

THE SYRO- MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTER, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Second Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
(1 – 2 DECEMBER 2005)

REPORT

The second Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was convoked at the Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum from 1st to 2nd December 2005. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop-Catholicos presided over the Synod. All the members of the Synod, namely, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos (Secretary of the Synod), Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis, Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios and Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, were present. Rev. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor, recorded the proceedings. The Synod, in nine sessions, of 1.5 hours each, prolonged two days.

At 9 a.m. on 1 December 2005, the members of the Synod assembled in the Synod hall of the Catholicate Centre. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop-Catholicos initiated the opening prayer and lighted the lamp while the Synodal Fathers chanted the hymn Velivu niranjoriso. Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod, led the prayer reading the Word of God.

Presidential Address by His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios

His Beatitude delivered the inaugural address. He welcomed all the members to the second canonical Synod of the Syro-Malankara Church, which was convoked with the consent of the Permanent Synod anticipating the Synod to be held on 6 January 2006 in order to expedite the execution of the decisions of the First Synod and the constitution of some of the basic canonical structures of our Church. He also informed the Synod about the progress of the codification of the Particular Law of our Church. He pointed out the need to finalise the constitution of the various Synodal commissions to ensure the participation of our laity, the religious and the clergy in the building up of our Church. He also thanked the officials of the curia for their efforts in preparing well for the Synod-in-session. He reminded the Synodal Fathers on the commitment of the Church towards the mission entrusted to her. Besides, he drew the attention of the Fathers to the significance of December 1, the World AIDS Day and reiterated the Church's pastoral commitment to the suffering and afflicted. he declared the Synod open.

The Presentation and Approval of the Agenda

The President presented the following agenda for the perusal of the Synod:

1. Report of the First Holy Synod
2. Matter Sub-Secreto
3. Finalisation of the Consultors of the Various Commissions

4. Malankara Major Seminary and Priestly Formation
5. Printing of the Catechism Texts; Centralised Evaluation and other Related Matters
6. Printing of Prayer Books
7. On Holding the Malankara Catholic Assembly
8. Discussion on the Statutes of the Synod of Bishops and Permanent Synod of the Malankara Catholic Church Submitted to the President
9. Other matters allowed by the President with the consent of the Synod.

The Synod accepted the agenda.

The Report of the First Holy Synod

The Report of the First Synod was read out by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod. After clarifications and corrections, the report was passed at the proposal of Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios and seconded by Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis.

THE AGENDA

After the report was passed, the Synod started deliberations on the topics on the agenda.

1. Matter sub-secreto

The first topic on the agenda was declared a matter sub-secreto.

2. The Constitution of the Synodal Commissions

The Synod then passed on to the next topic on the agenda, namely, finalising the names of the Consultors of the various Synodal commissions. The Synod went through commissions one after another.

Committee for History

Mr. Jomi Thomas, a teacher of St. Mary's Higher Secondary School, Pattom, wrote to His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, highlighting the need of a Synodal Commission for the History of the Malankara Catholic Church, in the context of the need to document the historical development of our Church and to discourage the tendency to falsify the historical literature presented by others. The Synod deliberated on the matter and accepted the request in principle. It was suggested that instead of a separate commission, there could be a special desk of the Synodal Commission for Theology and Publication, so that, the two could work hand in hand. The Synod nominated the following persons to the committee: Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos (Chairman) Mr. Jomi Thomas (Secretary) and (1) Fr. Sylvester Kanjiramukalil OIC, (2) Fr. P.T. Thomas (3) Chevalier Varghese Karippayil (4) Fr. Varghese Mavelil (5) Fr. Geevarghese Chediath (6) Mr. Manoj Abraham (7) Mother Philomina SIC (8) Mr. Christal John (9) Mr. Joy Thazhamon (10) Mr. Cherian Panicker and (11) Mr. Peter C. Abraham (Consultors).

It was discussed whether we should have a Synodal Commission for the pastoral care of the faithful in the extraterritorial regions in India. It was the common opinion that these regions now form part of the Church's mainstream and the faithful from these

regions are represented in almost all Synodal Commissions. It was also proposed that Mr. P.V. Thomas from Pune and Mr. John Mathew from Mumbai be nominated to the Synodal commissions for Family and Liturgy respectively.

Finally the Synod approved the Synodal Commissions and confirmed the various appointments and nominations. The Synod authorised the Chairmen of the respective commissions to complete, if necessary, the list of consultors of the commissions. The last date of finalising the list and sending letters of appointment to the consultors, is 15 December 2005. The completed list along with their address shall be sent to the Curia for reference.

