

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

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

**Eighteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod**

**(21 and 22 September 2015)**

**REPORT**

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Eighteenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Marygiri, the Archbishop's House, Tiruvalla on 21 and 22 September 2015. The members of the HES gathered together after the *Sabhasanghamam* hosted by the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla at Thirumoolapuram on the occasion of the 85<sup>th</sup> Reunion Day Celebrations.

The HES started with a prayer. The members present at the Synod were: Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal 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. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, Most Rev. Samuel Mar Irenios and Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos.

Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebios, the Exarch of USA, could not attend the Synod due to his visa problems in the US. He was granted leave of absence.

Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, the Bishop Emeritus of Tiruvalla is granted permanent leave of absence due to his old age health conditions.

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

His Beatitude Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos, gave the opening address. He congratulated the Archbishop, the clergy, religious and the faithful of the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla for successfully hosting the *Sabhasanghamam* on the occasion of the 85<sup>th</sup> Reunion Day Celebrations. The various programmes arranged with simplicity, the Organ Donation Drive, the dedication of the *Smriti Mandapam*, etc testify that we could be a Church with a difference, with a different apostolate. The celebrations marked a new approach and style. That Thirumoolapuram was the venue of the celebration was also providential. It is a place where our Fathers prayed intensely and with tears. His Beatitude appreciated the positive and sincere appreciation of our apostolate by Mr Mathew T Thomas, the local MLA. The dedication of the *Smriti Mandapam (Baith'Abo d'Malankara)* was apt and meaningful. His Beatitude the Catholicos said that encouraged by this positive experience we now move to the Eparchy of Puttur for the next *Sabhasanghamam* on the occasion of the 86<sup>th</sup> Reunion Day Celebrations. Though there are different limitations for the Eparchy, we move to celebrate our communion with a positive hope that everything will turn out for the greater glory of God and the good of our Church. His Beatitude conveyed in anticipation the prayers and best wishes of all to His Excellency Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar

Divannasios and the people of the Eparchy of Puttur. In the inaugural address, His Beatitude dealt with some of the current events in the Church. He called on the attention of the Synod Fathers to the Roman Synod on the “Family”. He also informed the HES that Mr Jacob M Abraham from our Church, from the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla is invited to represent the Laity in the Synod. His Beatitude further delved on the theme of the Holy Year of Mercy declared in the Church by the Holy Father. His Beatitude concluded the inaugural address invoking the Holy Spirit for his presence in the HES. Confiding the HES-in-session to the protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Beatitude declared the Synod open.

### **THE PRESENTATION OF THE AGENDA**

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

1. Prayer
2. Inaugural Address by His Beatitude
3. Report of the Seventeenth Holy Episcopal Synod
4. Decisions of the Seventeenth Holy Episcopal Synod
5. Evaluation of the Common Programmes - July 15, Sept. 20, 2015; Planning for the Year 2016.
6. The Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia – Appointing a Chancellor
7. Report of the Pastoral Visit to Australia
8. Briefings from the Eparchies and Exarchates
9. Accounts of the Financial Year 2014-2015;
10. Matters *Subsecreto*
11. Other Matters if any, With the Consent of the President

To this the Synod Fathers added the following topics:

1. Birth Centenary Celebrations of Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios
2. Seminary Formation

The agenda was approved.

### **Report of the Seventeenth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod**

The report of the Seventeenth Holy Episcopal Synod was read out. A few inaccuracies and corrections were pointed out and corrected. His Beatitude the Catholicos informed the HES the progress of the proposal to raise the Exarchate of the US to an Eparchy. So also Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios shared a few points on his study on the use of Psalms in our liturgy stressing the need to use other psalms too; not only the 13 Psalms now used. Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas proposed the report to be passed and Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC supported the proposal. The Report was passed with applause.

### **THE DELIBERATIONS**

After the completion of the initial procedures, deliberations on the agenda began.

#### **Evaluation of the Common Programmes; Planning for the Year 2016.**

In general, the members of the HES complimented the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla for hosting the *Sabhasanghamam* 2015 and felicitated them for the simplicity of the celebrations. The espousal of the donation of human organs was well appreciated by the public and served social awareness in this matter.

His Beatitude informed the HES that His Eminence Timothy Dolan of the US will visit us on the occasion of the (next) 63<sup>rd</sup> Feast of Commemoration of the Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios.

### **The Administration of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia – Appointing a Chancellor**

As Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC, the Curia Bishop and the Chancellor of our Church, is also appointed as the Exarch of St Ephrem Khadki-Pune, there was the need of appointing a priest as the Chancellor. The proposal was accepted. However, after a discussion of the matter, the matter was prorogued for the consideration of the next Ordinary HES.

