

**THE SYRO- MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
**MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA**

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**CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA**

**Sixth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod**  
**(5 – 7 March 2008)**

**REPORT**

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Sixth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church at the Synod Hall of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia in the Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum from 5 to 7 March 2008. The Holy Episcopal Synod (HES) began its first session at 6 p.m., after the Assembly of the Synodal Commissions which began at 9 a.m., on Wednesday 5 March 2008 and ended at 4.30 p.m. All the Synod Fathers - His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios 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. Abraham Mar Julios, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas and Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas – assembled at the Catholicate Centre and went into the Synod Hall. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor of Major Archiepiscopal Curia, recorded the acts of the Synod, except for those matters listed under “Matters *sub-secreto*.”

Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Bishop Emeritus of Tiruvalla, requested the President for leave from attending the Holy Episcopal Synod-in-Session from the afternoon of 6 March 2007 due to his ill-health. As per CCEO c 109, he was granted leave.

His Beatitude, Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis said the opening prayer and welcomed all the Bishops for the Sixth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. His Beatitude welcomed very specially His Excellency Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, the newly ordained Eparchial Bishop of Muvattupuzha. His Beatitude lauded the new Bishop for his excellent qualities as an organizer and as administrator of the various apostolates and offices entrusted to him in the Malankara Catholic Church in general and the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla in particular. His Beatitude said that the new Bishop’s qualities as a vigilant pastor of souls will stand in good stead as an Eparchial Bishop. His Beatitude wished that Most Rev. Mar Julios’ Episcopal ministry in the Episcopal and Synodal communion of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church bear beneficial fruits for the Church. In his opening message, His Beatitude highlighted the enthusiasm of the People of God in the apostolates of our Church and their expectation from the HES as exhibited in the concluding assembly of the Synodal Commissions. His Beatitude mentioned that the points, such as the revision of the civil law on the registration of Christian marriages blessed in our churches, the need to

produce a certificate of HIV and AIDS test before marriage, which the Assembly of the Synodal Commissions brought to the attention of the HES, are issues that should be seriously discussed. Being in session of the HES of the Church during the Lenten season is a special blessing for the Episcopate of our Church. For, the Synod Fathers ponder over the affairs of the Church when the entire Church is engaged in prayer and fast and communion with God. His Beatitude wished that God the Father with his love, his only Son with his salvific grace and the Holy Spirit with his inspiration enlighten the Bishops gathered in the Holy Synod. His Beatitude prayed that the Synodal gathering be for the greater glory of the Triune God and for the good of the Church. With these words, His Beatitude the Catholicos declared the Synod open.

### **The Presentation of the Agenda**

His Beatitude, the President of the HES, presented the agenda of the Synod:

1. Report of the Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
2. Decisions of the Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
3. Codification of the Particular Law of the SMCC
4. Evaluation of the Assembly of the Synodal Commissions
5. Evaluation of the functioning of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia
6. Construction of the Catholicate Centre
7. Report of the Apostolic Visitor of the ETRI
8. Report about the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary and its Staff Fixation for the Academic Year 2008-'09
9. Canonisation process
10. Common Programmes of 2008 – 15 July, 20 September
11. Evaluation/Approval of the Liturgical Books, Especially of the Holy Week
12. Common Collections (Catholicos' Day, Laity Day, Youth Day, Holy Land Day, etc.)
13. Matters *sub-secreto*
14. Other relevant matters, if any, with the consent of the President

The agenda was approved with the addition of the following topics: report of the ETROI (Extraterritorial Regions outside India) and the implementation of the synodal decision on permanent diaconate.

### **The Report and the Decisions of the Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod held from 9 to 12 October 2007**

The Report, the Decisions and the Guidelines of the Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod held from 9 to 12 October 2008 were read out by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the HES. During the discussion and clarifications on the matter presented, it was pointed out that those matters discussed and decisions taken on the Extraterritorial Regions of the Church outside India should be recorded in full in the report and included in the guidelines given by the Synod. The Secretary noted them down.

With the above-mentioned correction, the report, the decisions and the guidelines were proposed to be passed by Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios. Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom supported the proposal. They were passed unanimously.

## **The Deliberations**

### **The Codification of the Particular Law**

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos reported the progress of the codification of the Particular Law to the Synod. Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the Convenor of the Commission for the Codification of the Particular Law completed the drafting of the unfinished parts of the draft and submitted a fresh one.

