

THE SYRO- MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTER, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

First Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
(16 – 18 August 2005)

REPORT

The first canonical Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was convoked at the Catholicate Center, Pattom, Trivandrum from 16th to 18th August 2005. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop-Catholicos presided over the Synod. Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos (Secretary of the Synod), Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis and Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios participated in the Synod. Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas could not participate in the Synod. Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil (Vice-Chancellor) recorded the minutes.

On 16th August 2005 at 8.45 a.m. the members of the Synod gathered at St. Mary's Cathedral for prayer and thereafter made special commemorative prayer at the tombs of Mar Ivanios and Mar Gregorios. They entered the Synod Hall at 9.20 am. Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod lead the prayer reading the Word of God. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop-Catholicos, the President of the Synod concluded the prayer session with an apostolic blessing. After the prayers His Beatitude lighted the lamp.

Presidential Address by His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios:

After ascertaining the quorum of the Synod, the President made his inaugural address. He welcomed all the members wholeheartedly and explained the significance of this formal Synod. With the new status as a Major Archiepiscopal Church, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is entrusted with a great responsibility in the universal Church. He drew the attention of the synodal fathers to the aspirations of the people of God, who earnestly awaits the outcome of this Synod. The agenda of the Synod is indicative of this longing of the Church. He said that only through God's all-pervading providence and grace we could accomplish these apostolic tasks. He also noted that the preparatory Synodal meeting convened from 30 March to 1 April 2005 at Cherupushpagiri in the Eparchy of Tiruvalla was a success and laid firm basis leading to this formal Synod. Praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit and committing the Holy Synod to the protection and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of the Church, St. Thomas the Apostle of India and our father in faith and of Mar Ivanios, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos declared the First Canonical Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church open.

The President informed the Synod the request of leave of absence of His Excellency Joseph Mar Thomas as he was in the United States. The Synod accepted the absence as legitimate.

The Catholicos added a cheerful note to the session when he stated that the day was his 71st birthday. He thanked the community for the prayers and greetings. He also congratulated Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis on his fourth Episcopal Consecration anniversary.

The Synod then approved the following agenda presented to it by the President.
The Agenda:

1. Constituting the Episcopal Synod
2. Constituting the Permanent Synod
3. Constituting Various Synodal Commissions
4. Constituting Sub-Committee for preparing statutes of The Episcopal Synod, Permanent Synod and Tribunals.
5. Drafting the Particular Law
6. Building up of the Infrastructure for the Catholicate Center
7. Other items Proposed by the Members of the Synod
8. Other Relevant Matters

The President also informed the Synod of the following appointments in the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, which were proposed during the preparatory synodal meeting at Cherupushpagiri:

Chancellor Rev. Dr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC

Vice Chancellor Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil

Judicial Vicar Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil

Finance Officer Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath

Office Secretary Rev. Sr. Dr. Ardra SIC

1. Constituting the Episcopal Synod

As it was proposed in the agenda the Constitution of the Episcopal Synod was the first point of discussion. The following decisions were arrived at:

1. All the bishops of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, auxiliary and Emeritus, shall be the members of the Ordinary Episcopal Synod.
2. The name of this Synod is Malankara Catholic Episcopal Synod (MCES).
3. A statute for MCES has to be formulated, in which the organization and functioning of the Synod would be elucidated.

The members of the Synod at present are:

1. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop Catholicos
2. His Excellency Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, Metropolitan of Bathery
3. His Excellency Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, Metropolitan of Muvattupuzha

4. His Excellency Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, Metropolitan of Marthandom
5. His Excellency Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis, Metropolitan of Tiruvalla
6. His Excellency Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Metropolitan Emeritus of Tiruvalla
7. His Excellency Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, Auxiliary Bishop of Trivandrum
8. His Excellency Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, Auxiliary Bishop of Trivandrum and Apostolic Visitor to North America and Europe.

2. Constituting the Permanent Synod

Permanent Synod is a structure in the Major Archiepiscopal Church to assist the Major Archbishop in the matters of administration. Including the President there are five Bishops in this Synod. Among them three members are elected and the President nominates the other. Thus, after the discussion and evaluation, the Synod constituted the Permanent Synod:

President	:	(1) His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios
Elected Members	:	(2) Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis
	:	(3) Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios
	:	(4) Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom
Nominated Member	:	(5) Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos

3. Formulation of Statutes for Synods, Curia and Tribunals

The following persons were asked to prepare the statutes for the MCES, Permanent Synod, Curia, and Tribunals:

President	:	Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos
Vice President	:	Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios
Members	:	Rev. Dr. Antony Valiyavilayail OIC
	:	Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil

This commission has been asked to prepare the draft of the aforesaid Statutes with in three months.

