

THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

CATHOLICATE CENTRE, TRIVANDRUM - 695004, KERALA, INDIA

Fourth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
(31 October to 3 November 2006)

REPORT

The fourth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church was convoked at Thirusannidhi, the Major Archbishop's House at Pattom, Trivandrum from 31 October to 3 November 2006. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos presided over the Synod. All the members of the Synod, namely, His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios Catholicos (President of the Synod), Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos (Secretary of the Synod), Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios and Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas were present. Rev. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor, recorded the proceedings. Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis moderated the sessions of the Synod when His Beatitude had to absent himself from the sessions for short periods due to his ill-health.

The members of the Synod assembled and concelebrated the Holy Qurbono at 9 a.m. on 31 October 2006, at which all the office-bearers of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia also participated.

His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, Major Archbishop-Catholicos said the opening prayer.

Inaugural Address

His Beatitude the Catholicos delivered the inaugural address. He welcomed all the members to the fourth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. In his inaugural address, His Beatitude once again recounted the wonderful ways in which God leads our Church and the progress, the Church made in establishing the canonical structures. He drew the attention of the Synod Fathers to the proposal of the Permanent Synod to bifurcate the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum in the light of the pastoral needs due to the geographical extension of the Archieparchy. He asked the Synod to study the need in its historical and actual context.

Thereafter, His Beatitude dealt with special importance two topics on the agenda of the Synod, namely, the urgency to complete the codification of the particular law and the need to strengthen the activities of the Synodal commissions. They are important in the life of the Church.

With these observations, His Beatitude declared the Synod open.

The Presentation and Approval of the Agenda

The President presented the following agenda for the approval of the Synod:

1. Report of the Third Holy Episcopal Synod
2. Guidelines given by the Third Holy Episcopal Synod
3. Proposal of the Permanent Synod to establish a new Eparchy (Mavelikara) in the MCC (matter subsecreto).

4. The Synodal Commissions and their functions
5. Structuring of the Tribunals of the Syro-MCC
6. Presentation and approval of the final draft-plan of the Catholicate Centre
7. Presentation of the revised draft of the Takso and Qurbanokramam for the approval of the Holy Synod
8. Evaluation and action-plan for completing the codification of the Particular Law of the MCC and the statutes of the canonical bodies.
9. The Cause of Canonisation of Archbishop Mar Ivanios
10. Other relevant matters, if any, with the consent of the President

The agenda was approved by the Synod.

THE AGENDA

1. The Report of the Third Holy Synod

The Report of the Third Synod was read out by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod. After clarifications and corrections, the report was passed at the proposal of Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, which was seconded by Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom.

2. Guidelines given by the Third Holy Episcopal Synod

The guidelines given by the Synod was read out. The Synod on session unanimously approved the same.

A discussion on “diaconate ministry after the comprehensive examination in October until the feast of Easter”, clarified that it is applicable not only to the Deacons who study in St. Mary’s Malankara Seminary, but also to all the Deacons studying elsewhere also. The same is recommended to the curriculum of priestly formation in religious communities, but they are free to follow their own Holy Rule in this matter.

3. Proposal of the Permanent Synod to establish a new Eparchy (Mavelikara) in the MCC (matter subsecreto)¹

His Beatitude the Catholicos introduced the topic. He introduced the proposal of the Permanent Synod: “We propose to erect a new Eparchy consisting of the Presbyteral districts of Mavleikara, Kollam and parts of Chengannoor and Adoor, spread over the civil districts of Alapuzha, Kollam and Pathanamthitta. The See of the proposed Eparchy may be fixed at Mavelikara due to its historical and cultural importance and as the birth place of Archbishop Mar Ivanios”.

The proposal was discussed in the context of the historical, geographical, socio-cultural, pastoral and ecclesial situations of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum. It was decided that at present only the formation of the Eparchy of Mavelikara is to be considered. Other proposals may be dealt with at other opportune times.

Regarding the geographical extension of the Eparchy, it was proposed that it shall include the Presbyteral districts of Kollam and Mavelikara and parts of Chengannoor. It was pointed out, that it would be convenient to retain all the parishes of the civil district of Alapuzha in the proposed Eparchy. It was also decided that the parishes on the western side of the Main Central Road in the civil didtrict of Pathanamthitta shall be included in the new Eparchy.

