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May the light and hope of the Risen Christ, who conquered death, be with you always on your life's journey.

Heartfelt Easter Greetings

to all the dear readers of Syro-Malabar Vision!

He is
RISEN
(Mathew 28:6)



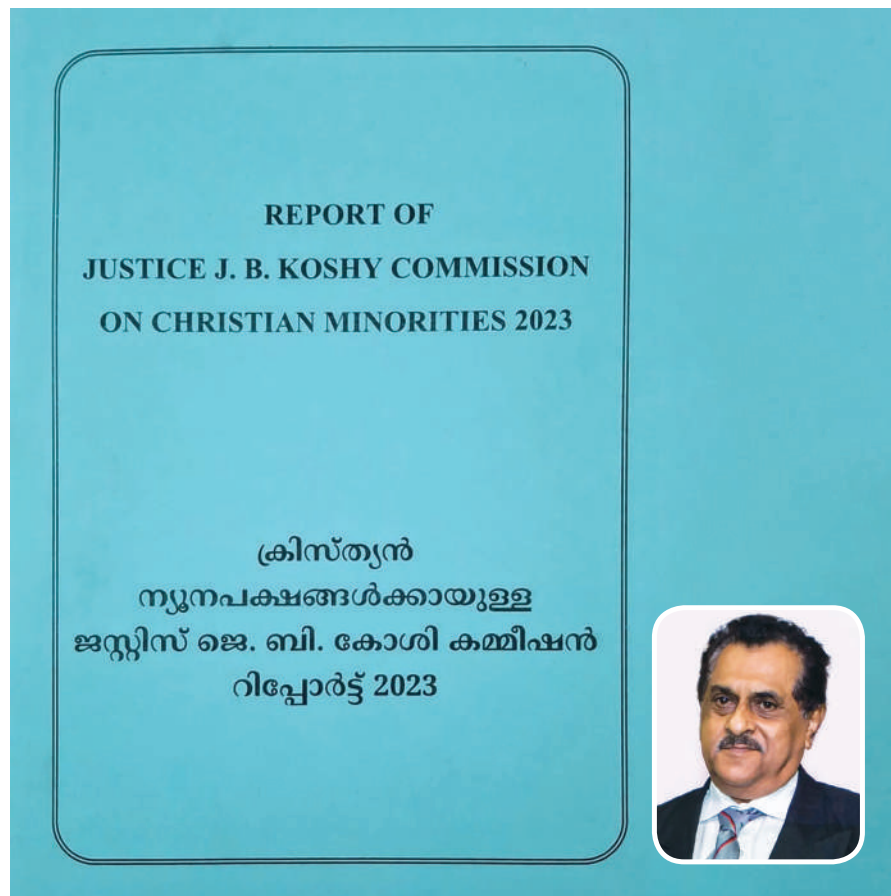
J. B. KOSHY COMMISSION REPORT: AN ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EFFORTS OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH



Rev. Fr. James Kokkavayalil
(Secretary, Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission)

The publication of the Justice J. B. Koshy Commission Report is a matter of great a matter of great satisfaction the Syro-Malabar Church, as it is, in a real sense, a fruit of the Church's sustained efforts. This is no exaggeration. In the very words of Justice J. B. Koshy himself, "It was the Syro-Malabar Church that demanded such a commission and worked most earnestly for it." He has made this statement on several occasions. Moreover, at the very beginning of the report, he explicitly mentions "the Syro-Malabar Church among other Churches" (1.1), singling it out by name. This acknowledgment is also reiterated in the conclusion.

On 20 December 2019, under the leadership of Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam, along with Bishop Mar Mathew Arackal, Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, and Bishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, a delegation met the Hon. Chief Minister Shri Pinarayi Vijayan and submitted a massive memorandum signed by one lakh people. The foremost demand in that petition was the appointment of a judicial commission to study the backwardness of the Christian minority in Kerala. When no action followed for months, Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath, Chairman of the Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission, and Bishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, Convener of the Commission, met the Chief Minister again on 27 October 2020, strongly urging the immediate constitution of the commission. In response to the persistent efforts of the Syro-Malabar Church, the Government of Kerala, within ten days, appointed the Justice J. B. Koshy Commission on 5 November 2020 to study and report on the educational, economic, and social backwardness and welfare of the Christian minori-



Although the Syro-Malabar Church invested immense effort for the Commission, only a limited number of recommendations beneficial to the Church have so far been implemented by the Government. Nevertheless, the availability of an authoritative document highlighting the backwardness of Christians in Kerala is a matter of satisfaction. Furthermore, the Commission's appointment prompted the Church to undertake self-assessment and study.

ties in the State.