What should be the content of the Particular Law? The HES, taking into consideration the criteria followed in the codification so far, laid down the following guidelines:

- a. The proposed Code, being a Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, it should confine itself to the codification of the Particular Law as required by the CCEO. The Code shall not repeat what is already treated in the CCEO. This may create confusions
- b. Wherever necessary, the Oriental characteristics, Antiochene traditions and the Malankara disciplinary patrimony should emerge.
- c. Legislation of “more particular laws” should be left to the Eparchies.
- d. The canonical status and legal effects of priests who leave priesthood should be clarified in the PL. In the context of the Universal Church and the particular context of our Church, the canonical status of married clergy and how married men could be promoted to priesthood should be dealt with.
- e. Norms for promotion of candidates to Permanent diaconate should be codified.
- f. Laws on salary and maintenance of priests and the legal ownership of their assets after their death should be treated in the Particular Law.
- g. In the section on “Religious”, special mention should be made on the status and role of Bethany Ashram in the Church. The role and functions of other religious congregations working in the Malankara Catholic Church should be delineated in the Code.
- h. In the realm of liturgy and interritual matters, care should be taken to give effective guidelines and clarifications to those who have obtained biritual faculties how they should use it. Similarly the use of Episcopal and other insignia should be regulated.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos and the team of experts shall revise the draft according to these principles. Thereafter, after plenary meeting of the Commission for Codification of the Particular Law of the MCC, it shall be presented before the HES for approval.

It was decided that the Holy Episcopal Synod-in-session shall have an extended session (second session) to approve the final draft of the Code of Particular Law, from 4 p.m. on 15 July to 17 July 2008. Thereafter, the acts of the codification shall be sent to the Holy See.

### **The Construction of the Catholicate Centre**

Mr. Saiju, the Architect of the proposed Catholicate Centre and Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath, the Finance Officer of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia were called in to introduce the plan and the front elevation of the proposed centre. They presented the plan. In the course of the presentation it was suggested that an auditorium could be constructed over the present Mar Ivanios block giving a face-lift to the present building to integrate it with the main block to be constructed. This would give the possibility of having more rooms for guests and others in St. Aloysius Block. The HES suggested further modifications in the front elevation.

Mr. Saiju left the synod hall. Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath presented the accounts of the Curia. In the context of the discussion on the expenses of the construction of the chapel of the proposed Catholicate Centre, which would be sponsored by the MCC in America, it was clarified by Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas that the promised amount is inclusive of the donations from the Priests working in America. Rev. Fr. Augustine Mangalath has to be intimated about this. It was also suggested that the funding agencies should be given a report of the progress of the project.

### **The Report of the Apostolic Visitor of the ETRI**

The Report was presented by Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor to the Extraterritorial regions of the MCC in India. In the discussion and responses that followed, it was suggested that the report should highlight the ecumenical role of our Church, and the importance of the liturgical life of our people, in the lack of which our people leave the Catholic Church.

In the part on recommendations to the Holy See, it could be suggested that the Syro-Malankara Catholic be granted “all-India jurisdiction” as it would be the ideal solution. If this is not possible at present, at least an Eparchy be erected as a canonical provision for the effective ecclesial and pastoral care of the faithful in the ETRI.

The Synod discussed ways and means to promote priestly vocations for the ETRI. The canonical status (incardination) of such priests was also considered. It was decided that each Eparchy shall promote vocations in view of the ETRI and the candidates could be formed in the respective Eparchial minor seminaries.

The effective deployment of priests in the ETR was discussed. It was decided that the priests from the Eparchies working in the Extraterritorial Regions be entrusted to the Apostolic Visitor. The Apostolic Visitor could transfer them to other personal parishes or mission centres giving prior information to their respective Eparchial Metropolitans.

Regarding the criteria to decide which properties are entrusted to the Apostolic Visitor by the Eparchies, it was decided that the names of the properties and their places shall be spelt out clearly. Accordingly, the following are the properties:.....

In this context, the relation and the co-operation of the religious in the organisation of the ecclesial life, both within and without the *territorium proprium* of the Church, was discussed. It was decided that, in order to promote co-operation in apostolic activities and to discuss canonical matters in this regard, a meeting of the Major Superiors (Superiors General and Provincial Superiors) of Bethany Ashram, Bethany Convent and the DM Sisters shall be organised, as per CCEO c 102 §3, **at 4.30 p.m. on**

**Thursday, 20 November 2008** on the sidelines of the Seventh Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod to be convoked from 18 to 21 November 2008 at the Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum.

