

THE SYRO- MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTER, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Eighth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
(2-5 March 2009)

REPORT

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Eighth 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 2 to 5 March 2009.

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 – were present. 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 3 March 2009 due to his health condition. As per CCEO c 109, he was granted leave.

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, recorded the minutes of the Synod, except for matters subsecreto on persons.

The Holy Episcopal Synod (HES) began its first session at 6 p.m. on 2 March 2009. After the prayer, Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, and Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas handed over the Catholicate Day Collection to the Major Archbishop Catholicos. The others were asked to hand over the collections without delay.

Thereafter the President of the Holy Synod welcomed all the Bishops to the Eighth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod. His Beatitude informed the HES that His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI had conferred on Rev. Fr. Johnson Varughese Kaimalayil, the title Monsignor after promoting him as First Grade Official of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. His Beatitude conveyed best wishes and compliments to Monsignor Johnson Varughese Kaimalayil. His Beatitude also informed the HES that he is still awaiting the response of the Apostolic See on some of the matters conveyed to it as per the decision of the HES. His Beatitude also informed the HES that the Holy Week Prayers and other liturgical books in preparation would be published soon. In his inaugural address, His Beatitude also delved on the repercussions of the proposed revision of the Civil Law in the State of Kerala. His Beatitude affirmed the dignity of man and the obligation of the humankind and the Church in particular to protect it. His Beatitude declared the HES open.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE AGENDA

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

1. Prayer
2. Handing over of the Catholicos' Day Collection
3. Report of the Extraordinary Synod with H E Card. Sandri
4. Report of the Seventh Holy Episcopal Synod
5. Decisions of the Seventh Holy Episcopal Synod
6. Report of the Meeting of the HES with the Major Superiors
7. Matters subsecreto
8. The Evaluation of the functioning of the Synodal Commissions
9. The Planning and Preparation for the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly
10. Construction of the Catholicate Centre
11. The Common Programmes of 2009 – July 15 and September 20
12. Evaluation of the contemporary socio-political situations
 - i. the proposed revision of laws by the govt. of Kerala
 - ii. the forthcoming parliamentary elections
 - iii. issues of reservations in govt. jobs
13. Common Programme for Vocation Promotion
14. The Code of Particular Canons of the SMCC
15. Other relevant matters if any with the consent of President

To the proposed agenda was added "Evaluation of the Major Seminary". The agenda was approved by the HES

The Report and the Decisions of the Seventh Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod held from 17 – 21 November 2008

The Report and the decisions of the Seventh Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod were read out. On matters that pertained to the Extraterritorial Regions of our Church outside India, it was pointed out that the report should high-light the positive response in favour of the erection of the proposed Eparchy of North America. On the laws concerning the prohibition of marriage during the seasons of Nombu the HES restated the prohibition of marriage during the seasons of Nombu and kathiruppukalam and the absolute prohibition of marriage during the Three-Day-Nombu and the Holy Week. With regard to dispensation granted from the prohibition of marriage during the season of Nombu, it was stated that it shall not be granted after the Pakuthinombu till the Holy Week unless for the gravest reason. After these corrections and clarifications the report and the decisions were passed unanimously.

Report of the Extraordinary Synod with H. E. Card. Sandri

The report of the Extraordinary Synod of HES held on 10 October 2010, convoked during the visitation of His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was presented. HES accepted the report.

Report of the Meeting of the HES with the Major Superiors

The report of the Meeting of the HES with the Major Superiors held on 20 November 2008 was read out. It was suggested that the report should be modified before publication.

THE DELIBERATIONS

Matters *subsecreto*

His Beatitude, the Catholicos introduced the topics to be treated under "Matters *subsecreto*." The Holy Episcopal Synod completed the deliberations and passed on to the other points on the agenda.

The Evaluation of the functioning of the Synodal Commissions

The Synodal Commissions have become less active. The secretaries are burdened with so many other offices in their Eparchies.

The Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Theology, Very Rev. Fr. Mariadas OIC, is elected the Superior General of the Order of the Imitation of Christ. Hence, we need a new Secretary of the Commission.

The Planning and Preparation for the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly

The HES deliberated on the planning and preparation for the first Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the SMCC. A theme has to be selected. Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios was proposed as the convenor of the assembly and Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios was proposed as the convener for theological matters.

It was decided that the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly shall be convoked in January 2011 and that before this Assembly, the Eparchial Assembly has to be convoked in each Eparchy before September 2010.

The possible themes of the assembly could be: "SMCC in the 21st century" or "Evangelisation and the role of the SMCC."

Construction of the Catholicate Centre

The accounts of the expenses for the construction of the Catholicate centre till the end of February 2009, prepared by the Finance Officer of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia was presented to the HES.

The Common Programmes of 2009 – July 15 and September 20

15 July, Mar Ivanios Day: It was suggested that the Padayatra ends at the tomb of Mar Ivanios on 14 July. It is recommended that the Padayatrikar observe fasting and abstinence as far as possible during the Padayatra.

It was suggested that all our Bishops are to participate in the Commemoration Feast of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios. The commemoration of the other Prelates of our Church shall be celebrated with the Morning Prayers, Holy Qurbano, Dhupaparthana and Nercha. All our Bishops may try to be present for these commemorations.

20 September 2009: The Eparchy of Marthandom would host the Reunion Day Celebrations 2009 as Malankara Ecclesial Day on Saturday, Sunday, Monday, 19, 20, 21 September 2009 at Mariagiri. It was suggested that the Catholic Bishops and other Christian Bishops of the neighbouring Dioceses of the Eparchy of Marthandom in Tamil Nadu could be invited. Similarly, an Eastern Catholic Patriarch could be invited.

