation of souls. HB welcomed them to an open sharing.

Rev. Fr. Manikulam, the Rector thanked HB and the HES for the warm welcome and for the opportunity to meet the HES.

The annual report and accounts of the seminary were read out and evaluated.

The members of the Staff shared their thoughts with the HES and expressed their appreciation of the present status of the Seminary. The Spiritual Fathers expressed their hope that the students could be more open to spiritual direction.

The Members of the Synod responded to the observations of the Staff and expressed their compliments to the Staff and Students of the Seminary. It was also pointed out that due importance can be given to the use of the clerical habit, to develop skills for the pastoral care of the youth and for the study of monasticism and its spirituality.

Thanks to the Sisters who Serve in the Curia

For the last five years the Sisters from the SIC were serving in the Curia taking turns by substitution. At present Rev. Sr. Santhi SIC as Office Secretary, Rev. Sr. Ivania SIC as Assistant to the Finance Officer and Rev. Sr. Savitha SIC as Receptionist are in service. As they are completing their term, they were called to the HES and felicitated for their dedicated service. As signs of gratitude, His Beatitude the Catholicos, also presented souvenirs to them.

Analysis of the Political Situation

The HES also evaluated the political situation in Kerala in the light of the forthcoming elections to the State Assembly. While we remain by the Catholic Principles of the political involvement of the Church, it was pointed out that worthy candidates can be supported, however, not involving in any sort of party politics.

CONCLUSION

HB the Catholicos concluded the HES-in-session Part I pointing out that we would assemble in Bengaluru on the sidelines of the Plenary Assembly of the CBCI. HB informed that the matters subsecreto and the other topics prorogued would be dealt there.

His Beatitude touched upon the wonderful ways in which the Lord guides our Church in fulfilling all her divine missions. HB said: "We are instruments in the hands of the Lord in fulfilling this divine mission, especially through our dedication to the Eparchies entrusted to our care. Your earnest efforts to improve the pastoral and financial situations in the respective Eparchies/Exarchate are praiseworthy." HB thanked the Bishops for their candid sharing on their respective Eparchies and expressed the firm hope that their financial situations will improve in due course with the clearance of the loans. HB continued: "It is a fact that no other Bishops have to face the situations we face in our Eparchies. But we, as a Church, always experience the greatness of the mercy that our Lord showers on us as a little flock. And this is our hope and strength. That means, we have the trust that we are in the safe custody of the Lord and are protected by the unfailing intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There may be stray disheartening incidents, but we are safe in the hands of the Lord."

HB reminded all bishops again to commemorate the Birth Centenary of His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios of venerable memory in all Eparchies and the Exarchate, to cherish his holiness and legacy in our Church.

His Beatitude thanked the Curia Bishop and his collaborators of the Curia for their commitment and for the upkeep of the Curia and for preparing well for the conduct of the Synod-in-Session.

Invoking God's blessing through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, on all and the Church, His Beatitude declared Part I of the HES-in-Session closed.

✠Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

✠Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC
Chancellor

NINETEENTH ORDINARY HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD
PART II

(5 March 2016)

St John's Academy of Medical Sciences, Bengaluru

REPORT

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Nineteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church at the Blessed John Paul II Synod Hall of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia from 16 to 20 February 2016. While presenting the Agenda, having seen the number of items on the agenda it was felt that the Synod-in-Session cannot complete deliberations on all. It was also pointed out that, on the forth coming CBCI Plenary Assembly convoked in Bengaluru from 2 to 9 March 2016, there would be a day, Sunday 5 March, set apart for the gathering of the Bishops of each SuiIuris Church. All agreed that that day shall be convoked as Part II the HES-in-session.

The topics earmarked for consideration were:

1. Charter of Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
2. Psalms that can be used in the Canonical Hours of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
3. Matters Sub-Secreto:
 - a. Canonical Provision for the Malankara Knanaya Faithful now under the Archdiocese of Kottayam
 - b. Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia – Canonical Provision for the office of the Curia Bishop and Chancellor

The Holy Episcopal Synod was convoked at the St John's Research Institute Conference Hall of St John's College of Medical Sciences. The Members of the Synod gathered together at 9 am.

The HES started with a prayer. 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 the USA, who had obtained leave of absence from the Synod in its part one, due to his visa problems in the US was also absent in part two of the HES.

