

THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHI EPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTRE, THIVANDRUM-695 004, KERALA INDIA

THE THIRD HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD
(7 -9 MARCH 2006)

REPORT

The third Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was convoked at the Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum, from 7 - 9 March 2006. Taking into consideration the health condition of His Beatitude the Catholicos, the Synod was later transferred to Thirusannidhi, the Major Archiepiscopal House. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos presided over the Synod. 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 and Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios were present. Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas was absent. Rev. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor, recorded the proceedings. The Synod, in ten sessions, of 1.5 hours each, prolonged for three days.

At 9 a.m. on 7 March 2006, the members of the Synod assembled at Thirusannidhi, and entered the Chapel. All members of the Synod present concelebrated the Holy Qurbano in which all the office-bearers of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia participated.

His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop-Catholicos made the opening prayer. Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis read the following scripture passage - Rom 12:9-20.

Presidential Address by His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios

His Beatitude the Catholicos delivered the inaugural address. He welcomed all the members to the third canonical Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. His Beatitude recounted the wonderful ways through which God leads our Church and the progress we could make in establishing the canonical structures of our Church, namely the Ordinary Synod, the Permanent Synod and the Synodal Commissions, within such a short time. In such a short span of time, we convened three Synods, as we had to expedite the constitution of the canonical structures of the Church. As per present norms, two Ordinary Synods will be convened every year, one preferably during the second week of the Great Lent and the other in the month of October. He specially thanked God Almighty for making it possible for him to attend this Synod in spite of his ill-health.

Thereafter, His Beatitude stressed on the sacred character of the Synod and the necessity of an appropriate prayerful preparation before the commencement of each Synod. It is a sacred act performed under the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; it is not a mere human act done in haste. He also dealt with the role of the Synodal Commissions in the life of the Church and the necessity to constitute parallel Eparchial Commissions, so that they could strengthen life in parishes, the basic unit of the Church. He also drew attention of all concerned to the need of constituting the necessary structures. It is to awaken and enliven divine life in the community. The structures are for fulfilling the mission of the Church. The universal Church grows up in and through the local Churches; the local churches through the Eparchies; the

Eparchies through the parishes. The parishes, through the prayer groups should awaken and enliven divine life in them.

Making these observations, His Beatitude declared the Synod opened. The letter of Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, requesting leave for absence from the Synod, due to his pastoral engagements in our communities of the USA was presented in the Synod. The Synod accepted the absence as legitimate.

The Presentation and Approval of the Agenda

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

1. Inaugural Address by His Beatitude, the Catholicos
2. The Report and Decisions of the Second Holy Episcopal Synod
3. Confirmation of the Synodal Commissions and Orientation on their Functions.
4. The Pastoral Care of the Malankara Catholics in the Extraterritorial Regions in India in the light of the CBCI decision
5. Hierarchical set up for the Malankara Catholics in the US
6. Presentation of the Prayer Books and Taksa.
7. Unification of the various titles in use in our Church with the names of the offices used in CCEO.
8. Publication of the Malankara Catholic Directory
9. Financial Report of the fund - raising for the construction of the Catholicate Centre
10. Report on the progress of the Codification of the Particular Law of the MCC
11. Study of the draft of the Statutes of the Malankara Catholic Assembly
12. Study of the draft of the Statutes of the Holy Synod
13. Study of the draft of the Statutes of the Permanent Synod
14. Topics to be sent for the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Roman Synod
15. Other pertinent subjects with the approval of the President

To this, the Synod Fathers added two more topics, namely, Formation in the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary (continuation of the discussion held in the last Synod) and the Reunion Day Celebrations, 2006. The Synod approved the agenda.

The Report of the Second Holy Synod

The Report of the Second Synod was read out by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod. After clarifications and connections, the report was passed at the proposal of Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, seconded by Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom

In the discussion that followed, the Synod Fathers enquired about the progress of the proposal of the sale of the rubber estate of the seminary. It is understood that there are chances coming up.

THE AGENDA

After passing report, the Synod started deliberation on the topics on the agenda.

