

THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Twelfth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

(23 – 25 September 2011)

REPORT

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Twelfth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church at Aloysius Maria Benziger Hall, Thirusannidhi, Major Archbishop's House, Pattom, Trivandrum from 23 to 25 September 2011. The Holy Episcopal Synod (HES) began after the conclusion of the First Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, which was held at the Catholicate Centre, from 21 to 23 September 2011.

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 OIC, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, Most Rev. Samuel Mar Ireneos 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.

The First Session of the Synod began at 6 p.m. on 23 September 2011. His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos delivered the opening message of the Holy Episcopal Synod. His Beatitude welcomed all the Bishops to the Twelfth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod. His Beatitude shared with the Synod Fathers the divine providence that we had experienced during the construction and the blessing of the Catholicate Center, the headquarters of our Church. His Beatitude expressed the gratitude of our Church to all our benefactors both in India and abroad who have generously contributed to the construction. It was an expression of the unity and the goodness of our Church that our eparchies and extraterritorial regions wholeheartedly participated in the construction. His Beatitude congratulated the members of various committees which worked for the success of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly. His Beatitude opined that the First Major Archiepiscopal Assembly was a grand success. His Beatitude brought to the attention of the members of the Synod that since the HES in session is convoked immediately after the Assembly, the main agenda of this HES is the study and approval of the premeyam and proposals of the Assembly. Exhorting the Synod Fathers to march forward in unity in the

evangelization activities of our Church, His Beatitude declared the Twelfth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church open.

His Beatitude proposed that the Report and the Decisions of the Eleventh Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod held from 2-3 March 2011 would be presented in the next HES and the Synod Fathers accepted the proposal.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE AGENDA

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

1. Prayer
2. Inaugural Address by His Beatitude
3. The Approval of the Proposal (Premeyam) of the First Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly
4. Meeting with the Professors of the Malankara Major Seminary
5. The Extraterritorial Regions in India
6. MCYM
7. Eparchy of Puttur
8. The Code of Conduct of the Rev. Priests
9. Liturgy
10. MCA
11. The Code of Particular Canons of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
12. Other relevant matters, if any, with the consent of President

The Synod Fathers accepted the proposed agenda.

THE DELIBERATIONS

1. The Approval of the Proposals (Premeyam) of the First Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly

The HES took up for discussion and approval of the premeyam of the First Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly, the main topic in the agenda. It was evaluated that the First Assembly was helpful to generate a comprehensive reformation and renewal of our ecclesial life. The participation of Bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful was active, creative and disciplined. This Assembly was an experience of receiving more grace of the Holy Spirit for the life and mission of the Church.

It was evaluated that the Premeyam presented in the Assembly was inspiring and comprehensive. It was proposed that the historical apostolic tradition, the foundation of our missionary activities, shall be highlighted in the introduction. It was observed that the parish level evangelization activity shall be added along with those at the individual and family levels.

The HES approved, in principle, the premeyam. The HES requested His Beatitude the Catholicos to publish the premeyam of the Assembly as the official teaching of the Head of the Church to the entire Church.

It was decided to establish, as early as possible, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Suvisesha Sangam and to commission it during the season of the Great Lent. It was decided to expand the Synodal Commission for Evangelization adding two bishops as Vice-Chairmen. The names of His Excellency Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios and His Excellency Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos were proposed. It was decided to add one representative from each religious congregation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Besides them, Rev. Priests and Lay Faithful from all Eparchies, Exarchate and Extraterritorial Regions could be members of the Suvisesha Sangam. It was decided to appoint a priest as a full-time executive-secretary who will reside in the Catholicate Centre, in addition to Rev. Sr. Namitha SIC, the present Secretary of the Synodal Commission. It is the responsibility of the Central Team to codify a bylaw for the activities of the Suvisesha Sangam. The draft of the bylaw shall be sent to the members of the HES in October 2011 and by accepting the observations and proposals of the bishops the draft shall be finalised. It was decided that the official formation and empowerment of the members shall be held on 10 March, 2012, after the blessing of the Holy Myron.

On the discussion exploring the possibilities of evangelisation activities in North India, His Excellency Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom informed the HES of his readiness to take over a mission region in any of the States in North India that is proposed by the His Excellency Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas. His Excellency Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos accepted the proposal of the HES to take over the territory of the Eparchy of Muvattupuzha in Tamil Nadu State as a mission region in collaboration with the Eparchy of Marthandom. It was proposed that the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla shall take up the evangelisation activities in Kambam, Theni regions of Tamil Nadu which lie close to the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla.