Common Programme for Vocation Promotion

It was felt that there was a great need of conscientizing Priests in regard to promotion of vocations to priestly life and religious life. The mutual responsibility of the religious priests and the eparchial clergy to foster vocations should be highlighted. Similarly fostering vocations to other religious communities should obtain priority in our Church life. A common pastoral letter highlighting the theological and pastoral implications of the vocations to priesthood and sanyasa could be given for the whole Church. It was also decided that the Vocation Day shall be on the third Sunday of the month of May.

Extraterritorial Regions

ETR-India: The current situation in the extraterritorial regions in India was shared by Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor. The co-operation of the Clergy in mission work is primary. As the priests working in the region are sent by Bethany Ashram and the eparchies, one sees a certain laxity in allegiance and common sharing. This affects co-ordination of activities in the region. A reshuffling and reallocation of priests might help in this situation. Most Rev. Mar Barnabas also described the situation of our educational institutions in Bhopal and Chennai and their prospects for further development.

ETR North America: Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, the Apostolic Visitor to North America and Europe briefed the HES on the convention of the Malankarites to be held in the USA from 6 to 9 August 2009. On behalf of the Christian Faithful there, he invited all to the Convention.

Evaluation of the contemporary socio-political situations

- i. the proposed revision of laws by the govt. of Kerala
- ii. the forthcoming parliamentary elections
- iii. issues of reservations in govt. jobs

The HES evaluated the socio-political impact of the aforesaid issues and situations in the State of Kerala in India. In order that the Church in India speak with one voice, the HES was of unanimous opinion that the statements issued by the CBCI and KCBC would be sufficient in this regard. The HES also authorized Most Rev. Mar Koorilos and Most Rev. Mar Ignathios to evaluate the political situation in Kerala in relation to the forthcoming assembly elections and do the needful so that the legitimate rights of our community are protected (especially with regard to Ranni, Konni and Parasala assembly seats).

Evaluation of the Formation Programmes in St. Mary's Malankara Seminary.

The HES evaluated the formation programmes in our Seminary. The focus was on the need to bring in more competent members on the Staff and their availability and commitment to the formation programmes of the seminary.

A new Seminary Commission was formed with Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios as the President and with Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios and Most Rev. Yoochanon Mar Chrysostom as members. They were empowered to select and appoint the Staff of the Seminary from the Eparchies, Bethany Ashram and other Catholic Churches sui iuris. It was also suggested that the members of the Seminary Commission and the Staff of the seminary could meet together in the month of May for an orientation of the formation programmes of the seminary.

The HES evaluated the functioning of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Seminary. It was felt that that the faculty be continued. The HES also planned to meet the members of the staff of the seminary at the end of this Synod-in-session.

The Code of Particular Canons of the SMCC

The draft of the Code of Particular Law of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was presented to the HES. The HES accepted it as a draft to be sent to a group of chosen consultors. They are:

1. Protosyncellus and Syncelli of the Eparchies
2. Superiors General
3. Rt. Rev. Mavelil Varghese Corepiscopo
4. Rt. Rev. Mannil Samuel Remban
5. Rector, Malankara Major Seminary
6. Deans, Malankara Major Seminary
7. Presbyteral Council Secretaries of the Eparchies
8. Memebrs of the Expert Committee
9. Sr. Anila Christy DM
10. Sr. Namitha SIC
11. Chevelier Varghese Karippayil
12. Bar Itho Kasiro Christl John
13. Bar Itho Kasiro Mr. PV Thomas
14. Bar Itho Kasiro. Thomas John Thevareth
15. Barz Itho Kasirtho Elisabeth Mathai Idiculla
16. Barz Itho Kasirtho Sara Mani Kuriakose
17. Pastoral Council Secretaries
18. President, Vice-President, Secretary and one Priest from the North American Board
19. Mr. Jacob Ponnus (DGP)
20. Mr. Alexander Jacob IPS
21. Mr. John Mathai IAS

22. Mrs Mary Mathew
23. Mr. Paul Raj (President, MCA)
24. Mr. Samraj (President MCYM)
25. Mr. Philip Ninan
26. Mr. Tom Njayalloor
27. Mrs Gibi Geevarghese (Mar Theophilos College)
28. Adv. Thomas M. Mathunni
29. Adovate Johnson M. Abraham

The Consultors should submit their observations in writing on or before 15 April 2009. A meeting of the Consultors would be convened on 28 April 2009.

Other relevant matters if any with the consent of President

With the permission of His Beatitude, the Catholicos, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for the Laity, brought to the attention of the HES a few concerns of the Synodal Commission for the Laity.

1. The Holy Qurbono offering (stôthrakâzhcha) on the Laity Day has to be made available for the activities of the Laity, especially for the MCA.
2. A theological formation for the Laity has to be introduced for those interested in the same.
3. The Secretary of the Synodal Commission for the Laity could be a lay person.
4. The Laity Day and the Seminary Day are now proposed to be on the same day, the first Sunday of the month of May. This clash could be avoided placing the Seminary Day on the Puthunjâyar.

The HES in principle agreed to all the proposals.

Meeting with the Rector and Staff of the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary

The proposed meeting of the members of the HES with the Rector and staff of the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary was held at 10 a.m. on 5 March 2009 at the Staff Meeting Hall of the Seminary. The meeting ended at 1.30 p.m.

CONCLUSION

After the meeting with the Staff of the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, His Beatitude, the Catholicos declared the Synod closed at 1.30 p.m. It was also informed that the next Holy Episcopal Synod would be convoked from 20 to 23 October 2009 at the Catholicate Centre. The Synod Fathers dispersed after the lunch with the staff and students of the Seminary.

✠ Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

Fr. Antony Valiavilayil OIC
Chancellor