4. Constitution of Various Synodal Commissions

His Beatitude informed the Synod that various commissions have to be constituted so that the different apostolates in the Church might be fostered. Practically these commissions would be the signposts and organs of our ecclesial activity. No doubt They would strengthen our eparchies and enrich the whole Malankara Catholic Church. The commissions in the eparchies would be on the basis of the commissions in the Church.

It was decided that every Commission would be headed by a Chairman, who should be a bishop, assisted by a Secretary. There were various opinions about the

number of the consultants. The Chairman is to be chosen by the Synod and the Catholicos would issue the letter of appointment. The secretaries of each commission would be selected by the chairman and would be appointed by the Catholicos. It was left to the Chairmen to select the consultants of their respective commissions. With regard to the selection of the consultants, the Chairmen should consult the concerned departments in each eparchy. Guidelines are to be drafted for the organization and functioning of these Commissions.

As a general norm it was proposed that each commission should have a corresponding commission at the eparchial level and their directors or presidents should be included among the consultants. It was specially noted that the participation of our faithful outside Kerala and outside India should be ensured. The term of the commission is fixed for a period of five years.

The commissions were proposed taking into account the needs of the Church in the modern times. Eighteen commissions were proposed. The following are the names of the Commissions with their respective Chairmen:

1. Commission for Liturgy; presided over by Moran Mor Cyril Baselios Catholicos
2. Commissions for the Youth, Ecumenism, Dialogue and Evangelisation; presided over by Bishop Isaac Mar Cleemis
3. Commissions for Family and Lay-Pious Associations; presided over by Bishop Geevarghese Mar Divannasios
4. Commissions for Bible Apostolate, Priests, Religious; presided over by Bishop Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom
5. Commissions for Faith Formation, Theology and Publications and Priestly Formation; presided over by Bishop Thomas Mar Koorilos
6. Commissions for Education, Health, Communication Media, Common Celebrations and Social Apostolate and Dalit Christians; presided over by Bishop Joshua Mar Ignathios
7. Commission for Vocation; presided over by Bishop Geevarghese Mar Timotheos
8. Commission for Pastoral Care of the Faithful outside India; presided over by Bishop Joseph Mar Thomas

5. Constitution of an Expert Group for Drafting the Particular Law:

The President of the Synod asked Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the Convenor of the committee for the Codification of the Particular Law to brief the Synod regarding the progress of the codification. He stated that for the preliminary drafting of the Particular Law, His Beatitude had convened a general body consisting of 83 members on 7th June 2005 at Srothas, Trivandrum. This Body was divided into seven groups. Each group was allotted particular topics for study and formulation as per the provisions given in the Code of Canons for the Oriental Churches. They were also informed to note down the extensions of the topics if any. As a result, though not complete, we have the first draft with us.

The Synod decided to form another group of experts from the existing General Body in order to redact a second draft from the available material.

6. Construction of the Catholicate Centre and Fund Raising:

His Beatitude informed the Synod that the Catholicate Center has to be built at the earliest. The proposed location was the first house of Archbishop Mar Ivanios at Pattom, Trivandrum, where now the St. Aloysius Minor Seminary is functioning. The seminary would be shifted from there. The existing building of the seminary could be converted as the residential part of the Center. The two rooms of late Mar Ivanios in the old portion of the building would be kept up as a monument to the prophet of Unity and Ecumenism.

Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath was asked to present the proposed plan of the Catholicate Centre. The 40,000 sq.ft building is estimated to cost Rs.3.5 crores. It was suggested that the construction of the Church in this Centre should be in accordance with the liturgical traditions of the Church.

His Beatitude informed the members that the financial source for the construction should be raised by the Malankara Church itself. He volunteered to take up the responsibility of raising the fund. Thus, he proposed several sectors from which we could raise the fund. For instance; Bishops, Dioceses (through collection from Parishes), Priests, Religious Institutes, Secular Institutions, Priests (Diocesan & Religious) working abroad, Sisters working abroad, Individuals and other Funding agencies.

A personal contribution from the bishops is proposed in the Synod as follows. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios Rs.5,00000/-; Other Bishops - a minimum of Rs. 1,00000/- each. The total sum expected from this sector is around Rs.15,00000/-.

The proposed eparchial contribution would be: Trivandrum Rs. 25,00000- + 2 acres of land (estimated to cost Rs. 4 Crores); Tiruvalla - Rs. 15,00000; Bathery - Rs.10,00000/-; Marthandom - Rs. 5,00000/-; and Muvattupuzha - Rs. 8,00000/-. The total amount expected from this sector is Rs. 63,00000/-.