### **Report of the Pastoral Activities in Australia**

Rev. Fr Stephen Kulathinkarottu, the Priest-in-Charge of our Faithful in Australia had sent a report of the activities of our Church in Australia with new proposals. The report was placed before the HES for its knowledge and study.

### **Briefings from the Eparchies and Exarchates**

Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas OIC, the Bishop of the Eparchy of Gurgaon-Delhi and Most Rev. Thomas Mar Anthonios, the Apostolic Exarch of the Exarchate of St Ephrem Khadki-Pune briefed the HES, how the buildup of the Eparchy and the Exarchate respectively could be planned. The lack of sufficient number of priests and the dearth of finances are to be overcome in due course.

Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulos shared with the HES his views on developing missions in Madurai and other adjoining places of the Eparchy of Marthandom, the area that falls under the Exarchate of St Ephrem. The members of the HES agreed to the proposal that such missionary activities can be entrusted to the Eparchy of Mathandom while the area is situated canonically in the Exarchate. For this the Apostolic Exarch of St Ephrem can delegate his power to the Bishop of Marthandom.

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas introduced the problem of land and taxation that he faces in the Eparchy of Bathery.

Most Rev. Abraham Mar Julios shared his experience of participating in the beatification of Bienheveux Flavian Michel MELKI, Bishop of Djazinet Ibn-Qmar (Turquie) who lived from 1858 to 1915 and was martyred. The decision of the Pope strengthens the persecuted Church of the region.

Most Rev. Vincent Mar Paulose shared the problem of membership in a parish in his Eparchy.

One of the Bishops enquired whether a Deacon sent out from a seminary can be readmitted in another seminary. The members opined that the answer depends on the case concerned.

### **Accounts of the financial year 2014-2015**

The account of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia for the financial year ending March 2015 was presented by Rev. Fr Varghese Angadiyil, the Finance Officer. The account was accepted.

### **Matters *Subsecreto*:**

#### **1. Exarchate of the USA**

It was informed that our request to include Canada too in the Malankara Syrian Catholic Exarchate of the US which is requested to be raised as an Eparchy is favourably considered by the Holy See and all concerned.

## **2. Canonical Provision for the Knananites**

The canonical provision for the Knananites belonging to the Eparchy of Kottayam again came in for the consideration of the HES. The opinion of the HES can be summed up as follows: (a) A canonical provision is urgent; (b) the community can be unified by the canonical provision of a Bishop; (c) A special provision can be made directly under the Holy See.

### **Other Matters if any, With the Consent of the President**

#### **1. Birth Centenary Celebrations of Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios**

The programmes chalked out by the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum for the Birth Centenary Celebrations of His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios of venerable memory was presented by His Beatitude the Catholicos. It was the general understanding that the Church as a whole celebrates the Centenary joining the programmes organized by the Archieparchy. Other commemorative celebrations can be organized in other places and Eparchies in accordance with the circumstances.

#### **2. Seminary formation**

The need of finalizing the Charter of Formation was discussed.

#### **3. Inauguration of the Year of Mercy**

The HES discussed the celebration of the Holy Year of Mercy proclaimed in the Church. Each Eparchy shall chalk out its programmes in accordance with the guidelines given by the Holy Father and the Holy See.

#### **4. *Suviseshasangham***

The report of the *Suviseshasangham* was presented. It was pointed out that the *Suviseshasangham* plans to complete the visit of our families in all our parishes within a time frame of two years. A fourth batch of the members of the *Suviseshasangham* at the ecclesial level can be formed. The need of formation of the *Suviseshasangham* at the parish level was stressed.

#### **5. Tribunal of our Eparchies and Exarchies**

The Synod urged all Eparchies and Exarchates to implement very earnestly the new laws promulgated by the Holy Father in dealing with marriage nullity cases.

### **Conclusion**

HB the Catholicos concluded the HES. He gave the valedictory address highlighting the abundant grace the Lord showered upon us during the celebration of the *Sabhasanghamam* on the occasion of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Reunion Day. He urged his brethren in the Episcopate to go ahead strengthened by the power received through the *Sabhasanghamam*. He thanked everyone for his wholehearted participation in the Synod. He also thanked the office-bearers of the Archiepiscopal Curia of Tiruvalla and the Major Archiepiscopal Curia for their dedicated service to the Synod. Invoking God's blessing through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, on all and the Church, His Beatitude declared the HES closed.

✠ **Thomas Mar Koorilos**

Secretary

✠ **Thomas Mar Anthonios OIC**

Chancellor