

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

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

**Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod**  
**(9 – 12 October 2007)**

**REPORT**

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos convoked the Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church at the Synod Hall of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia in the Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum from 9 to 12 October 2007. At 3 p.m., all the Synod Fathers - His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos (President of the Synod), 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, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas and Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas – assembled at the Catholicate Centre. After refreshments, at 3.30 p.m., all the members went into the Synod Hall.

His Beatitude, Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis welcomed all the Bishops for the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. He thanked the Lord Almighty for the wonderful ways through which He guides the Malankara Catholic Church. In the past the Fathers of venerable memory led the Church through the path of progress and growth. He paid homage to His Grace Archbishop Mar Gregorios, whose 13<sup>th</sup> feast of Commemoration the Church celebrated on 10 October 2007. The 125<sup>th</sup> Birth anniversary of the Servant of God, Archbishop Mar Ivanios, the 77<sup>th</sup> Reunion Day Celebrations, the Platinum Jubilee of the Reconstitution of the Hierarchy of the Malankara Church in Catholic Communion, the Golden Jubilee of the Emigration of the Malankarites to Malabar, together were celebrated at Kodenchery in the Eparchy of Bathery. This bore witness to the deep ecclesial consciousness of the faithful of our Church. The vehement enthusiasm of the priests, religious as well as the laity evinced in these celebrations, is also a sign of their great concern in the events of their Church. Similarly, the celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios, held at Mavelikara, his birth place, awakened his message and vision in the minds of the people. Certain important thoughts that His Beatitude shared with the Synod Fathers were on the seminary, the effective attention to be paid to the priestly formation, the youth movement of our Church, its effective pastoral care, the strengthening of its leadership and the support to be given to the Eparchial Directors of the Movement. He also dealt with the need to strengthen the personal care to be paid to our Catholic families in the wake of the infiltration of the Pentecostals in their midst. He also reminded the Synod Fathers of the decision to hold the Malankara Catholic Assembly, which, in fact, is to be preceded by the Eparchial Assemblies. It will enhance the participation of the Laity in the life of the Church, especially in the wake of the Platinum Jubilee of the Archieparchies of Trivandrum and Tiruvalla, which is an occasion to revive the ecclesial life. He also emphasized the need to complete the

codification of the Particular Laws of the Church. Regarding the construction of the Catholicate Centre, he assured the members of the Synod of its execution. With these words, he welcomed the Synod Fathers once again conveying his appreciation in particular to Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, the Apostolic Visitor to America and Europe, all the way from America to attend the Synod.

His Beatitude, the Catholicos declared the Synod open.

### **The Presentation of the Agenda**

His Beatitude presented the agenda of the Synod:

1. Report of the Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
2. Decisions of the Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
3. Guidelines of the Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod
4. The Catholicos' Visit to the Holy Father and the proposals submitted to the Holy See
5. Matters *subsecreto*
6. Codification of the Particular Law of the SMCC
7. Discussion on the theme of the Roman Synod 2008 ("The Word of God in the life of the Church – *Lineamenta*")
8. The Synodal Commissions and their functions
9. Erection of the Tribunals of the SMCC
10. Evaluation of the functioning of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia
  - Permanent Synod
  - Chancery
  - Synodal Commissions
  - Tribunals
  - Finance Office
11. Construction of the Catholicate Centre/ Reallotting the present offices
12. Pastoral care for the youth studying outside Kerala
13. Evaluation of the set up in the ETR
14. Canonisation process
15. Conferring of Ecclesiastical titles upon the Laity
16. Approval of Liturgical books
17. Other relevant matters if any with the consent of President

The agenda was approved with the addition of the following topics: Evaluation of the pastoral activities outside India, Remarriage and Attendance at the Synod.

### **The Report, the Decisions and the Guidelines of the Extraordinary Synod held on 10 March 2007**

The Report, the decisions and the Guidelines of the Extraordinary Holy Episcopal Synod held on 10 March 2007 were read out by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod. During the discussion and clarifications on the matter presented, it was pointed out and decided upon that *Matters sub-secreto* should be presented separately from the general report and decisions as it would help to foster the confidentiality of the matter.