In relation to the civil districts, the proposed Eparchy comprises of the district of Alapuzha south of river Pampa, certain parts of Kollam and Pathanamthitta. In the civil district of Kollam, the boundary of the Eparchy is the boundary of the parishes of the

presbyteral district of Kollam. The boundaries of the parishes on the western part of the Main Central Road in the district of Pathanamthitta shall be the boundary of the proposed Eparchy. The number of native priests of the proposed area, the socio-economic status of the parishes, the pastoral outreach potential, the number of ecclesiastical institutions, etc., have been considered before arriving at a decision. The Holy Synod in its fourth session decided solemnly “to erect the Eparchy of Mavelikara, bifurcating the Archieparchy of Trivandrum, comprising of the Presbyteral districts of Mavelikara and Kollam and parts of Chengannoor and Adoor. This coincides with the civil district of Alapuzha minus certain portions that belong to the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla and parts of the civil districts of Kollam and Pathanamthitta”.

From which city shall the Eparchy take its name? Which shall be the permanent see for the residence of its Bishop? Regarding these questions, it was decided that the city of Mavelikara shall be the permanent see for the residence of the Bishop and from that city the Eparchy shall take its name. It was also decided that the residence of the new Bishop shall be at Punnammoodu, Mavelikara. Necessary alterations and additions shall be made to the present presbytery of the parish at Punnammoodu to be used as a temporary Bishop’s House. It was further decided that St. Mary Immaculate Church at Punnammoodu, Mavelikara shall be the cathedral of the New Eparchy. However, the appellation “immaculate” shall be dropped.

The next point for discussion was, who would be the Bishop of the proposed Eparchy. After due consideration, the Synod, in its fourth session decided solemnly “to appoint His Excellency Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios, the present Auxiliary Bishop of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum, as Bishop of the proposed Eparchy of Mavelikara.”

The Synod then turned its attention to the sharing of the temporal goods of the Archieparchy at the time of the bifurcation. The following principles were accepted for the same:

- The assets of the Major Archieparchy shall be divided taking into consideration the needs and obligations of the Major Archieparchy and the new Eparchy.
- The ownership and use of all properties of the churches, institutions and lands in the proposed eparchy, shall be incorporated to the new eparchy.

4. The Synodal Commissions and their functions

In preparation for the meeting of the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions on 1 November 2006 on the sidelines of the Synod, the Synod evaluated the functioning of the Synodal Commissions constituted for effectively carrying out the mission of our Church in the different aspects of its life. The Synod expressed its satisfaction about the way the Synodal Commissions have begun their functions. For further improvement in their functions and for empowering them adequately, the Synod Fathers shall attend the proposed meeting of the Secretaries.

5. Structuring of the Tribunals of the Syro-MCC

The letter (Prot N. 3279/06 SAT dated 15 May 2006) from the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Segnatura on the occasion of the erection of the sui iuris Syro-Malankara Church into a Major Archiepiscopal Church, outlining the principal necessary undertakings concerning the administration of justice in the Major Archiepiscopal Church, was introduced in the Synod.

The Synod evaluated the functioning of the tribunals of the Church in the light of the above-mentioned letter. The Synod also took into consideration the lack of qualified personnel to work in the tribunals of the Church. The Synod also took note of the number of priests who are now doing their higher studies in Canon Law. Taking into consideration of

the various factors, especially convenience of the Faithful, it was felt that the erection of a common tribunal as not feasible. Hence the Synod encouraged the Eparchies to co-operate with and co-opt personnel from other Eparchies as per provisions of the law.

According to the norms of canon 1062 of the CCEO the Synodal tribunal of the Church was formed. The members are:

General Moderator or President : Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Koorilos
 Judges : 1. Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios
 : 2. Most Rev. Dr. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom

Likewise, the Synod was also informed of the personnel to be appointed to the Ordinary Tribunal of the Church which deals with the second and ulterior instance according to the norms of canon 1063. The following are the proposed persons to constitute this tribunal:

President : Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil
 Judges : Rev. Dr. Thomas Thannickakuzhy
 : Rev. Dr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC
 : Rev. Dr. Thomas Muthalapa
 : Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Kuttilyil OIC
 : Rev. Dr. Sr. Anila Christy DM
 Defender of Bond : Rev. Dr. Varghese Thannickakuzy
 Promoter of Justice : Rev. Dr. Joseph Gnayalloor

The Synod appreciated the endeavours of the Eparchial Bishops and the tribunal personnel and asked them to carry on the administration of justice in the Church.