1. Formation in St. Mary's Malankara Seminary

In continuation of the evaluation of the formation programmes in the Malankara Seminary in the last Synod and the action taken, the Synod took up the topic for further discussion. The Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Seminary Formation, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos briefed the Synod of the actions taken regarding the matter. His Excellency continued the dialogue with the staff of the Seminary. The Synod opined that the appointment of the resident staff members of the seminary shall be with the knowledge of the Holy Synod. It was pointed out that Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Kuttilyil OIC, returning after his Doctorate in Canon Law, Rev. Fr. Varghese Thannickakuzy of the Eparchy of Bathery and Rev. Fr. Stephen Thottathil, the former Protosyncellus of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla are prospective resident professors for the Seminary. Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis informed the Synod that the service of Rev. Fr. Stephen Thottathil could be made available to the seminary for a period of three years.

Concerning the term of appointment of the resident professors, most of the Synod Fathers were of opinion that the appointment shall be for a period of six years which could be extended later.

The functioning of the Faculty of philosophy was brought in for evaluations, especially in the context of the need to update the syllabus to make it beneficial to the study of Theology. The Synod decided to call the Rector and the resident professors of the Faculty of philosophy to the Synod and to discuss with them the modalities of teaching philosophy in our Seminary.

In another session of the Synod, "the diaconate ministry" was taken for discussion' It was pointed out that the present practice of conferring priesthood to the Deacons immediately after the comprehensive exam in Theology, deprives them of experience in the pastoral ministry and in liturgical applications. After an elaborate discussion, it was decided that there shall be a diaconate ministry after the comprehensive exam in October till the forthcoming feast of Easter. Ordinations shall be conferred after Easter. The practice of having a common retreat for the Deacons before ordination shall continue. These decisions will take effect from the next academic year.

2. Confirmation of tire synodal Commissions and orientation on their Functions

The finalised lists of consultors of the eighteen synodal commissions were reviewed and confirmed. In the discussions that followed, it was decided that the first meeting of each Synodal commission shall be held at the earliest.

3. The Pastoral Care of the Malankara Catholics in the Extraterritorial Regions in India in the Light of the Recent Decision of the CBCI

The topic was introduced by Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis, who is also the Vice-President of the CBCI. In the last CBCI meeting (February 2005), the Bishops of the Latin Church had welcomed the appointment of a Bishop as the contact person for any discussions

about collaboration among the oriental churches and the Latin dioceses for the purpose of pastoral care and evangelization. The Syro-Malankara and the Syro-Malabar churches may nominate an Apostolic visitor for this purpose. However, it is recommended that the conference of the catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) be consulted about these appointments and that clear terms of reference are established for the functioning of these Apostolic visitors. It is hoped that the Apostolic Nuncio in India will inform this to the Holy See and the necessary actions will be initiated by him.

The synod welcomed the idea as a beginning to resolve the need of a permanent, hierarchical set up for the pastoral care of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Faithful in India living outside the canonical territorial boundaries of the Church. The Synod requested His Beatitude the Catholicos to follow up the matter so that the appointment of the Apostolic Visitor be expedited the Synod also prepared a *terra* (list) of candidates to be presented to the Holy See as soon as it initiates the process'

4. Hierarchical setup for the Malankara Catholics in the US

It was the opinion of the synod Fathers that we should try to get at least an exarchate erected in the US as a canonical provision for the pastoral care of our faithful residing over there.

5. Presentation of the Prayer Books and Taksa

The Synod Fathers expressed their concern in the growing tendency of introducing non-Malankara hymns in our Holy Qurbano and other sacramental celebrations. They also shared the difficulties they encounter in introducing the revised ordinary prayer book. They were of opinion that a common circular or pastoral letter would help to announce in public the expectation of the Church in revising the existing translations and motivate the faithful to use the new text.