The Report, the Decisions and the Guidelines were proposed to be passed by Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom and seconded by Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Divannasios and were passed.

### **The Catholicos' Visit to the Holy Father and the Proposals Submitted to the Holy See**

His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos reported to the Synod that he visited His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, the Roman Pontiff, as per the requirement of CCEO c 92 §3, that is, within a year of his election, he should visit Rome to venerate the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and to present himself to the Successor of Saint Peter in primacy over the entire Church. His Beatitude conveyed to the Synod Fathers the cordial welcome he received from the Holy Father and the appreciation the Holy Father cherishes on the life and mission of the Malankara Church. In his private audience with the Holy Father, he had a face to face exchange of views with the Holy Father on the day to day life of the Church. The Holy Father also graciously received in an audience all the Priests, Religious and the Laity of the Malankara Catholic Church residing in Rome together with the Catholicos. The Catholicos also conveyed to the Synod Fathers the Holy Father's personal greetings and Apostolic blessings to them.

### **Matters *subsecreto***

His Beatitude, the Catholicos introduced the matters *subsecreto* and it was deliberated upon the Holy Synod.

### **Codification of the Particular Law of the SMCC**

The Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, Rev. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC, on being asked to present to the Synod the status of the codification of the Particular Law informed the Synod that the work is progressing under the leadership of Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the convener of the drafting committee and the team of experts. The Synod Fathers asked Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the Secretary of the Synod and an expert in Canon Law, to support the team of experts to complete the work.

### **Discussion on the theme of the Roman Synod 2008 (“The Word of God in the life of the Church – *Lineamenta*”)**

The working draft prepared and submitted by the Synodal Commission for Bible Apostolate to the Fifth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church as response to the *Lineamenta* on “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church”, the subject of the Roman Synod 2008, was taken up for study. The theme was subdivided and the following Synod Fathers exposed them.

Introduction – Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios

Chapter 1 – Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas

Chapter 2 – Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas

Chapter 3 – Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom

It was suggested that a team consisting of Rev. Fr. Placid Thompiladimuriyil OIC, a specialist in Indology, Rev. Fr. Chempakassery and Rev. Fr. Abraham Kackannattu, specialists in Biblical Theology and Rev. Fr. Antony Kakkannattu expert in the field of Biblical Catechesis were to be convened by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos and finalise the ‘Response’ before submitting it to the Secretariat of the Roman Synod.

### **The Synodal Commissions and their functions**

The next topic on the agenda was the evaluation of the functioning of the Synodal Commissions. It was observed that the demise of His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, the First Catholicos and the subsequent Synod of Election and Enthronement of the new Major Archbishop-Catholicos had slowed down the implementation of the Synodal decisions and the functioning of the Synodal Commissions. The seminar that was planned could not be conducted. Taking the present situation into consideration, it was decided that an assembly of all the members of the Synodal Commissions be convened a day before the opening of the Sixth Ordinary Synod (6, 7 March 2008) to impart to the members an orientation on the scope and activities of the Commissions and to strengthen them.

### **Erection of the Ordinary Tribunal of the SMCC**

The Fourth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod of this Church held from 31 October to 3 November 2006 deliberated on the efficient organization of the tribunals of the Church to ensure effective administration of justice in the Church. The unexpected passing away of his Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios, the First Major Archbishop-Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church plunged the Church in grief and delayed the erection of the Tribunals. The Synod-in-session reconfirmed the endorsements of the Fourth Ordinary Synod. This tribunal functions according to the norms of Canon 1063 and other relevant Holy Canons. The Synod requested the Catholicos to decree the erection of the Ordinary Tribunal and appoint the proposed personnel of the Tribunal.

