

# THE SYRO-MALABAR MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CURIA

Mount St. Thomas, P.B. No. 3110, P.O. Kakkanad, Kochi - 682 030, Kerala, India

Tel: (0484) 2424780, 2424768, 2426235, 2428271 (Dir); Fax: (0484) 2422727

Email: majorarchbishop@gmail.com, chancellor.mount@gmail.com

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## **Cardinal Mar George Alencherry Resigns Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurackal Administrator**

Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, the third Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church, resigned from the Office of Major Archbishop. The Holy Father Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Cardinal Mar Alencherry, who submitted it to the Holy Father communicating his intention to be relieved from the Office of the Major Archbishop, after carefully considering the increasing pastoral demands in the Church and his health condition. As per c. 127 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the Curia Bishop Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal will assume the Office of the Administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church until the new Major Archbishop assumes the Office.

Earlier in 2019, Cardinal Mar George Alencherry had submitted his resignation to the Holy Father. The Holy Father, after seeking the mind of the Synod, did not accept the resignation, as the Synod was not in favour of accepting the resignation. Cardinal Mar George Alencherry submitted his resignation again on November 15, 2022 expressing his desire to be relieved from the Office of the Major Archbishop. Now he has resigned from the Office to be effective from December 7, 2023, with the approval of the Holy Father.

Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, the second curia bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, was ordained a priest in 1992. He completed the Doctorate in Canon Law from the Holy Cross University, Rome. After various ministries in the Eparchy of Kanjirapally, he was appointed the Vice Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia in 2014. He was consecrated Bishop on November 12, 2017. The administrative responsibilities of the Church are vested in the Administrator, including the conduct of the Synodal Session to elect the new Major Archbishop and his installation.

Cardinal Alencherry was born on April 19, 1945. He was ordained a priest on December 18, 1972 by Cardinal Antony Padiyara. He received his Doctorate in Biblical Theology from Sorbonne and Catholic Universities, Paris. He was appointed the Director of POC, Palarivattom, after his return from Paris, for six years. He was appointed the Vicar General of Changanacherry after his stint at the POC. He also taught at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam for ten years. He was appointed the first Bishop of Thuckalay which was started as a mission by the Archeparchy of

Changanacherry. He was consecrated as the Bishop of the newly created Eparchy of Thuckalay by Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil on the 2 February, 1997. He built up the Eparchy from scratch and was held dear to the people of Thuckalay as their brother, father, and friend, irrespective of caste or creed.

Bishop Alencherry was the Secretary of the Synod when Major Archbishop Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil passed away in April, 2011. He was elected the Major Archbishop during the Synod of May 2011. He took up the charge officially on May 29, 2011. It was Pope Benedict XVI who elevated him to the Cardinalate at the Vatican on February 18, 2012. Cardinal Mar Alencherry participated in the Conclave that elected Pope Francis in 2013.

The development that took place after Cardinal Alencherry became the Major Archbishop was stupendous in the history of the Church. Through the erection of the Shamshabad and Hosur Eparchies, the Holy Father extended the pastoral jurisdiction of the Syro-Malabar Church to the whole of India. It was a request that was pending with the Holy See for a long period. Similarly, the establishment of the Eparchies of Faridabad, Melbourne, Mississauga, Great Britain, and the Apostolic Visitation in Rome enlarged the evangelization ministry of the Church. Under his leadership, a new house of the *Procura* to deal with matters connected with the Syro-Malabar Church was established in Rome. His efforts and attention were mainly focused on strengthening and enlarging the evangelization ministry of the Syro-Malabar Church. It is after a very strenuous and hard work extending over more than a decade that Cardinal Mar George Alencherry is retiring from his unbelievably grace-filled leadership of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The leadership that Cardinal Alencherry gave for the revising of the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church, implementing a uniform mode of celebration, revising the Liturgy of the Hours, and for all the innovative steps he has taken in revitalizing the organizations of the Church will be recorded in golden letters in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church.

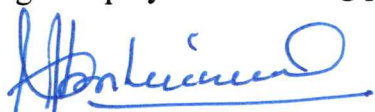
While being the Major Archbishop of 5 million Catholics of 35 Eparchies spread over the whole world, he was also ministering to the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy as its Archbishop. His service as the head of the KCBC was very admirable. During the while, he is also functioning as the President of the Inter-Church Council.

The spiritual leadership of Cardinal Alencherry is very inclusive and respects all the modern tendencies in the present-day culture. It is to be pointed out that his decisions were unwavering and he was very effective in administration as well as endowed with an unbiased spiritual vision. His clarity in the expression of opinions, respect for those who



take opposing views and simple but eloquent articulation of his vision are very impressive. A lot of people have felt empowered and honoured by the way he would engage in conversations with them even amid big crowds. He has an uncanny ability to recognize friendly faces in big crowds. He was also deeply committed to the welfare of society along with his deep commitment to the Faith. He was pro-life as well as pro-environment in his talks and writings. He was not confined just to the Church alone but had a heart that was open to all.

As a Cardinal, he would be continuing his service as a member of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches. We shall pray that God will continue to bless him as he retires from the Office of the Major Archbishop to nurture and strengthen the Syro-Malabar Church through his prayers and loving presence.



Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil  
Major Archiepiscopal Chancellor

