

THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Twenty First Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

(6-10 March 2017)

REPORT

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Twenty-first Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church at St. John Paul II Synod Hall of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia at the Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum. The Members gathered together after the Holy Qurbono at the Tomb of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios. It was on the Tenth Anniversary of the Enthronement of His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, as the President of the HES and the Father and Head of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

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. Yoochanon Mar Chrysostom, Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC, Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios and Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebius, the Exarch of USA, 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 was granted permanent leave of absence due to his old age and 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 and welcomed the members to the HES. His Beatitude said that, it was a fervent and joyful experience that he could celebrate the Holy Qurbono together with his brother Bishops and thank the Lord for all His loving care and providence on his 10th anniversary. God's grace outdid human weakness! His Beatitude dealt with the growth of the Church in the last few years, especially through the missions undertaken by the Church. His Beatitude also lauded his Brother Bishops for their untiring commitment. His Beatitude pointed out that the presence of our Bishops on the occasions of funerals when our people lose their loved ones in accidents or through sickness, and at liturgical celebrations and ecclesial events have a great pastoral effect. These are occasions in which we share the mercy of the Lord and the mercy of the Church with the People of God.

His Beatitude expressed love, appreciation and gratitude of the Church to Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, who resigned from the office of the Eparchial Bishop of Puttur, due to his ill health. His Beatitude thanked his Excellency for his presence at the HES.

His Beatitude urged his Brother Bishops to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Supreme Lord in spite of all the challenges we face today and said, "In the midst of the challenges let

us go ahead holding on to the hands of the Lord. This should be a witness for our priests, religious and the rest of the People of God. The grace that the Holy Spirit showers on us has to be shared with all. I humbly bow my head before the immense love and the providence of God.”

His Beatitude concluded the inaugural address invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit in the HES. Confiding the HES-in-sessions to the protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Beatitude declared the Synod open.

His Beatitude invited Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, the Bishop Emeritus of Puttur to address the Synod. Bishop Mar Divannasios said: “I thank you all. I thank you for your goodness and the solidarity that you share with me on my resignation from the office of the Eparhial Bishop of Puttur. I suffer from liver Cirrhosis. It has many side effects. It makes me very weak. It is in this context that I tendered my resignation. When I considered, where I shall live as Bishop Emeritus, I thought of Tiruvalla and asked His Grace Mar Koorilos whether I can stay in Tiruvalla. He graciously invited me to stay at Pallimala where His Excellency Mar Timotheos was staying before he was shifted to Pushpagiri. A new Administrator is appointed for the Eparchy of Puttur. I will help the Eparchy in any way possible. I participate in this first session only. I am happy that I could participate in the tenth anniversary celebration of the Enthronement of His Beatitude. Take care of your health. It is important. Kindly pray for me. I will pray for you. The Church should continuously renew itself through the spirit of Evangelisation. What do we do in Central Travancore? Why the world appreciates Pope Francis? People emulate him for his simplicity and sincerity. The success of our Synod is its communion, the communion among us Bishops. Thank you all!”

His Beatitude the Catholicos thanked His Excellency Mar Divannasios for his sharing and message.

Submission of the Catholicos Day Offerings

His Beatitude the Catholicos said that the Bishops could now submit the Catholicos Day offerings from the respective Eparchies.

The following was the contributions from each Eparchy:

Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum	1,000,000.00
Archieparchy of Tiruvalla	600,000.00
Eparchy of Bathery	500,000.00
Eparchy of Marthandom	300,000.00
Eparchy of Muvattupuzha	200,000.00
Eparchy of Mavelikara	355,000.00
Eparchy of Pathanamthitta	355,000.00
Eparchy of Puttur	200,000.00
Eparchy of Gurgaon, Delhi	200,000.00
Eparchy of USA & Canada	\$10,000.00
Exarchate of Khadki-Pune	200,000.00

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 20th Holy Episcopal Synod
5. Evaluation of the Holy Episcopal Synod after 12 years (Presentation of the theme and discussion : by Mar Anthonios & Mar Paulos)
6. A Briefing on the Canonization Process-Roman Phase
7. Evaluation of the Meeting with the Major Superiors
8. Evaluation of the Meeting with the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions
9. Evaluation of the Major Seminary Academic Year.
10. Planning of the Common Celebrations
 - a. 15 July-Mar Ivanios' Day
 - b. 20 Sept.-Sabhasangamam
11. The second Malankara Catholic Assembly.
12. Briefing from the Eparchies and Exarchate.
13. The Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia.-Regents for the coming year
14. Accounts of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia
15. Matters Subsecreto
16. Other matters if any, with the consent of the President.