6. Unification of the various Titles in use in our church with the Names of the Offices Used in CCEO.

“Unification of the names of the various offices in our church with the names used in CCEO” was the next topic taken up for deliberation. The general opinion was that it would be better to use names, words and titles as used in the Code of Canons of the oriental Churches. However, it was pointed out that words like diocese, vicar general, etc. have become accepted usages both among the public and in civil legal procedure. Taking this into account, it was decided that, as far as possible the names, titles, usages, etc. shall conform with those in use in the CCEO.

The Synod also focussed attention on the conferring of titles on priests and laity (both men and women). These titles shall be in consonance with the Syro-Malankara ecclesial tradition. *Corepiscopo, Ramban, Bar Itho*, etc. Are some of the possible titles that shall be conferred on the Christian faithful in recognition of their outstanding service rendered to the church' It was also noted that persons on whom such titles are conferred should be of exceptional quality and in agreement with the rating of the people.

7. Publication of the Malankara Catholic Directory

The Directory of the Malankara Catholic Church as a reference book on the various statistical and factual matters of the church is very important. Hence the updated edition of the Directory should be published once in three years.

The next edition of the Directory shall be published in September 2006, by the time of the Reunion Day celebrations.

8. Financial Report of the Fund Raising for the Construction of the Catholicate Centre

The financial report of the income and expenditure of the Catholicate Centre, highlighting the funds collected towards the construction of the Catholicate Centre prepared by the Finance Officer Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedathu, was presented in the Synod. The amount raised so far had been given over to the Major Archiepiscopal Eparchy of Trivandrum as compensation for the St. Aloysius Minor Seminary buildings, which will form part of the proposed Catholicate Centre. The construction of the Seminary building is progressing.

9. Report on the Progress of the Codification of the Particular Law of the MCC

The Report of the Codification of the Particular Law of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was read out at the Synod. The Synod evaluated the progress and expressed satisfaction over the second draft submitted in the Synod.

The Synod Fathers decided that they shall gather together for the study of the draft on 3/4 April at Bethany Navajyothi Provincial Ashram at Desom, Aluva, or at Bethany Ashram Asokapuram, Aluva. Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the convener of the commission and Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC also shall be present at the meeting to introduce and assist the study of the draft.

10. Study of the Draft of the Statutes of the Malankara Catholic Assembly

A draft of the statutes of the Malankara Catholic Assembly, that is, a consultative body of the entire Church, presided over by the Major Archbishop-Catholicos according to the norms of CCEO cc 140-145, prepared by the Commission for the Codification of the Particular Law and submitted to the Synod was taken up for study. The statutes are to be formally approved later after the completion of its study and presentation of the final draft.

11. Topics to be Sent for the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Roman Synod

The letter of the General Secretary of the (Roman) Synod of Bishops, requesting the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malankara Church to suggest a topic for the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod was taken up for discussion.

After going through the themes covered by the Roman Synod so far and considering the current themes of world wide interest, the Synod Fathers proposed the following three themes:

- The role of *sui iuris* Churches in the Communion of the Universal Church
- Faith Formation in the globalisation
- The pastoral care of the Christian faithful and the shortage of priests

12. Holy Friday collection for “Pro Terra Sancta”

The Synod also took for consideration a letter of His Eminence Ignace Moussa Cardinal Daoud, the prefect of the congregation for the oriental churches, reminding everyone of the church to encourage the Holy Friday collection for the Holy Land. The Synod decided to encourage all parishes to raise maximum collection in favour of the Holy Land. The eparchial Bishops shall send it to the Nunciature according to the custom prevalent.

Meeting with the Rector and the staff of the faculty of philosophy of St. Mary's Malankara Seminary

The Rector, Rev. Fr. George Kalayil and the members of the staff of the Faculty of Philosophy of St. Mary's Malankara seminary were invited to the Synod in the session at 8.30 a.m. on 9 March 2006. Besides, the Rector, Rev. Fr. Thomas Naickampampil, the Dean, and Rev. Fr. Daniel Mangalath, Professor of the Faculty of philosophy, were present.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the secretary of the Synod welcomed the fathers on behalf of the Synod and thanked them for dedicating their time for the service of the Seminary.

