

THE SYRO- MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA
CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

**Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT
OF HIS EMINENCE LEONARDO CARDINAL SANDRI
THE PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES
(10 October 2008)**

REPORT

Besides the liturgical reception, the Holy Qurbano and the public reception and meeting to honour His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Representative of the Holy Father, on his official visit to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church (SMCC) His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos convoked an extraordinary session of the Holy Episcopal Synod (HES) of the Church at 5.30 p.m. on Monday, 10 October 2008 at Thirusannidhi, the Major Archiepiscopal House, Pattom, Trivandrum.

All the Synod Fathers - His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos (President of the Holy 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. Joseph Mar Thomas and Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas – were present. Msgr. Marizio Malvestiti and Rev. Fr. Johnson Varghese Kaimalayil, the officials of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, who accompanied the Cardinal Prefect, were special invitees to the HES. Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, the Metropolitan Emeritus of Tiruvalla, excused himself from attending the Synod due to his health condition.

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, recorded the minutes of the Holy Synod.

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, the President of the HES welcomed His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri to the extraordinary session of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. He also welcomed Rt. Rev. Msgr. Maurizio Malvestiti, the Secretary of the Prefect and Very Rev. Fr. Johnson Varghese Kaimalayil from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches as special invitees to the Holy Synod. His Beatitude said, "Today we started the day with the liturgical reception accorded to His Eminence and with the Holy Qurbano. After a tight schedule of visits thereafter, now we are extremely happy, that His eminence is participating in this Holy Synod". His Beatitude recounted the events which took place in the life of the Malankara Catholic Church ever after that fostered relationship with the Apostolic See. We have kept up unconditional loyalty to the Holy See. The Holy See has been always gracious to us. The pastoral visits of the former Prefects of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches to us have strengthened the Malankara Catholic Church. His Beatitude specially recalled with

gratitude the gracious gesture of the Roman Pontiff in elevating our Church to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church and thanked the service of His Beatitude Ignace Cardinal Moussa Daoud as the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Thanking His Eminence Cardinal Sandri for his readiness to be present at Holy Episcopal Synod, His Beatitude said that the Synod-in-session was an expression of the communion that the Apostolic Malankara Catholic Church enjoys with the Apostolic See of Rome. He declared the Synod open as an extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod convoked on the occasion of the visitation of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

The Agenda

The agenda of the Holy Synod was the sharing of some of the aspects of the Malankara ecclesial life with His Eminence, the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. His Beatitude the Catholicos asked Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod, to moderate the sharing session.

The Deliberations

His Excellency Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor of the Malankara Catholics residing in India in the Extra-Territorial Regions (ETRI) of the SMCC, spoke about the missionary vision of the Church. He reminded that the SMCC is by its very nature a missionary Church. The Eparchy of Marthandom is a living testimony of this aspect of the Church. The emigration of the Malankarites to the metropolitan cities and other parts of India is yet another development in the missionary life of this Church. On behalf of the Faithful of our Church in the ETRI, he thanked the Roman Pontiff and the Congregation for the Oriental Churches for appointing him Apostolic Visitor for the Malankara Catholic Faithful of the region. Ever since his appointment, they have become very lively due to the presence of an Episcopal leadership. He brought to the notice of His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect that the People are eagerly looking forward to a stable canonical arrangement for their pastoral care and ecclesial life.

His Excellency Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios shared with His Eminence the Cardinal the progress of the Cause of Canonization of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. He requested the help of the Apostolic See, especially of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, in this matter.

His Excellency Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios spoke about the status of the Oriental Churches in the Universal Church and their participation in the life of the Church. He brought to the attention of His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect that the Malankara Catholic Church being raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church should obtain a corresponding participation, through the Father and Head of the Church, in the decision making bodies of the Universal Church.

His Excellency Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, as the Apostolic Visitor appointed for the Malankara Catholics living in North America and Europe, spoke about the situation of the SMCC Faithful in this part of the world. He also spoke about the need of a procura of the Malankara Catholic Church in Rome and enquired whether the Congregation for the Oriental Churches could come to the help of the SMCC in this regard.

His Grace Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos briefed His Eminence the Cardinal on the status of the codification of the Particular Law of the SMCC. He informed His Eminence that the codification is nearing completion.

His Excellency Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, sharing his experience with international organizations brought to the attention of His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect that the Oriental Congregation may encourage the international ecclesiastical organizations to be more open to Churches like the Malankara Catholic Church, especially in helping the priests of the Church in matters of their social security schemes.

His Excellency Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios spoke on active participation and co-operation of the Priests, Religious and the Laity in the life of the SMCC. He also dealt with the cooperation of the Laity and the Priests in our Church, which is very much encouraging and exemplary. Similarly, he elucidated the role of our Major Seminary in the formation of the Priests of the Malankara Catholic Church.

Response and Message from His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect

As the Synod Fathers completed their sharing, His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri addressed the Synod. First of all he responded to the sharing by the Most Rev. Bishops. On requests like support for the cause of canonization of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, assistance to open a procura of the Malankara Church in Rome and support for the social security for priests, he promised to use his good offices for the purpose. For opening the procura in Rome he wanted the SMCC “to keep its radars open”, so that it would be able to locate when such chance would appear, as and when a religious congregation or a parish in Rome restructure its infrastructure and activities. Concerning representation of the SMCC in the Universal Church, His Eminence assured the Holy Synod that he would speak to the Holy Father about it. He also appreciated the pastoral involvement of the Apostolic Visitors outside the proper territory of the SMCC. He said that the endeavor for canonical provisions in the region is moving ahead step by step. His Eminence also appreciated the cordiality and the synodal spirit within the Episcopate of the SMCC.

In his written message read out to the members of the Holy Synod, he expressed his great appreciation of the SMCC, especially as the Church is celebrating the year of the Platinum Jubilee of the reconstitution of the Malankara Hierarchy in Catholic communion. He emulated the reunion attempts of the Servant of God, Archbishop Mar Ivanios and appreciated the spectacular growth of the SMCC from 5 to 400,000 as per Directory 2006 of the SMCC with 551 Eparchial Priests, 122 Religious Priests and 1808 Religious Sisters. He also said that had it not been for Archbishop Mar Ivanios, a leader led by God and with prophetic vision, all these would not have materialized. He advised the Church to perpetuate her emphasis upon ecumenical dialogue together with her devotions to the Holy See. He concluded the message communicating the nearness and affection of the Supreme Shepherd, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and his special blessings to each one of the Bishops and to the whole of the SMCC.

Conclusion

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, again communicated to His Eminence the Cardinal the Church's joy and gratitude for his visit to the Malankara Church. He also thanked all the Most Rev. Bishops for their participation in the Synod. Acknowledging the valuable service of Rt. Rev. Msgr. Maurizio Malvestiti and Very Rev. Fr. Johnson Kaimalayil for the SMCC as the officials of the Congregations for the Oriental Churches, His Beatitude thanked them warmly.

After the concluding prayers, Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis together with His Eminence Cardinal Sandri imparted apostolic blessings.

✠ Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC
Chancellor