The HES evaluated that, in order to strengthen the Eparchy of Puttur and to make the pastoral ministry effective in the Region of Bangalore, the incorporation of the Region of Bangalore into the Eparchy of Puttur would be good. Considering the financial situations of the Eparchy of Puttur and the construction works in the Region of Bangalore, it was decided to implement the proposal only after some time.

As part of the evangelization activities at family level, the Gospel of Life shall be preached in our families. The HES expressed its concern in the decrease of the number of children in our families. The third child born in our families which faces financial difficulties will be given free primary education in our institutions and educational scholarship shall be arranged for their higher education.

The HES evaluated that the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church could effectively involve in the society through socially committed activities and could generate appreciable results. It was opined that publishing a consolidated report of financial disbursement through the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church for the building up of our nation through social welfare activities and the private charitable activities, will be a good witness.

2. Protection of the Nature

Our parishes, hospitals, educational institutions, etc. shall possess an attitude of protecting the environment. The HES directed that the proposal of the First Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly to join our hands together to fight against social evils has to be accepted wholeheartedly.

3. Blessing of the Holy Myron

The decision of the last HES to bless the Holy Myron was reviewed. The HES decided that in order to make proper spiritual preparation, the blessing of the Holy Myron, which was scheduled on 9 and 10 December 2011 at St. Mary's Cathedral be postponed to 9 and 10 March 2012. The liturgy of the blessing will begin at 3 p.m. on 9 March. The services of the second day will begin at 7 a.m.

4. Meeting with the Professors of the St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary

The professors of the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary were invited to the HES at 11 am on 24 September. His Beatitude welcomed the professors to the meeting. His Beatitude expressed satisfaction at the qualitative improvement the Seminary achieved in the basic formation. On behalf of the HES, His Beatitude thanked the professors for their commitment to the ministry.

On behalf of the Staff of the seminary, Very Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil, the Rector, expressed gratitude for the invitation to the meeting and for the words of welcome. Particularly, he thanked the members of the Seminary Commission for their excellent service. There is a tremendous improvement in the formation in the seminary after the joint-meeting of the Synod Fathers and the professors of the Seminary held at Maria Rani Centre, Sreekariyam, at the beginning of the previous academic year. We could see betterment in the spiritual life, academic matters, in the relationship between the seminarians and the professors, etc. He also added that the interests of the seminary students in agriculture and the protection of environment are praiseworthy.

The discussion that followed took into consideration the request for assigning holidays for Onam and at the semester break. It was decided to grant semester holidays. It was decided further that these holidays shall be linked to the exposure programme. The suggestion to introduce "Paid-Job Exposure" shall not be introduced.

Rev. Fr. Mathew Allummoottil, the Procurator of the Seminary, presented the income and expenditure report of the Seminary.

The HES discussed the situation of the need of more resident professors in the faculties of Philosophy and Theology.

The HES took for consideration, the proposal of the seminarians that their individual report shall be read out to the respective seminarian. It was proposed that the report shall not be read out to them, but pertinent facts of the report shall be informed to the seminarian personally by the Rector. When the report of the Deacons are sent to the Eparchies, it shall be made clear by the authorities of the seminary whether the candidate could be promoted to the order of the priesthood or not. The Eparchial Bishops shall be informed from time to time,

about the character and conduct of the seminarians. Once corrections are given, the improvement in the character and conduct of the seminarian shall be mentioned in the report. The Synod Fathers told the staff that the Eparchial Bishop shall be informed of any serious breach in the conduct of the seminarian, even if the seminarian is given correction and he shows sign of improvement in his character and conduct.

5. Extraterritorial Regions in India (ETRI)

His Excellency Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas explained the incident and context of the attacks on the churches in the Extraterritorial Regions, particularly in Pune and Hyderabad by anti-social activists. His Excellency also informed the HES about the follow-up actions in these incidents. The Synod Fathers expressed their anxiety in these incidents and assured their solidarity with Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas and the Malankara Faithful in these regions. HES directed that the positive circumstance to construct a new church in Hyderabad shall be made use of at the earliest.

Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas and Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos shared with the Synod Fathers, the events after the decision of the HES authorising Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, the Bishop of Marthandom, to provide pastoral care to the Tamil-speaking Malankarites residing outside the territory of the Eparchy of Marthandom, in collaboration with Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor to the ETRI. The Synod Fathers highlighted the fact that the Tamil-speaking Malankarites in Chennai are still part of the ETRI and that the property in Chennai bought by the Eparchy of Marthandom is owned by this Eparchy. A new church has to be constructed at Chennai-Aipakkam for the Tamil-speaking Malankarites in Chennai.

6. Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (MCYM)

Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos, the Chairman of the Malankara Catholic Youth Movement, informed the Fathers of the Holy Synod about the challenges and situations that the Youth Movement of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church faces today. The Movement feels the lack of youth leaders. His Excellency informed the HES of the decision to celebrate Youth day at the Eparchial level, since we could not celebrate the Youth day along with the Reunion Day celebrations. The need of sending the Sthothrakazhcha of Youth day for the common expenses of the MCYM was highlighted. In this context Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios pointed out the need of allotting the collection on the Laity day for the activities of the Laity.

7. Faith-formation

His Excellency Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for faith-formation, shared with the HES the matters related with faith formation in our Church.

It was proposed that the students in faith formation shall be given a common certificate. The HES entrusted Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos to design the same. The Synod Fathers discussed on the need of rescheduling the academic year of Sunday School in order that the faith-formation classes are not affected by the school/college year. The HES decided that the academic year of the faith-formation classes shall be from February to

January. It was decided to conduct the annual exams in the month of January. Likewise, the HES proposed that there shall be changes in the evaluation of the progress of the students in faith-formation. The HES discussed the possibility of:

a common question paper for the exams.

a common publication for the faith-formation.

a common vacation programme for the children with a common name and theme.

Most Rev. Philipos Mar Sthephanos was assigned to study the matters and to place the proposals before the HES.

Rev. Fr. Geevarghese (Binny) Nedumpurath of the Eparchy of Mavelikara was proposed to be the new Director of the Malankara Catholic Children's League, since Rev. Fr. George Thekkadayil, the present director is transferred to Mumbai.

8. Liturgy

His Grace Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Liturgy presented the matters related to the commission in the HES. His Grace informed that the Liturgical Calendar 2011-2012 was published. The HES directed the commission to publish the prayer book of the Great Lent, the Prumion-Sedero of the Holy Week, the Thukkasa and the Order of Blessing the Myron at the earliest.

The Order of the Burial of the Religious Brothers, which was prepared by the Order of Imitation of Christ (Bethany Ashram) in consultation with the Synodal Commission for Liturgy, was presented in the HES. The HES approved the same for publication.

9. The Code of Particular Canons of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

His Beatitude the Catholicos read out the text of the recognitio from the Holy See to the "Code of Particular Canons of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church" approved by the Ninth Ordinary HES that was convoked from 20 to 23 October, 2009. It was submitted to the Holy See by His Beatitude as per CCEO c 111 §3. The Synod Fathers received the information with great applause.

The Holy See, without proposing any amendment "recognized" the "Code of Particular Canons" of our Church, with all its canons including the canon that the Father and Head of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is called Catholicos. The letter from the Holy See specially mentioned that in accordance with the CCEO, The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church has the right and obligation to codify its own Particular Law. This Code of Particular Canons would be promulgated by His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos, through an apostolic decree on 8 December 2011, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the same day, the copies of this Code will be made available to the entire Church.

10. Thirteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod

It was decided to convoke the Thirteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of our Church at the Catholicate Centre from 5 to 8 March 2012. The HES will begin at 6 pm on 5

March with Holy Qurbano. After the HES, the blessing of Holy Myron will be celebrated on 9 and 10 March 2012.

CONCLUSION

His Beatitude gave the concluding message in the session of the Holy Episcopal Synod that began at 11 a.m. on 25 September 2011. His Beatitude recalled the divine providence and the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit at the 81st Re-union Day Celebrations, the blessing of the Catholicate Centre and First Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly that preceded this Synod. These are the signs of the special providence and care of God for the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The discipline and ecclesiastical loyalty that prevailed explicitly all through the Assembly is praiseworthy. The Assembly was a testimony that the hierarchy, while taking decisions, has to listen carefully and understand the voice of the people (*vox populi*). The sharing of the situations and challenges of various Eparchies, associations and movements of our Church was a great strength of this Synod. The intercession of the Holy Mother of God is a stronghold to us.

In the context of the convocation of the HES at Thirusannidhi, the Major Archbishop's House, Trivandrum, His Beatitude thanked all the officials and assistants of the Major Archbishop's House. Thanking all the Synod Fathers for attending this Holy Synod, His Beatitude declared the Twelfth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod closed.

HES ended with the noon prayer and lunch.

✠ **Thomas Mar Koorilos**
Secretary

✠ **Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC**
Chancellor