The contribution expected from priests per head would be a minimum of Rs.1000/- or 10 Holy Qurbano intentions absolved in favour of the Catholicate Centre. The priests (diocesan and religious) and Rev. Sisters who are working abroad should contribute one-month salary to this noble cause.

Special Gathering:

On 18 August 2005 from 11.30 am to 1.00 pm there was a special meeting at the Synodal hall organized by His Beatitude in order to discuss the matter of the construction of the Catholicate Centre. There were 26 participants in this gathering including Vicar Generals, Superior General, Mother Generals, Provincials, Procurators, Major seminary Rector, Minor Seminary Rectors, President of the MCA, and President of Mathrusangam.

His Beatitude wholeheartedly welcomed all the participants and informed them about the discussions in the Episcopal Synod. After this, His Beatitude explained the need of a Catholicate Center and about the proposed location. The proposed plan and the estimated cost of construction were presented.

Further, His Beatitude placed before the gathering the fund raising proposals as discussed in the Synod. The gathering was of consensus to go ahead with the proposals.

With regard to the religious it was decided that each Generalate will organize the collection from the various sectors of their congregation. They will let His Beatitude know about the total sum within two weeks. The amount could be transferred to the project on installments.

Moreover if some one wished to sponsor one section of the project, for instance the Synodal Hall, Chapel, etc, it is possible. The collection from outside Kerala region and outside India would be organized by His Beatitude.

After this, Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios informed the gathering in detail about the Platinum Jubilee Reunion Celebration at Mavelikkara from 19 to 21 September 2005.

Finally, His Beatitude thanked each and every one wholeheartedly for their valuable presence at the invitation of the Synod and for their responsible

co-operation for a common cause. With a short prayer the special session concluded at 1.00 p.m.

7. The Items and Requests as Proposed by the Members of the Synod:

The title “Malankara” given to the publication of the Synodal Acts and Voice of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was a topic of discussion and finally the title was confirmed.

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas sent a letter to His Beatitude with certain proposals. The letter was read in the Synod and the matter was discussed.

9. Special Decisions:

The decision of the preparatory Synod that the hierarchical head of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, being its father and head shall be called “Catholicos”, according to our Syro-Antiochene and Malankara traditions, was further endorsed by this First Canonical Synod of the Malankara Catholic Church. In this title he exercises the office of the Major Archbishop in accordance with the common law and the particular law of the Malankara Church.

The Synod decided to reinstate the traditional permanent diaconate in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. For this proper norms and regulations should be formulated in our particular law.

Basing on CCEO cc.1035 to 1042 there was a prolonged discussion over alienation of temporal goods of the Church. It was decided as follows:

- If the alienation of goods exceeds one million dollars, the permission of the synod is required.
- The minimum amount referred in canon 1036 paragraph one for alienation of properties is fixed to US \$ 50,000 which the bishop may sanction by himself, and for any amount up to 1 million dollars the consent of the finance council and college of eparchial consultors is required.

It was decided to address all our Bishops His Excellency Most Reverend rather than His Excellency Right Reverend.

10. Other Relevant Information:

His Beatitude has informed the Synod members about the need of publishing a complete prayer book for our laity and another for our priests and sisters.

It was decided to start a mission in the United Kingdom. If we get an opening we could post Corepiscopo Geevarghese Mannikarott in that region.

Final Session:

The final session of the Synod started at 2.30 p.m. on Friday, 18 August 2005. During this session there were discussions on various topics like participation of our laity in the active ministry of the Church, the allowance of the priests, and the possibility of a single judge eparchial tribunal. Further, it was tentatively decided to convoke the Synod some time around 6 January 2006.

In his concluding remarks His Beatitude informed the Synod of his health condition. All the members of the Synod promised their constant prayer and moral supports to His Beatitude. His Beatitude once again thanked each bishop for their valuable presence and co-operation in the building up of the Church.

His Beatitude thanked Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the Vice Chancellor, who noted down the minutes, Rev. Sr. Ardra SIC, the Office Secretary and Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath the Finance Officer of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia who helped to conduct the Synodal meeting successfully.

In his concluding message to the Synod, the Catholicos invited the Synod Fathers and the people of the Church as a whole to rise up and shoulder the particular obligations and grace entrusted to the Malankara Catholic Church through the Universal Church. He said that the decisions of the Synod aim at the holistic growth and service of the Church and the society in this present century.

The First Canonical Holy Episcopal Synod of the Malankara Catholic Church was concluded with a small prayer conducted by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos and the apostolic blessing imparted by the Catholicos at 3.30 pm on 18 August 2005.

✠ Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos

Secretary of the Synod

Fr. John Kochuthundil

Vice-Chancellor