The bearers of various offices at the common or eparchial or provincial level were nominated as Consultors in virtue of their office. With the change of their office, their successors become ex-officio Consultors of the respective Synodal Commissions. This is to be made clear in their appointment. The ex-officio member is confirmed as Consultor of a Synodal Commission by a letter of appointment from the respective Chairman on receiving the authentic information of the change.

The Malankara Major Seminary and Priestly Formation

The Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Seminary Formation presented to the Synod a brief report on the academic and financial positions of St. Mary's Malankara Seminary after meeting the Rector, Staff and Students individually. The Synod focussed its attention on the dynamics of the present formation in the Seminary and suggested ways and means for excellence in spiritual and academic formation in the Seminary.

The Synod expressed its appreciation over the affiliation of the faculty of Theology to the Urbanian University, Rome. On the question of affiliation of the Faculty of Philosophy, the Synod pointed out that in the context of the present arrangement for securing University degree in Philosophy, it is not relevant to have another degree in Philosophy. The matter could be considered, if necessary, in the future.

A long discussion was held in the Synod on the spiritual and academic formation of the Malankara Seminary. Formation accompanied by proper motivations to the student to become a good priest is to be stressed. The Synod authorised Most Rev. Mar Koorilos, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Priestly Formation, to continue the interaction with the Rector, Staff and Students and to submit proposals for improving the quality of the spiritual and academic formation in the seminary. The Synod also spoke of the need to encourage and train a team of priests who would dedicate themselves exclusively for the seminary formation. Getting the service of priests of Bethany Ashram and of other Churches, religious and diocesan, was brought in for consideration.

The Synod reviewed the financial situation and administration of the seminary and expressed its satisfaction on the present state of affairs. Regarding the suggestion of the sale of the estate purchased by the seminary for better investment opportunity, it was decided to evaluate the opportunities as and when they arise.

It was decided that the certificate fee charged by the Urbanian University Rome be treated as an ordinary expense of the seminary and be borne by the seminary.

Printing of Liturgical Books

The Synod took for consideration the topic – Printing of Prayer Books. It was decided to print the following liturgical books with corrections wherever necessary:

1. Prayer book for the laity
 - a. Canonical Prayers
 - b. Devotions and other prayers
 - c. Qurbano Kramam with kyomto, and other season's Sunday prayers, prayers of benediction and the intercessory prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, hymns for rasha, etc.
2. Prayer Book for the priests and religious: S'himo Namaskaram
3. Kûdâsakramam (Book of the Order of Sacraments)
4. Prayers for sacramentals and other blessings
5. Takso

All these books are to be printed in Tamil also. There is a huge amount required for the printing of these books. Sources for the same are to be found out. The books are to be distributed to the various eparchies. It was observed that there would be a time lag for the people to get accustomed to some of the verbal translational changes.

The suggestion of Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC and Fr. Bovas Meloottu to compile, print and publish the readings of the Bible in accordance with our liturgical year was discussed. Because of the enormity of the work and the cost of publication, the Synod did not give its final decision on it.

Catechetical Formation and Printing of the Catechism Books

Most Rev. Mar Koorilos, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for catechism or faith formation briefed the Synod about the progress in the preparation, printing and distribution of the common catechism texts for the Malankara Catholic Church and the implementation of the programme in our Church. In the discussion that followed, the Synod wholeheartedly appreciated the endeavours of Bishop Mar Koorilos and of Fr. Antony Kakkanattu, the chief redactor. They deserve thanks and complement for their work. Together with them, all who assisted in the noble endeavour are gratefully remembered. It was noted that all sections of our people and other Churches appreciate the books already published.

The financial aspects of the project were also discussed and the Bishops expressed the financial strains they are passing through.

It was decided that all our eparchies and extra-territorial regions both inside and outside India should generously contribute to and implement the common catechetical programmes without fail. The Chairman of the Synodal Commission is asked to encourage the eparchial catechism directors who lag behind in the implementation of the programme. The preparation of the syllabus and text books for standards eleven and twelve is to continue. Centralised evaluation shall be introduced later in due course. Organising classes to train the teachers in accordance with the syllabus is to continue.

His Beatitude congratulated the initiatives of Most Rev. Mar Koorilos and Fr. Antony Kakkanattu. He also appreciated the publication of Atmabodhanam.

Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis, Metropolitan of Tiruvalla informed the Synod about the establishment of a theological training centre for the laity in the Eparchy of Tiruvalla.