The Synod also evaluated the functioning of the Eparchial and Metropolitan Tribunals and asked Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the President of the Synodal Tribunal, to organise a training programme for the Tribunal Personnel of the Church, so that through them, the Church can respond to the needs of the Faithful quickly and adequately discharging the judicial responsibilities in the administration of justice. Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the President of the Ordinary Tribunal could co-ordinate the course.

### **Evaluation of the functioning of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia**

The Synod Fathers expressed satisfaction at the overall functioning of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia at this initial stage of its functioning.

- Permanent Synod

At present the Permanent Synod is convoked when its consent is necessary for the acts of the Major Archbishop-Catholicos. Since, many topics of common interest are discussed in the Holy Episcopal Synod convoked twice a year, there is no need of the frequent convocation of the Permanent Synod.

- Chancery

The Synod expressed its appreciation of the work of the Chancellor and his colleagues in the chancery of the curia. It took special note of the regular publication of MALANKARA. In general, it is appreciated all over the world. The copy of a recent letter of appreciation sent by the Prefect and Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches was circulated in the Synod for its knowledge.

- Tribunals

The Chancellor of the Curia was asked to give a brief account of the arrangements for the functioning of the Ordinary Tribunal at the Curia. He said that, the Tribunal Hall shall be set up in the first floor of the existing building. Rev. Fr. John Kochuthundil, the proposed President of the Tribunal, could do what is necessary for the infrastructure of the Tribunal. He shall also organise a simple function in which the decree of erection of the Ordinary Tribunal could be given and the swearing-in-ceremony of the judges and other personnel of the tribunal could be conducted. The proposed date is 15 November 2007.

- Finance Office

Very Rev. Fr. Jose Kizhakkedath, the Finance Officer of the Curia was asked to present the accounts of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia. He presented the entire accounts from 1 April 2005 to 30 September 2007. After sufficient analysis, clarification and evaluation, Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas proposed that the accounts could be passed. Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios seconded the proposal and with the acclamation of all the accounts were passed.

### **Construction of the Catholicate Centre/ Reallotting the Present Offices**

As St. Aloysius Seminary was finally transferred to the new building at Bethany Hills, Nalanchira on 29 September 2007, the ownership of the buildings of the Seminary was passed on to the Catholicate Centre and the way for the construction of the Centre is now cleared. Rev. Fr. Jose and the Architect were summoned to explain the proposed plan of the building. In the discussion that followed, it was pointed out that we ought to stick on to the minimum requirements at the minimum expense. A Chapel to accommodate a hundred Faithful, a Synod Hall and fifteen living rooms and the main reception and Guest rooms could be planned in the new building. It was decided that the existing two blocks of buildings could be converted into curia offices such as the Chancery, the Finance office, the Tribunal, the offices for the 18 Synodal Commissions, the Archives, the library, the office of canonisation, etc. It was decided that, the part of the old building where Mar Ivanios lived be conserved and converted into a museum. The room adjacent to this shall be used as an office of the Historical Desk, the subsection of the Synodal Commission for Theology and Publications. The present Synod Hall shall be retained until the completion of the proposed Synod Hall, while the present parlour shall be converted into a temporary Chapel. It was also suggested that the Rev. Sisters who serve in the curia shall have an enclosure for them to be used as a convent. The Architect was asked to redefine the present plan according to the present suggestions. The Finance Officer was asked to see to it that the site was prepared demolishing the existing structure through selling them off to the highest bidder who would like to purchase old building materials.

### **Pastoral care for the youth studying outside Kerala**

There are a large number of students belonging to our Church studying in the metropolitan cities of India. They deserve special pastoral attention, so that they remain in communion with the Church. Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor

to the Malankara Catholics in the Extraterritorial Regions in India is making certain arrangements for them.

### **Evaluation of the set up in the ETR**

Most Rev. Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor to the MCCETRI briefed the Synod Fathers about his visits to the various Local Ordinaries and the Malankara Catholic Personal Parishes and Communities in the MCCETRI. He shared with the Synod that, by and large, he received a warm welcome from the Latin Bishops. He also thanked the Catholicos and the Synod Fathers for their solicitude and support.