Although the Commission was constituted with Justice J. B. Koshy as Chairman and Dr. Christy Fernandez (IAS) and Shri Jacob Punnose (IPS) as members, the absence of a representative from the Syro-Malabar Church—the largest Christian community in Kerala—was widely felt as a serious shortcoming. Subsequently, accepting the Church's request, Retired Judge C. V. Francis of the Eparchy of Kothamangalam was appointed as Secretary of the Commission. A perusal of the report clearly reveals the invaluable contribution he rendered in the preparation of this comprehensive document.

The Terms of Reference of the Commission were published on 8 February 2021. From that time onwards, the Sy-

ro-Malabar Church made earnest efforts to inform its members about the Commission's proceedings and to encourage the submission of maximum representations highlighting their concerns. This responsibility was undertaken by the Public Affairs Commission of the Church. The Commission received as many as 445,500 representations, the vast majority of which came from members of the Syro-Malabar Church. I personally witnessed a jeep-load of submissions brought from the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda to the Commission office—testimony to the remarkable enthusiasm and cooperation of the faithful.

The Church did not merely submit petitions; rather, it presented well-researched and scientifically analyzed studies. The Eparchies of Thalassery, Thamarassery, and Mananthavady con-

ducted comprehensive surveys, while several others carried out sample studies. The PAROC Institute of the Archeparchy of Thrissur undertook a sample survey across the Church. A team of experts comprising priests and lay faithful worked for several days at the Archeparchial headquarters of Thrissur to prepare the Church's memorandum under the auspices of the Public Affairs Commission. The team included Rev. Fr. Noble Parakkal, Rev. Fr. Sabin Thoommullil, Dr. Chacko Kalambarambil, Dr. Mary Regina, Adv. Joji Chirayil, Adv. Alex M. Scaria, Mr. Rony Augustine, Mr. Bibin K. Alex, and myself. This memorandum comprehensively and scientifically presented the key issues and discriminations faced by the community. It is indeed a matter of pride that a large portion of these findings, along with charts and tables, has been incorporated into the Commission's report. We also pay tribute to the late Adv. Alex M. Scaria, one of the principal contributors to this work.

Though the Commission had initially decided to conduct sittings only at district headquarters, it agreed to hold two special sittings for the Syro-Malabar Church. On 22 November 2021, a sitting was held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanaad, the Church's headquarters, where the then Major Archbishop Cardinal Mar George Alencherry submitted the memorandum in the presence of the members of the Public Affairs Commission.

The Commission submitted its report to the Hon. Chief Minister on 17 May 2023. However, the Government withheld its publication for over a thousand days. The Syro-Malabar Church raised a strong voice in protest. The Synod itself urged the Government to release the report, and Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil also wrote to the Chief Minister requesting its publication.

In August 2024, the Church Assembly held in Pala passed a resolution demanding the release of the report. The Public Affairs Commission, various Eparchies, the Catholic Congress, SMYM, and several other organizations submitted memoranda and organized protests. Additionally, Syro-Malabar members

Continued on page 3

EDITORIAL



J.B. KOSHY COMMISSION REPORT: A RECKONING OF INJUSTICE AND A BEACON OF HOPE

The Justice J. B. Koshy Commission Report stands as a significant moment of moral and constitutional recognition, an acknowledgment, long overdue, of the persistent appeals for justice raised by the Churches of Kerala, and in a particular way by the Syro-Malabar Church. It is noteworthy that the Report itself recognizes, at the very outset, the decisive role played by the Syro-Malabar Church in bringing about the constitution of this Commission. The Report presents before the State a sober and systematic account of the problems faced by the Christian community, highlighting their historical origin of the Churches. In doing so, it dispels any notion that these grievances are exaggerated or unfounded. The sheer volume of petitions, numbering more than four and a half lakh, bears eloquent witness to the depth of anxiety and marginalization experienced by the faithful.

For the Syro-Malabar community, the question of the future of its younger generation emerges as particularly urgent. Despite the Church's historic contributions to the field of education, the Report notes with concern the growing exclusion of Christian students from opportunities in higher education. The recommendation to rectify the 80:20 imbalances in minority scholarship distribution is an act of long-delayed justice. Similarly, the proposal to extend government support to aided institutions run by the Church is essential if its educational apostolate is to endure with integrity and vitality.

The Commission also brings into sharp focus the plight of farmers, especially in the high ranges and hilly regions. Recurrent crop destruction, loss of life due to wild animal attacks, and the long-standing denial of land titles have together driven many farming families into distress and insecurity. Equally troubling is the application of unscientific criteria in determining eligibility for EWS reservations, which unjustly excludes many who, though possessing land, derive little or no income from it. These structural inequities demand urgent correction.