**The Report of the Apostolic Visitor of the Extraterritorial Regions outside India (ETROI)**

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, the Apostolic Visitor to America and Europe introduced the report of the ecclesial life and organisation of the Malankara Catholics in the ETROI. The discussion that ensued focussed mainly on the financial situation of the communities organised in America. It was decided to constitute a committee consisting of Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos and Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom to study the canonical and financial status of our Church in America and to propose solutions for a stable ecclesial organisation of our Church there.

**Report about the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary and its Staff-Fixation for the Academic Year 2008-'09**

The Report about the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary submitted by the Rector was examined by the Synod. In the evaluation and discussion that followed, the following decisions were made:

- a. The Seminary Commission: The Seminary Commission shall be expanded with two Vice-Chairmen – Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios and Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios – along with His Beatitude, Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos, the Chairman of the Commission.
- b. In view of appointing him as member of the Historical Commission for the Cause of Canonisation of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios, Rev. Fr. Jose Mariadas Padipurackal OIC shall be relieved from his office as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy. However, he will continue as a Resident Professor in the Faculty of the Seminary. Rev. Fr. Daniel Mangalath shall be appointed the new Dean.
- c. Rev. Fr. Placid Thompiladimuriyil OIC and Rev. Fr. Vincent from the Eparchy of Marthandom shall be appointed a Resident Staff of the Seminary after due consultation with their Provincial Superior and Eparchial Bishop respectively.
- d. The HES considers the revision of the statutes of the Seminary. In the mean time, it is decided that any Staff of the Seminary shall obtain the prior permission from His Beatitude the Catholicos and the respective Eparchial Metropolitan to go on leave for more than two weeks.

In view of the formation of the Seminarians in general, it was stated that as a rule, Minor Seminary Rectors are not to be appointed as vicars of parishes.

**Enquiry by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches on Kananites following the Malankara Rite in the Syro-Malabar Church**

His Beatitude the Catholicos introduced the above-mentioned topic before the Synod. The draft of the response was read out by His Grace Archbishop Thomas Mar Koorilos. The Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church endorsed the request made by the Kananites of the Syro-Malabar Church following the Malankara

Rite to make a canonical provision for them with a Bishop. It was further suggested that such a canonical provision could be under the jurisdiction of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy. In the history of our Church, we had a prelate, namely Most Rev. Thomas Mar Dioscoros, who got reunited to the Catholic Church from the Kananite Malankara community. This response is confidential.

### **Common Collections**

The HES took up for deliberation the topic of common collections raised in the Church to determine the mode of collecting them and to ascertain to whom they would belong. It was decided that the Seminary Day shall be in the month of May, not on Maundy Thursday as is now observed. Though Maundy Thursday is ideal for such a collection, the liturgical context of the Passion Week does not suit for publicity of vocations and for monetary collections to support the seminary. With regard to the distribution of the collection, half of the amount shall be set apart for the Minor Seminary and the other half for the Major Seminary. The amount that is due to the Major Seminary shall be sent to the Major Archiepiscopal Curia.

The total collection from each Eparchy and the Extraterritorial Regions on the Catholicos' Day in February shall be sent over to the Major Archiepiscopal Curia. As a custom, this shall be brought by the respective Eparchial Bishop or Apostolic Visitor at the convocation of the HES that falls after the Catholicos' Day and handed over to the Catholicos personally. The money will be utilised for the expenses of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia.

The Youth Day and Laity Day collections are for the activities of the Youth and the Laity of the respective Eparchies and ETR.

The Mission Sunday collection and the Holy Land Collection are sent directly by each Eparchy and ETR to the Apostolic Nunciature.

### **The Cause of Canonisation of the Servant of God, Archbishop Mar Ivanios**

The Chancellor, who is also the Postulator of the Cause of Canonisation of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios, was asked to report to the HES the progress of the Cause. He briefed the Synod that efforts are being made to constitute the Historical and Theological Commissions and the Tribunal for the examination of witnesses. His Beatitude the Catholicos was contacting experts on the matter. It was expected that those teams could be commissioned under oath on or before 15 July 2008, the annual commemoration feast of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios.