To this the Synod Fathers added the following topics:

1. Briefing from the Administrator of the Eparchy of Puttur
2. Civil law on properties
3. Clerical Discipline

The agenda was approved.

Report of the Twentieth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

The report of the Twentieth Holy Episcopal Synod was read out. A few inaccuracies and corrections were pointed out and corrected. Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas proposed the report to be passed and Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos supported the proposal. The Report was passed with applause.

THE DELIBERATIONS

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

Evaluation of the Holy Episcopal Synod after 12 years (Presentation of the theme and discussion: by Mar Anthonios & Mar Paulos)

Most Rev. Dr.Thomas Mar Anthonios presented the paper, "The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Synodal Communion – an Evaluation after 12 years". The paper presented in the Holy Episcopal Synod as the Ecclesial Regime of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church analyzing the sanctifying, teaching and governing functions of the Church

highlighting the executive, legislative and judicial powers it exercises. It concluded highlighting the areas for evaluation. Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos dealt with the evaluation of some of the particular areas of the life of the Church in which the HES gives leadership.

A Briefing on the Canonization Process-Roman Phase

His Beatitude the Catholicos briefed the HES on the commencement of the Roman phase of the Cause of Canonization of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios. Rev. Dr. Cherian Thunduparampil CMI is appointed the Postulator of the Cause at the Roman phase with approval of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Rev. Sr Sandra SIC is appointed to assist the work of the Postulator as External Collaborator. She resides in Rome for the work. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints will appoint a Relator of the Cause. So far, the process is progressing smoothly.

Evaluation of the Meeting with the Major Superiors

The HES was of opinion that in general the meeting went on well. There was a frank sharing on matters of mutual concern. The sharing was mainly on the theme of mercy. They have shared enormous initiations in witnessing the mercy of God.

Evaluation of the Meeting with the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions

The meeting gave once again a chance to assess and share the activities of the Synodal Commissions.

Evaluation of the Major Seminary Academic Year

The term of the present Rector, Rev. Fr. Shaji Thomas Manikulam is coming to an end. There was common consensus to have a change of the Rector. Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Thadathil of the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla was proposed. The members of the HES agreed with the choice.

The staff of the Seminary was called in for a meeting with the HES. The meeting with the staff began with a prayer by Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom. His Beatitude welcomed the Rector and other members of the staff to the meeting. His Beatitude appreciated the committed services of the seminary staff and thanked them for the same. His Beatitude reminded the staff that the Seminary is a place of growth for the Seminarians focused on the crucified and risen Christ.

Thereafter, the Rector shared a brief report of the activities of the Seminary during the academic year. The life and the activities of the Malankara Major Seminary during the academic year was shared by the Rector. There is progress in matters of discipline, spiritual and academic life. A survey was conducted among the students. In the survey the students suggested that they need more freedom, especially in the use of mobile phones and to go for ministry on Saturday eve. Introducing a movement register was suggested.

It was felt that introducing the repetition of the academic year if one fails four times in subject wise exams has made noteworthy changes in the attitude of the students and there is progress in academic matters. Spiritual formation has to improve, especially seminarians should learn to meditate, and that they should learn that in the Minor Seminary. It was also shared by the Rector that the report of the seminarians sent to their respective Bishop has to be taken seriously, especially when the report gives strong reservation on the promotion of the candidate. However, it was pointed out that reporting style should be clear and very indicative.