His Beatitude, the Catholicos introduced the topic, namely, the expectation of the church from the Seminary, especially from the philosophical formation of our seminarians. He stressed that the aim of teaching philosophy in our Seminary is to help a seminarian in his faith formation as a Christian and in the study of Theology. The orientation has to be clear. Professors should have a unity of vision and be totally dedicated.

Rev. Fr. Thomas Naickampampil introduced the present curriculum of Philosophy in the Seminary. In the three years of the Philosophers studies, the first year is spent mostly for the study of languages, especially English. In the second and third year, the curriculum focuses on the study of systematic Philosophy, both Western and Indian.

The meeting also focussed attention on the role of the Rector. He is to focus on the formation of the first year philosophers as they are new to the major seminary formation. He himself is to be the animators of the first years while other animators, be appointed for others according to the year of their formation.

Concerning the number of chances to be given to the seminarians who fail in the examination, it was decided that both for the subject wise and the comprehensive examinations, only two chances shall be given.

The meeting also stressed the need of improvement in the minor seminary formation, both spiritual and academic. The mastery of language, especially English, is to be stressed.

The Synod informed the Rector and other professors present at the meeting, its decision at an earlier session of the Synod to introduce the diaconate ministry after the completion of the Theology course at the end of which only priestly ordination will take place.

The meeting ended with the understanding to reorganise the course in Philosophy in accordance with the guidelines given in this discussion.

Meeting of the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions

The apostolate of the Church is now to be promoted by and through the Synodal Commissions constituted by the Synod. To generate an awareness of the purpose and *modus operandi* of the Synodal Commissions, a meeting of the Secretaries of the Commissions was scheduled at 10.30 a.m, on the third day of the Synod. All the Invitees, except two, participated in the meeting. The report of the meeting is attached herewith.

76th Reunion Day Celebrations

After the meeting with the Secretaries of the Synodal Commission the Synod Fathers assembled again in the Synod Hall. Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Common Celebrations introduced to the Synod, the planning

underway for the 76th Reunion Day Celebrations to be held at Muvattupuzha under the auspices of the Eparchy of Muvattupuzha. Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Eparchial Bishop of Muvattupuzha briefed the Synod the proposed programme chalked out at the various consultative meetings. It was the common opinion of the Synod that the spirit behind the celebration should be kept up, namely, an occasion to come together to celebrate and nurture the spirit of communion among the members of our Church. The rally to mark the end of the celebration is an inspiration and a sign of the vitality and communion of our Church. Hence it shall not be waved off. Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos agreed to pursue the organisation of the celebration in accordance with the mind of the Synod in consultation with the Synodal Commission for Common Celebrations.

On the Guidelines Emerging from the Synod

The Synod-in-session did not take any decisions as such. The Synod Fathers were of opinion that those norms of action discussed in the Synod shall be communicated as "Guidelines".

The Closing

The Synod ended with the concluding message from His Beatitude, the Catholicos. He expressed his satisfaction in the fact that within a short period of time, we could concentrate on the structural organisation of our Church. However, he cautioned an inherent danger. We may imagine that the life of the Church is *ipso facto* promoted and guaranteed by these structures. The real goal of our ecclesiastical endeavours is to promote divine life and love shared and communicated to us by God through his Son in the Holy Spirit. We have to see how this life is promoted in our church, namely, in our eparchies, missions and institutions. This is done primarily through our liturgical and spiritual life.

His Beatitude thanked all the members of the synod for attending the Synod and expressed his hope that God the loving Father through His Son in communion with the Holy Spirit enable us fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to us and as now manifested to us through the sessions of the Synod.

His Beatitude also thanked the officials of the Curia for their prompt service. He declared the Synod closed around 3 p.m. on 9 March 2006.

Thereafter the Synod Fathers went to the chapel, prayed the *Kaumo* and chanted the *Quiqlion* of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. His Beatitude the Catholicos imparted the apostolic blessing.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary of the Synod

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC
Chancellor