6. Presentation and approval of the final draft-plan of the Catholicate Centre

The Finance Officer and the Architect Mr. Saiju Muhammed from 'Insight, Consortium for Architectural Research and Design' presented the plan of the proposed Catholicate Centre to house the Major Archiepiscopal Curia of the Church. The Bishops expressed their anxiety over the size or built-up area of the centre and its cost of construction. Many pointed out that the conference hall, the chapel and the auditorium should be smaller in size than what is shown in the plan. The auditoriums of nearby institutions could be used when large number of participants assemble for meetings. The Chapel shall be of typical Malankara style. An amount of Rupees thirty to thirty-five lakhs needs to be spent on it. The Synod Hall shall be closer to the Chapel. The Living rooms and the office rooms shall be separated. Preferably, there shall be a separate living block for the office bearers.

The Synod expressed its satisfaction in the progress of the fund-raising programmes in favour of the construction of the Catholicate Centre. In this context, taking into account the health of His Beatitude, the Catholicos, it was also decided that Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos shall help him in the planning and execution of the project.

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas expressed his hope that the Malankara Catholics of the United States would be willing to contribute for the construction of the Chapel at the Catholicate Centre.

Presuming the construction of the Minor Seminary buildings to be over and the shifting made towards the close of 2006, a proposal was made to lay the foundation stone and begin work of the Catholicate Centre on 1 January 2007, the Feast of St. Basil, the heavenly patron of His Beatitude, the Catholicos.

7. Presentation of the revised draft of the Takso and Qurbonokramam for the approval of the Holy Synod

The draft of the revised text of the Takso was presented before the Synod by the Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Liturgy. He presented the proposed translational changes and

additions, effected according to the criteria accepted by the commission. The following are the criteria and some of the pertinent changes:

- The translation of all Anaphorae shall conform to the original Syriac text
- In general, for the rubrics, one has to refer the Thûkâsa. Hence the rubrics are given only in most pertinent instances. Rubrics of the three blessings of the Anaphora are given in detail.
- The original Syriac text of the Institution Narrative and Epiklesis are given in Syriac also. Their Malayalam translations are given in conformity with the original Syriac text.
- The name St. Thomas, the Apostle of India, is added in the Intercessory prayers.
- In the kuklion of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the wording '*nin valamairâjabhâminiyum*' is changed to '*nin valabhâgerâjabhâminiyum*'.
- In the kukkilion of the Saints, the wording – '*orupôlingum Mar Thôma, undemçlum ninnôrma*, a redactional change is made.
- Similarly, the language of the Bôvôôtô of the Kukkilion for the Departed, is corrected.
- The Synod went through the entire translation and agreed to the above- mentioned proposals. The Synod kept the following suggestions of the Synodal Commission for Liturgy in abeyance:
 - to add the Anaphora of Mar Julios, the Patriarch of Rome
 - to add a long Proemion and Sederô from the Syriac text
 - to add more Huthomo (covering 70 pages)

The Synod also directed the Secretary of the Commission, Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Thadathil, to print the final text of the Takso and Qurbonokramam after presenting a copy of the final proof with the final layout to Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos. The Chancellor, Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, shall see to the execution of the decisions.

8. The Cause of Canonisation of Archbishop Mar Ivanios

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, the Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, who is also the Postulator of the Cause of Canonisation of Archbishop Mar Ivanios, briefed the progress of the cause to the Synod Fathers:

- The Petitioners, namely the Order of the Imitation Christ (Bethany Ashram), the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ (Bethany Convent) and the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, appointed the Postulator, Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, with the approval of the Metropolitan-Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in the year 1998.
- The Postulator, with the help of those who from time to time came to work in the team of helpers for the cause of canonisation, conducted a preliminary study through questionnaires, interviews, collection of the written and published works of Mar Ivanios.
- The Postulator submitted a Canonical Petition to the Major Archbishop-Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church on 15 July 2005.
- In the mean time, a lot of study and research is actually taking place in the way of preparing the ground work for the progress of the different stages for the cause of canonisation.

- The translation of most of the books written and published by Mar Ivanios is progressing.
- It is assumed that His Beatitude, the Major Archbishop Catholicos, is consulting with the Theologians before he finally accepts the Canonical Petition.
- The Postulator called together a meeting of those of our Church who could contribute to the formation of a Historical Commission of the Cause.
- The consultation with the Synod is to appraise the Synod-Fathers about the progress of the cause.
- It is hoped that by the next Synod, that is, in the fourth week of February (second week of the Great Lent), the Synod would be able to give its final opinion before the Major Archbishop gives approval to the canonical petition.
- Once the canonical petition is accepted, Mar Ivanios could be called "a Servant God".