In the discussion that followed, the Synod Fathers approved the draft of the “Guidelines Given to the Order of the Imitation of Christ (Bethany Ashram) on the Ownership and Use of Churches, Ashrams, Institutions and their Premises in the Extra-Territorial Regions in India of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church” by Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, the Major Archbishop-Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, prepared jointly with the group of Metropolitans deputed by the Synod and the Major Superiors.

It was decided that the ownership of the properties, institutions, Churches owned by the Eparchies shall pass on to the MCCETRI and juridical represented by the Apostolic Visitor from 15 October 2007.

### **The Cause of Canonisation of the Servant of God, Archbishop Mar Ivanios**

The Synod Fathers greeted with great enthusiasm the announcement of His Beatitude the Catholicos that he intends to follow up the Cause of Canonisation of the Servant of God, Archbishop Mar Ivanios with the appointment of Commissions to study the heroic virtues of the Servant of God as early as possible.

### **Conferring of Ecclesiastical Titles upon the Laity**

This topic on the agenda was seen as a long-felt need of the Church. The Synod agreed in principle on the matter and wanted that criteria and guidelines be evolved for the fixation of the titles and their conferring.

### **Approval of Liturgical books**

First of all, the Chancellor who is also the publisher of the Malankara Catholic Publications from the Catholicate Centre presented the new revised edition of the *Order of the Holy Qurbano of the Syro-Malankara Church* to the Catholicos. His Beatitude introduced the new *Taksa* to the Synod Fathers and appreciated the work done the Synodal Commission for Liturgy and the Publisher for their work. He released the new *Taksa* giving a copy of the same to Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, the former Chairman of the Commission for Liturgy and the senior most Metropolitan of the SMCC.

The Synod Fathers also appreciated the publication of the Common Prayer Book and the *Qurbonakramam* with the Prayers of Liturgical Seasons of *Qyomto* (Resurrection) and *Sleebo* (Cross).

The revised drafts of the *Kūdāsakramam* (Order of the Sacraments), *Yaldaganangal* (the Hymns of the Feast of Christmas), were examined by the Synod and

approved. The revision of these liturgical books did not entail many corrections. In the order of the burial, instead of references to prayers in the other parts of the book, the complete prayers are re-printed, so that the book is made easy to the user. The Synod directed that while using the third person in the *Kūdāsakramam*, respectful terms in Malayalam should be used. For example, *Ivaṇ*, *Ivaḷ*, etc. shall be changed to *Ī Dāsan* and *Ī Dāsi*, etc.

The Synod directed that, just as the *Yaldagānangal* was published, the Synodal Commission for Liturgy shall see to the publication of the *Hāsagānangal* (the Order of the Passion Week Service) and the Order of Prayers of the Passion Week.

*Divyanidhi* – the book of prayers and blessings for various occasions– which was revised with additions of prayers by Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos and Rev. Fr. Mathew Kalarikalayil was examined by the Synod. It was observed that the prayers for other occasions of local religious importance could be added. The Synod approved the text in principle. The Synod Fathers could study the text and send their observations before 31 October 2007, so that the text shall be finalized for printing.

The Chancellor reported to the Synod that the Synodal Commission for Liturgy has prepared a draft of the *Thūkāsa* – the Book of Rubrics – basing on the existing one. The commission is studying the text for further improvements. The same commission is also trying its best to improve and complete the book of the canonical prayers of the Passion Week. It is expected that these two books would be placed before the forthcoming Synod for its approval.

In this context, the Synod Fathers discussed the need to include the rubrics of the Concelebration of the Holy *Qurbano*. Among other things, it was directed, that the prayers before the Institution Narrative shall be said loudly by the Main Celebrant. The Institution Narrative shall be pronounced by the Concelebrants in a low voice. Likewise, the prayers of the Epiklesis also are chanted by them in a low voice. The Concelebrants shall keep standing during the Intercessory Prayers (*Thūbdēn*).