His Beatitude announced the change of leadership in the seminary. Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Thadathil will be appointed to the office. The new Rector shall assume the office in the

presence of the Seminary Commission. Rev. Fr. Cherian Kottayil expressed his wish to have a change from the Seminary as resident Professor and the Synod accepted it and appointed Rev. Fr. Jolly Karimpil. Rev. Fr. Kurianal is completing his term and will be relieved from his office as Professor. Other members of the Staff will continue. It was also recommended to ask Bethany Ashram whether they can lend the services of Rev. Fr. Mathai Kadavil on the Staff of the Seminary.

His Beatitude also urged the staff to ensure continuity of policies and academic excellence. We need theologizing and theological literature. Our apostolic Church has to be supported in this field by the professors of the Seminary. His Beatitude lauded Rev. Fr. Philip Chempakassery for his academic input and excellence in teaching. His Beatitude also thanked Rev. Fr. Kurianal, who is returning to his home Eparchy Kothamangalam.

When the meeting with the Staff was completed, Rev. Fr. Shaji Thomas Manikulam, the outgoing Rector was invited for a personal sharing. On behalf of the HES, His Beatitude the Catholicos thanked the outgoing Rector for his services and commitment.

Planning of the Common Celebrations

Mar Ivanios Day 2017

On 15 July 2017 we will be celebrating the 64th Feast of Commemoration of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios. All usual celebrations and observance of the occasion will be conducted this year also. The Chief Guest of the occasion will be His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alanchery, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Sabhasanghamam and 87th Reunion Day Celebrations

This year the Sabhasanghamam and the Reunion Day Celebrations will be held at Adoor. The Green Valley Park is booked for it. The blessing of the newly constructed church of the Sacred Heart Parish Adoor will be blessed on this occasion. We shall not have the Preshitha Rally.

Next year the Sabhasanghamam will be hosted by the Eparchy of Muvattupuzha.

The Second Malankara Catholic Assembly

Discussions on the Second Malankara Catholic Assembly was held and if possible could be convoked in the year 2018. The theme could be "Family and Priesthood" (Kudumbavum Paurohithyavum).

Briefing from the Eparchies and Exarchate

Each Bishop was given a chance to update the HES with the latest development and growth in the life of the Eparchy.

Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Bishop of the Eparchy of St. John Chrysostom Gurgaon submitted a written report in which he highlighted the development of the new missions in the new Eparchy and the challenges faced by him. Lack of sufficient number of priests and religious is a major concern.

Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, told the HES about the development of the missions in the Districts of Tamil Nadu that are part of the Eparchy. He also highlighted the progress of reunion among the faithful of Thozhiyoor Church with the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

The Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum has revived two mission stations, Mudakkal and Chemboor that have been dormant for some years. His Beatitude shared also the academic excellence of some of our institutions in Trivandrum.

Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, the Bishop of Pathanamthitta, emphasized in his sharing that the Eparchy has built up its identity and has gained a popular acceptance in the mind of the people of Pathanamthitta and around because of its meaningful interaction with the public and its commitment to the society. The Social Service wing of the Eparchy is progressing in its commitment to the society. Home for the poor at Cheekkanal, Carmela etc., are initiatives of the Eparchy to share the mercy of God with the less privileged of the society.

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, the Bishop of Bathery, underscored the mission work and the reunion work that are gaining priority in the Eparchy. New initiatives were launched in the field of social work.

Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulose, the Bishop of Marthandam, informed the members that the Ashram run by Rev. Fr. Crispin in the Eparchy is now established as an Eparchial Pious Association.

Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios said, that in the Eparchy of Mavelikara, there are regular gatherings of the priests for monthly recollection. The Suvishesha Sangham is being organized. The associations of our Faithful are functioning well.

In the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla, the pastoral care and mission work are progressing. The situation of Pushpagiri in its various dimensions were shared.

The new Exarchate of St. Ephrem Khadki-Pune is beginning its life with the emphasis to find out and develop its own missions. However, there are lack of priests and religious in the new Exarchate.

Accounts of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia

Rev. Fr. Varghese Angadiyil, the Finance Officer of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia was called in to present the Accounts of the Curia for financial year 2016-'17. He did the same. Clarifications were made. The account was accepted.