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 a brief introductory address to the HES. Explaining the context of the Synod-in-session, His Beatitude said: "It was our decision at that time that we get at the sidelines of the Plenary Assembly of the CBCI shall be made use of to deliberate on the Charter of Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. This gives us an opportunity to relate our concerns with the pastoral concerns at the national level. Our active participation in the CBCI always contributes to the Catholic ecclesial communion in our country and helps us to widen our ecclesial horizons, especially in the present socio-political scenario of our country. Let us

keep praying for the success of the CBCI Plenary Assembly-in-session. Let us keep praying for our country, especially for our brethren who suffer injustice in the different parts of our country, for the fact that they are Christians.” His Beatitude expressed the prayerful sentiments of the members of the Synod to Most Rev Vincent Mar Paulose on the serious health condition of his mother. His Beatitude also delved in brief on the agenda to be treated in the HES. “In today’s deliberations of our Holy Synod, we reflect mainly on the priestly formation in our Church. As you know, it is our primary duty to form our future priests. Our deliberations in this regard decide the future of our Church. The demand of the epoch is to provide priests with an integrated personality of human and spiritual qualities. Though there are lots of shortcoming in our life and ministries and that of our priests, the faithful accept us and respect us. However, they are looking forward “to good shepherds who lay down their life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). Therefore, we should have the divine discernment in selecting and forming new candidates to priesthood.” HB expressed satisfaction at the progress of the CBCI Plenary Assembly in session. His Beatitude also informed the Synod Members that the Apostolic Nuncio would visit the HES while in session.

Confiding the HES-in-session to the protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Beatitude declared the Synod open.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE AGENDA

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

1. Charter of Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
2. Psalms that can be used in the Canonical Hours of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
3. Matters Sub-Secreto:
 - a. Canonical Provision for the Malankara Knanaya Faithful now under the Archdiocese of Kottayam
 - b. Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia – Canonical Provision for the office of the Curia Bishop and Chancellor

DELIBERATIONS

Charter of Priestly Formation

His Excellency Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios presented the elaborate draft of the charter as studied and drafted by the Episcopal Committee formed for the same. The draft was examined chapter by chapter. It was widely accepted by the members while specific improvements were suggested. The Committee was asked to finalise the draft.

Psalms that can be used in the Canonical Hours of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios who had volunteered to study and propose psalms other than those frequently used in our Liturgy presented the schema. The schema was accepted. The Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Liturgy, Most Rev Thomas Mar Koorilos agreed to engage the members of the Commission to present to the HES the S’himoNamaskaram incorporating the proposed Psalms.

The Visit of the Apostolic Nuncio

The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Salvatore Pennachio, who was participating in the CBCI Plenary Assembly visited the Holy Episcopal Synod-in-Session with the two secretaries of the Nunciature. His Beatitude the Catholicos welcomed His Grace. HB recalled the loving services and popular pastoral service the Nuncio is rendering to the Catholic Church in India. Through his loving and generous approach His Grace represents Pope Francis in India. HB also recalled the generous love and solicitude His Grace shows for the needs of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. With deep sense of gratitude HB recalled the

active role played by the Nuncio in the erection of the Eparchy of Gurgaon and the Exarchate of St EphremKhadki. This historic canonical provision made by the Holy Father has practically granted all India jurisdictions to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. His Beatitude also thanked the Nuncio for the support he has given for the Canonical Provision and elevation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Exarchate in the USA to the Eparchy of Queen of Peace in the USA and Canada.

On his part, the Nuncio shared with the members of the Synod his sentiments of joy at the growth of the SMCC. His Grace lauded the role His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos plays in the Indian and Universal spheres of the Catholic Church. His Grace also appreciated the unity and communion among the members of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the SMCC. His Grace urged all to work hand in hand with the other Sister Churches of the Catholic Communion.

After spending half an hour with the Synod, the Nuncio left the hall.

Matters Subsecreto:

In the afternoon, at the third session of the day, the Holy Episcopal Synod took up the Matters Subsecreto.

1. Canonical provision for the Malankara Syrian Catholic Knananites in the Archieparchy of Kottayam
2. Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia – Canonical Provision for the office of the Curia Bishop and Chancellor

Next, the canonical provision for the office of the Curia Bishop and Chancellor, so far held by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios was considered, as the incumbent appointed as Apostolic Exarch of the Exarchate of St Ephrem, Khadkhi-Pune was overburdened with new responsibilities cannot carry forward the responsibilities of the office of the Curia Bishop and Chancellor.

As per CCEO c 182 §1-2, all agreed that, the members of the Holy Synod shall by secret ballot propose the names of the priests who can be considered to be included in the terna to be sent to the Holy See for approval.

CONCLUSION

Concluding the Synod, His Beatitude said: “With this session, we conclude the agenda of the Nineteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod. I thank you all sincerely for your active participation. I thank Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios and his team for preparing the draft of the Charter of Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and for presenting it in the Synod. We could discuss it elaborately and suggest amendments where they were necessary. Let us hope to complete the process as early as possible and apply it in our priestly formation plan.” HB also mentioned about the special duty of metropolitans in forming future priests in our Church. “As we are the members of the HES, it is our duty to provide proper directives for priestly formation to enhance the pastoral and missionary life of our Church. We are appointed episcopoi, supervisors, of our Church to look after the pastoral needs of our people. We have to discern the signs of the times and provide for the pastoral care of our people”. HB thanked everyone for their active participation in the HES. HB assured the members to follow up the matters entrusted to him.

✠ Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

✠ Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC
Chancellor