The Synod Fathers also discussed the need of a Master of Ceremonies for our common celebrations of the Liturgical Services, especially the Holy *Qurbano*. It was decided that the Chairman of the Synodal Commission for Liturgy shall entrust this to the Secretary of the Commission. If the Secretary is absent at a common liturgical celebration, the Chairman shall depute another one for the particular celebration.

The Holy Synod also evaluated the quality of the liturgical celebrations and parish administration in our Church. It decided to offer a Pastoral Orientation Course for all the Deacons of our Church, who are preparing themselves for priestly ordination. The Synod Fathers felt it imperative to include the Deacons or New Priests of Bethany Ashram also for this course.

The goal of the course is to initiate the Deacons, who will soon be appointed in pastoral ministry of the Church as ordained ministers, into the pastoral context and milieu of our Church. The course is to familiarize them with particular laws, legitimate customs and pastoral exigencies of our Church, that they be better equipped for the administration of parishes and to cope with the challenges of the times.

The course shall be co-ordinated by the Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia and held at the St. Mary's Malankara Seminary and organised by the Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 2 to 17 January 2008. It shall be a resident course supervised by the Rector of the seminary.

The certificate of completion of this course, conducted every year for all the Deacons and New Priests of our Church, is a requisite for appointments as parochial vicars and parish priests.

### **Evaluation of the Pastoral Activities outside India**

Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas, the Apostolic Visitor submitted to the HES a short report of the ecclesial life of the Malankara Catholics in North America and Europe. He highlighted the need of a disciplined ecclesial life by all the Christian Faithful of the Church in this region. Our communities in North America should get organized under canonical structures. He also submitted a project proposal for two million US Dollars for the development of the infrastructure of our Church in North America. The HES positively endorsed the proposal and gave the following guidelines to realize the project:

- a. The purchase of the adjacent home of the Mar Ivanios Centre New York is in principle accepted. His Beatitude, the Catholicos can give a letter of sanction for the same.
- b. His Beatitude, the Catholicos will give a letter to the priests working in America to support this programme. He will personally write to the priests working in our missions to contribute the surplus money kept in the parishes to this goal.
- c. Each priest working in the missions is asked to be give to the Apostolic Visitor a sum of US Dollars 250/- every month from the money he sends to his home Eparchy.

### **Annulment of Marriage and Pastoral Problems**

One of the Synod Fathers brought up the subject of remarriages in his Eparchy and the ways of tackling the issue. It was observed that effective and efficient functioning of the ecclesiastical tribunals is the only means to help the just and deserving cases. It was pointed out that the co-operation of the available tribunal personnel is the means to overcome the shortages of those competent in the field for the administration of justice.

### **Attendance at the Synod**

At the first session of the Synod, Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Timotheos, Metropolitan Emeritus of Tiruvalla, enquired whether he could be exempted from attending the Holy Synod due to his ill health. To this, it was pointed out that, for the perfection of the Holy Synod, the participation of all the Bishops of our Church is necessary. However, Most Rev. Mar Timotheos, on grounds of his ill health, could employ the provision of canon 104 §1, that is, "All bishops legitimately convoked to the Synod of Bishops of the patriarchal Church are bound by a serious obligation to attend it, except those who have legitimately resigned from office".

### **Conclusion**

As discussed earlier, it was agreed upon that the next and the Sixth Ordinary Holy Episcopal Synod, shall be convoked from 5 to 7 March 2008. The Fathers of the Holy Synod, as Chairmen of Synodal Commissions shall participate in the Assembly of the Synodal Commissions which will be held on 5 March 2008. After a short message, His



Beatitude, the Catholicos thanked all the Synod Fathers for their participation in the Synod and declared the Synod closed. The Holy Synod ended with the prayers and the blessing of His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos.

**✠Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos**  
Secretary

**Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC**  
Chancellor