Briefing from the Administrator of the Eparchy of Puttur

Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Kalayil, the Administrator of the Eparchy of Puttur, was asked to prepare a brief report of the present status of the Eparchy and to present it to the HES. He was called in. He presented the report highlighting the smooth transfer of the administration from the hands of Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, the first Bishop of the Eparchy. The Administrator recalled the committed hard work of the Bishop Emeritus who left no stone unturned in his pursuit to build up the Eparchy since its establishment. The administrator also pointed out some of the areas in which there are loans and liabilities that remain to be absolved. He also said that, in general, the Priests, Religious and the Faithful understand the situation of the Eparchy and are cooperating with the administration.

Civil law on properties

It was brought for the attention of the HES that the Government of Kerala is planning a legislation to control the properties of the Church. Advocate Johnson Abraham, Treasurer of the Indian National Congress and member of the Syndicate and a member of St. Stephen's Church Kattanam of the Eparchy of Mavelikkara was asked to evaluate the proposed legislation "Kerala Christian Church Properties and Institutions Trust Bill". Mr. Johnson explained the different articles of the bill, where the Government in the guise of democracy

was aiming to control unduly the life and activities of the Church. It was an enlightening discussion. At the end of the discussion, His Beatitude appreciated the commitment of Adv. Johnson to the Church and the society as a committed Christian and citizen of India.

Clerical Discipline

The HES considered some of the new trends that affect the overall discipline among the clergy of the Church. It was suggested that these are to be addressed by the Synodal Commission for the Priests. The Commission was urged to arrange courses for the priests belonging to different age groups at the ecclesial and eparchial levels.

Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia – The Reorganization of the Synodal Commissions

The following changes came into effect:

Synodal Commission for Religious and Priests - Chairman: Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios; Secretary: Rev. Fr. Vinayanand OIC

Secretary for Priests: Rev. Fr. Dr. Sunny Mathew Kavuvilayil

Secretary for the Synodal Commission for the Laity: Rev. Fr. John Thundiyath

Synodal Commission for Priestly Formation and Seminary Commission - Chairman: Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos; Members: Most Rev. Yoochanon Mar Chrysostom and Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios

Synodal Commission for Bible and Theology: Chairman: Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios; Secretary: Rev. Fr. Dr. Mathai Kadavil OIC

Synodal Commission for Communication Media: Chairman: Curia Bishop, Secretary: Rev. Fr. Sheen Thankalayam

Synodal Commission for Vocation: Secretaries: Rev. Fr. Dr. John Kuttiyil and Rev. Sr. Dr. Ardra SIC

Synodal Commission for Social Apostolate: Secretary: Rev. Fr. Binny Philip Nedumpurath

Matters Subsecreto

The topic for consideration was: Bifurcation of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum and the Formation of the Eparchy of Parassala. A prepared documentation for the same was introduced in the HES by His Beatitude. It was also highlighted that the division was not according to any criteria of caste or ethnicity. It was a division based on the geography. The families of the proposed Eparchy are Nadars, Dalits and Syrians by origin. The vision of the formation of the Eparchy is the holistic development of our members and our families and the region. At the end of the deliberation and discussion, the proposal was put to vote. The HES unanimously decided to present the proposal for the knowledge of the Holy See and requested His Beatitude to do the same.

Conclusion

His Beatitude concluded the HES. His Beatitude said that the Synod-in-session was very special. The sharing on the life and activities of the Eparchies has highlighted that there is a growing sense of evangelization in our Church in the recent times. The formation of the Suvishesha Sangham, the erection of the Eparchy of St. John Chrysostom and the Exarchate of St. Ephrem, the growing awareness of mission activities in our Eparchies have all been helping us to grow in our duty to share the joy of the Gospel with

those who have not come to know of Jesus. His Beatitude thanked all the Bishops for their love and solidarity with him in the exercise of his ministry in the Church as its Father and Head. He also thanked the officials of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia for the arrangements of the Synod. Invoking God's blessing through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, on all and the Church, His Beatitude declared the HES closed.

Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos made the concluding prayer. His Beatitude the Catholicos imparted the final blessing.

✠Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

✠Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC
Chancellor