Convoking the Malankara Catholic Assembly

The Synod then moved on to a discussion on the possibility of convoking the Malankara Catholic Assembly as per the requirements of Canon Law and the present status of our Church. This is a forum for encouraging the participatory role of the different groups of the Christian faithful in the day-to-day life of our Church. Themes have to be chosen; commissions are to be formed to prepare papers to be studied and discussed at the eparchial and district levels of the Church. The date of the convocation of the assembly shall be fixed taking into consideration the Jubilee of the establishment of the hierarchy of our Church and the occasion of the completion and blessing of the proposed Catholicate centre. As a prelude there shall be eparchial assemblies in the same manner.

Construction of the Catholicate Centre.

The Synod evaluated the progress of the fund-raising for the construction of the proposed Catholicate Centre. The progress is satisfactory. It was decided that the agreed terms and conditions of the contribution of the various entities shall be pursued without any change.

The Statutes of the Holy Synod of Bishops

The draft of the statutes of the Synod of Bishops prepared by the appointed committee was placed before the Synod for its approval. The draft was read out article by article and discussed and necessary amendments were made.

During the discussions for finalising certain important points, the Synod made the following decisions:

1. That all members of the Synod shall have a deliberative vote in the Synod.
2. That the Ordinary Synod shall be convoked twice a year; the first meeting shall preferably be in the second week of the Great Lent and the second in the month of October.
3. That the precedence of the Bishops in our Church shall be according to the seniority of their Episcopal consecration placing the Eparchial Bishops first, followed by Titular Bishops according to the seniority of their Episcopal consecration.
4. That the canonical opening of the Synod shall be preceded by a concelebrated Holy Qurbano and the canonical closure of the Synod followed by the Kauma and Kuklion of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints and the Apostolic Blessing by the Major Archbishop-Catholics.
5. That every session of the Holy Synod shall begin with an invocation to the Holy Spirit.

Statutes of the Permanent Synod

The Synod went through the draft of the statistics of the Permanent Synod. After the first reading, it was decided that each Bishop studies the draft and report the amendments. It shall be approved at the next Synod.

Missions Outside India

With the permission of the President, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, the Apostolic Visitor to Europe and America gave a report of his visit of communities in Gulf Countries, Europe and America.

In Europe, besides in Germany, a community of our people are regularly gathering together in Zurich in Switzerland under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Thomas Kuruvilla Cheruthone OIC. The efforts to organise our people in England is underway. Rt. Rev. Corepiscopo Geevarghese Mannikkarottu is to assist the Apostolic Visitor in this matter.

In America, His Excellency met all our priests, sisters and communities of the faithful. In the meeting with the Priests, they shared their experience of co-ordinating our ecclesial activities in the US and Canada. In the discussion that ensued, it was pointed out that the Major Archbishop-Catholicos, in the name of the Synod, has to give clear guidelines to our priests in the US that they should follow the guidelines given by the Apostolic Visitor in their pastoral work.

Mar Thomas also drew the attention of the Synod to the confusion caused in our communities by the priests visiting our faithful without proper authorisation of their eparchial Bishops. He informed the Synod of the details of the convention to be arranged in the USA. He also spoke of the need to organise our families in Australia and New Zealand.

The Major Archiepiscopal Eparchy

Lastly, the Synod discussed the title under which the former Metropolitan Eparchy of Trivandrum should be designated now, as the Metropolitan Church of Malankara is now raised to the status of Major Archiepiscopal Church and its Head as the Major Archbishop-Catholicos. According to the Papal Bull, the see is raised and made the Major Archiepiscopal Church. It was decided that, as the Eparchy was formerly known as the Metropolitan Eparchy, in the new canonical status of the Church, it shall be known as the Major Archiepiscopal Eparchy of Trivandrum based on the Papal decree and the event of elevation. The matter may also be consulted with the Papal Nuncio in India (which in fact was done later by the Major Archbishop-Catholicos).

The Closing

The Synod ended with the concluding message from His Beatitude, the Catholicos. He expressed his hope that the basic canonical structures that we have created will serve the Church in its integral growth and the holistic good of the human society. He reiterated the commitment of the Malankara Catholic Church to unity. He forewarned everyone to resist tendencies against this in a spirit of fraternal love and mental courage. His Beatitude thanked all the members of the Synod for attending the Synod in spite of the short notice. He also thanked Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC for

recording the minutes, for preparing the report and the decisions. He profusely thanked all the other office bearers of the Curia, Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath, the Finance Officer, Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil the Vice-Chancellor and Rev. Sr. Ardra SIC, the Office Secretary for their prompt service in the Curia. He declared the Synod closed around 8 p.m. on 2 December 2005.

✠ Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos

Secretary of the Synod

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC

Chancellor