### **Common Celebrations**

His Grace Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, Metropolitan Archbishop of Tiruvalla who hosts the 78<sup>th</sup> Reunion Day celebrations informed the HES that the celebrations will be held at Kattappana on 19 and 20 September. 20 September being a Saturday, the celebrations will end on that day instead of the usual 21 September. 19 September will be the day of the conventions of the different Associations. Celebrations on 20 September will begin with the concelebrated Holy Qurbano. This year being "the Year of the Word of God", a reading of selected passages of the Bible with messages from His Beatitude the Catholicos and the Apostolic Nuncio would be appropriate. The celebrations shall end with a rally.

In this context, a discussion was held to the effect that all the Bishops of our Church shall be present, as far as possible, for all the common functions of our Church.

It was informed that the valedictory function of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of the Archieparchies of Trivandrum and Tiruvalla is to take place towards the end of December 2008. The possible date of the celebration in the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum would be on 27 or 29 December. The day will be finalised on obtaining the confirmation expected from His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, who is invited to grace the occasion and to visit our Church. The date of celebrations of the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla will be fixed accordingly.

### **Permanent Diaconate**

The reinstatement of the Permanent Diaconate in the Malankara Catholic Church was in principle decided already by the HES. To work out the modalities for the same, a team consisting of Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios and Abraham Mar Julios would study the matter and submit proposals in the next HES.

### **Approval of Liturgical Books**

The Passion (*Hāsa*) Week Canonical Prayers and the Order of Services of the Passion Week (*Hāsa Sushrūshakramam*) for the use of the Faithful, which were printed and published *ad experimnetum* by the Synodal Commission for Liturgy were placed before the HES. The HES directed that the text, after having included the corrections and suggestions received after its use during the forthcoming Passion Week, shall be presented before the next HES for approval.

The HES considered the observations received from various sections of the Faithful concerning the institution narrative of certain Anaphorae printed in the recently approved and published Takso of the Holy Qurbono. It was decided that the institution narrative of St. Jacob's Anaphora which could be used in all other Anaphorae be printed on a separate card, laminated and circulated for use.

The HES wanted that the revision of the *Divyanidhi* (Book of occasional prayers and blessings) be completed and published soon. His Excellency Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios would help His Grace Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos in completing the revision.

### **Evaluation about the Functioning of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia**

The Chancellor, Rev. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC informed the HES of the increasing work-load in the Chancery and other offices of the Curia. His Beatitude, the Catholicos volunteered to grant the service of a Regent who could assist the Chancellor in his office works

### **Matters *subsecreto***

His Beatitude, the Catholicos introduced the matters *subsecreto* and it was deliberated upon in the Holy Synod. The Secretary of the HES, His Grace Thomas Mar Koorilos maintains the minutes of the session separately.

## **Other Relevant Matters with the Permission of the President**

### **Alienation of the properties of the Eparchy of Bathery**

Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, the Metropolitan of Bathery submitted to the HES two applications, requesting permission to alienate two properties - 10 acres of land at Arattuthara and 54 acres of the estate at Edakon, Kannur District - of the Eparchy of Bathery, in order to clear the debts of the Eparchy. The Eparchy has to clear a loan of Rupees ten crores taken from the Federal Bank. His Excellency also informed the HES that the matter was discussed in the Eparchial Council, the Presbyteral Council and the Priests' General Assembly of the Eparchy. All these fora made the same proposal.

The HES, after evaluating the proposal, decided to endorse the request of Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Diavannios. His Beatitude, the Catholicos is requested to give in writing the permission for the same.

### **Conclusion**

It was agreed upon that the next and the Seventh Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod be convoked from 18 to 21 November 2008. The Holy Episcopal Synod Fathers will assemble at the Catholicate Centre in the evening on 17 November and spend the time till noon of 18 November in recollection.

After a short message, His Beatitude the Catholicos thanked all the Synod Fathers for their participation in the Synod. His Beatitude also thanked the personnel of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia for their prompt and painstaking preparations for the conduct of the Assembly of the Synodal Commissions and the HES. After that, His Beatitude declared the HES closed. His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos said the concluding prayers and imparted the apostolic blessing. The first session of the Sixth Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church ended at 12.30 noon on 7 March 2008.

**✠ Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos**  
Secretary

**Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC**  
Chancellor