

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

Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT HIS BEATITUDE MORAN MOR BECHARA BOUTROS AL RAI, PATRIARCH OF THE SYRIAN MARONITE CHURCH (21 September 2012)

REPORT

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos convoked the fourteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod at Marygiri Archbishop's House on 21 and 22 September 2012. The Synod was to gather itself at the Archbishop's house immediately after the end of the 82nd Reunion Anniversary celebrations held at Pathanamthitta on 21 September. His Beatitude Moran Mor Bechara Boutros al Rai, the Patriarch of Syrian Maronite Church from Lebanon was the chief guest at the celebrations.

Since the situation at end of the Reunion Day celebrations was hectic, and since some members of the HES had to participate in the programmes of His Beatitude Moran Mor Bechara Boutros al Rai the following day, His Beatitude the Catholicos declared the convoked synod as an Extraordinary Synod held in honour of the visiting Patriarch.

The Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod (HES) met at the conference hall of Marygiri at 7.00 p.m. on Friday, 21 September 2012.

The members of the Synod-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. Joseph Mar Thomas, Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios, Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebios, Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios and Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos-were present. Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, the Bishop Emeritus of Tiruvalla was absent due to his ill-health.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, the Curia Bishop and the Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, recorded the minutes.

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, the President of the HES welcomed His Beatitude Moran Mor Bechara Boutros al Rai to the extraordinary session of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. He also welcomed Most Rev. Paul Sayab and Most Rev. Baulos Rouhana, the Bishops accompanying the Patriarch as special invitees to the Holy Synod. His Beatitude introduced all the members of the HES to His Beatitude.

In his welcome address, His Beatitude the Catholicos recalled the warm welcome and the hospitality accorded to him by the Patriarch and his team on the former's visit to Lebanon on the occasion of the visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to Lebanon. His Beatitude also thanked the Patriarch for his visit to the Malankara Catholic Church immediately after papal visit to Lebanon. As the Patriarch of the Maronites in Lebanon, His Beatitude had a great responsibility in the conduct of the Papal visit. It is before its stress had melted down that His Beatitude undertook the tedious journey to Malankara. His Beatitude the Catholicos thanked the Patriarch for this great gesture of communion between the Maronite Church and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, both belonging to the West Syrian Antiochene tradition.

His Beatitude the Patriarch addressed the HES. He expressed his joy in visiting India and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and said that he was looking forward to an opportunity like this, to forge a tie up with the Oriental Churches in India and to strengthen the communion. He appreciated the apostolic lineage of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and the ritual affinity with the Syro-Antiochene Church. His Beatitude also promised all possible co-operation of the Maronite Syrian Church with the SMCC. His Beatitude also introduced the other Bishops accompanying him to the HES.

In the discussion that followed, the ways and means of collaboration between the Maronite Syrian Church and the SMCC. The possibility of exchange of seminarians and students for higher studies in Theology and Liturgy was discussed.

Thereafter, His Beatiude the Catholicos thanked His Beatitude the Patriarch and the Bishops and Rev. Fr. Abdo Badwi for their gracious gesture of communion and co-operation shown through the visit. His Beatitude the Catholicos also expressed the hope of strengthening the relations through various means in the years to come. They left the HES.

After the Patriarch left the HES, a few important topics were taken up:

82nd Reunion Day: First of all, His Beatitude the Catholicos congratulated and thanked Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom for the successful conduct of the 82nd Reunion Day and the blessing of the Cathedral of the Eparchy of Pathanamthitta. Most Rev. Chrysostom thanked all the members of the HES for their support and participation.

Seminary Formation: The mode of execution of the decision of the Thirteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod that "the Eparchial Bishops shall have the freedom to send seminarians to

seminaries other than the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary" was discussed. It was decided that His Beatitude the Catholicos shall communicate the matter to the seminary.

The Chairman of the seminary commission, Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios informed that the service of Rev. Fr. James Kurianal, Professor of Scripture, from the Eparchy of Kothamangalam would be available for the seminary. He could be appointed as a resident professor.

Request from the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum for a small plot of land to be allotted for use as cemetery adjacent to the existing cemetery was considered by the HES. After due evaluation of the request, the HES gave its consent to the request.

Caritas Malankara: Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Social Action, introduced the proposal to constitute "Caritas Malankara" an apex body for co-ordinating the development institutions and charitable activities of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Due to lack of time, it was decided that the matter would be taken up at the next HES.

Bethany Sannadha Seva Sangam (BSSS): His Beatitude the Catholicos informed the HES that he had received a request for the approval of the bye-laws of Bethany Sannadha Seva Sangam (BSSS), from the Superior General of Bethany Ashram. His Beatitude the Catholicos said that in the present context of organizing the Syro-Malankara Catholic Suvisesha Sangam, the formation of a similar organization is not expedient; hence the matter was not taken up for consideration.

The Fourteenth Ordinary HES: After due deliberation, the date of the next Ordinary HES, that is, the Fourteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod was fixed; it is to be convoked from 1 to 5 March 2013. The Synod would commence with the concelebrated Holy Qurbono at 6 p.m. on Friday, 1 March 2013 and would end in the afternoon on Tuesday, 5 March 2013.

Conclusion

His Beatitude the Catholicos thanked Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the HES, and Metropolitan-Archbishop of Tiruvalla for hosting the HES. He also thanked all the Most Rev. Bishops for their participation in the Synod in spite of the heavy schedule of the Reunion Day celebrations at Pathanamthitta. His Beatitude declared the Synod closed at 9 p.m.

✠ Archbishop Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos
Secretary

✠ Bishop Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC
Chancellor