The Synod sought clarification on a few points, such as, the canonical nature of the cause, the participation of the Eparchial Clergy and other Christian Faithful in the process of canonisation, the ways to ensure the participation of all in the process, etc. The Postulator clarified these points giving sufficient details. The Synod expressed its satisfaction in the progress of the Cause and assured every encouragement to proceed with it. The Synod awaits the decision of His Beatitude, the Catholicos regarding the acceptance of the Petition. If the Petition is accepted, it shall be made known to the Church by 15 July 2007 after which Archbishop Mar Ivanios could be called "Servant of God".

9. Other relevant matters if any with the consent of the President

a. Account-keeping of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia

The Secretary of the Synod will meet the Finance Officer and explain to him the procedure to be followed in the maintenance of the account. The records and accounts should be kept in the Curia office and Sr. Ardra SIC, the Office Secretary, has to maintain the daily accounts.

b. The Problem of the management of a School in Bombay.

At Sakinaka in Bombay, a trust consisting of some Malankarites had started a school. The Synod expressed its hopes that the concerned parties will abide by the directives given by His Beatitude in finding out an amicable solution to some of the problems that have cropped up.

c. Pastoral Care of the Faithful in America and Europe.

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas reported to the Synod his efforts to build up our Church in the above-mentioned continents organizing our people who have migrated to these places and are settled down there. The Synodal Commission for these regions is strengthened to assist the pastoral activities in these continents. To the question whether the number of members of the Synodal Commission for Pastoral Care of the Faithful Outside India could be increased, the Synod expressed a favourable assent. Similarly, to the question whether Rt. Rev. Corepiscopo Mannikarottu could be appointed in Germany, the response was that, if he is willing, it would be welcome.

It was also suggested that buying a property in the United States would be helpful to consolidate and extend our activities. In order to tide over the financial difficulties, some income-generating institutions such as old age homes could be built, which would also enable us to extend our services to others. Suggestion was made that other priests should not be permitted to render any service among our Communities in the United States, lest they undermine the pastoral service of the local parish priest.

d. Pastoral Care of the Faithful in Chennai from the Eparchy of Marthandom.

Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom presented to the Synod the need of pastoral care for the faithful of the Eparchy of Marthandom, who have migrated to Chennai. For their effective pastoral care, the Holy Qurbano should be celebrated in Tamil. A priest from the Eparchy shall be sent to Chennai for this. He should stay in our parish at Padi and do the work. It was proposed and the Synod agreed to the proposal that Fr. Jose Chamakalayil should be authorised by His Beatitude the Catholicos for this.

The Synod noted with appreciation the donation of 11 cents of land for a cemetery for our church at Padi, Chennai, by the Eparchy of Marthandom.

CONCLUSION

Since more time is needed, the topic on the agenda, "Evaluation and action-plan for completing the codification of the Particular Law of the MCC and the statutes of canonical bodies" was postponed to be taken up in the next Ordinary Synod to be held in February. Taking into consideration the convenience to conduct the seminar for the members of the Synodal Commissions on 21 and 22 February 2007, the Synod decided to hold the next gathering of the Ordinary Synod on 22 and 23 February 2007.

The Synod came to a close with the concluding message from His Beatitude, the Catholicos. He expressed his satisfaction of the synodal deliberations. He was happy that the Synod gave its consent towards the bifurcation of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum and in order to create the Eparchy of Mavelikara. He informed the Synod that the proposal shall be sent immediately for consultation with the Apostolic See through the Apostolic Nuncio in India. He expressed his hopes that the Holy See will expedite the matter.

He also referred to the fruitful meeting of the Secretaries of the Synodal Commissions and encouraged its decision to come together for the seminar before the next Ordinary Synod in February.

He reminded the Synod-Fathers about the commencement of the 50th year of the reorganisation of the State of Kerala and hence the Golden Jubilee year. He appreciated the growth and development, Kerala achieved in the past fifty years. He recounted the contribution of our Church to the Church and Society of Kerala under leadership of the illustrious prelates of our Church, especially Mar Ivanios and Mar Gregorios, in the field of social reform, social and religious harmony, education, health care and politics. He expressed his regrets at the growing tendency of the people to create divisions in the society due to unhealthy politicisation of social events and discrimination in the name of caste and religion.

His Beatitude thanked all the members of the Synod for attending the Synod. His Beatitude also thanked the officials of the Curia for their prompt service. He wished everyone a fruitful preparation for a blessed Christmas during the Advent Season. He declared the Synod closed at around 12 noon on 3 November 2006.

Thereafter, the Synod Fathers went to the Chapel, prayed the Kaumo and chanted the Kuklion of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. His Beatitude the Catholicos imparted the apostolic blessing.

✠ Thomas Mar Koorilos

Secretary

Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC

Chancellor