Among the most sobering findings of the Report is the marked demographic decline within the Christian community—from 18.38% in 2011 to 14.28% in 2019. This trend raises profound questions about the sustainability of the community's presence and witness. Economic hardship and unemployment have compelled many young people to seek opportunities abroad, further accelerating this decline. In this context, the proposal to establish a dedicated development corporation for Christians is not merely desirable but imperative.

Yet, the responsibility of the State cannot end with a formal acceptance of the Report. Declarations, however well-intentioned, must give way to decisive and equitable action. The longstanding tendency to confine minority rights to select sections must be replaced by a more just and proportionate distribution. The Justice J. B. Koshy Commission Report is, therefore, more than a document; it is a milestone in the ongoing quest for dignity, equity, and rightful recognition. It offers both a sober reckoning and a ray of hope. Yet, the path ahead remains long. In that spirit of prudence and integrity, the community must continue its journey. "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (cf. Matt. 10:16).

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A DAY TO REMEMBER

April 1: Seventh Wednesday of the Great Fast

Death Anniversary of Major Archbishop Cardinal Mar Varkey Vithayathil (2011)

From this evening till the evening of Great Saturday (Holy Saturday), the prayer: "Jesus humbled Himself..." is recited.

April 2: Maundy Thursday (Pesaha)

Demise of Pope John Paul II (2005)

April 3: Passion Friday (Day of fasting)

April 4: Great Saturday

Death Anniversary of Archbishop Mar Abraham Kattumana (1995)

Death Anniversary of Archbishop Mar Sebastian Valloppilly (2006)

From today until the Feast of Pentecost, the prayer "Queen of Heaven" (Swargaloka Rajni) is recited.

April 5: Easter Sunday (Resurrection Feast)

Episcopal Ordination of Mar John Nellikunnel (2018)

April 6: Death Anniversary of Mar Emmanuel

Pothanamuzhy (2003)

April 7: Episcopal Ordination of Mar George Njaralakatt

(2010)

April 8: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Remigiose

Inchananiyil (2010)

April 10: Feast of All Saints

Episcopal Ordination of Major Archbishop Mar Raphael

Thattil (2010)

April 11: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Paul Alappatt (2010)

April 12: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Mathew Vaniakizhakeel (2000)

April 14: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Thomas Chakiath (1998)

April 16: Death Anniversary of Mar Abraham Mattam (2019)

April 17: Episcopal Ordination of Mar James Athikalam (2018)

April 18: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Pauly Kannookadan (2010)

April 20: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath (2002)

April 21: Death Anniversary of Pope Francis (2025)

April 23: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Thomas Tharayil (2017)

April 24: Episcopal Ordination of Mar George Punnakottil (1977) and Mar Gregory Karotemprel (1983), Feast of Saint George

April 25: Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist

April 26: World Day of Prayer for Vocations
Death Anniversary of Mar Joseph Kundukulam (1998)

April 29: Feast of Saint Catherine of Siena

» FESTAL GREETINGS «

April 24



Cardinal Mar George Alencherry



Mar George Valiamattam



Mar George Njaralakatt



Mar George Punnakottil



Mar George Rajendran



Mar George Madathikandathil

SAINT GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER

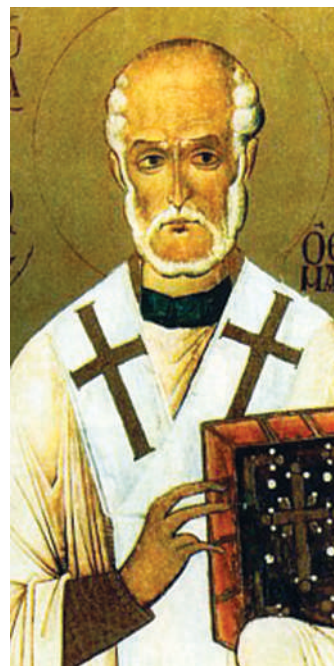


PATHFINDERS

Rev. Dr. Alex Sebastian Kollamkalam

Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus, known as the Wonderworker, was born around A.D. 213 in Neocaesarea, in a pagan family. His original name was Theodore. At about the age of fourteen, he traveled with his brother Athenodorus to Caesarea in Palestine, accompanying their sister to join her husband, who had been appointed a government official there. From Caesarea, their intention was to proceed to Berytus to pursue higher studies in law.

However, while in Caesarea, they attended the lectures of Origen. Deeply inspired by his teaching, they remained there for seven years, studying philosophy and theology. Drawn



to the Christian faith, Theodore received Baptism and took the name Gregory.

Returning to his native place, he was ordained Bishop of Neocaesarea at the age of forty. He served his flock faithfully for thirty years. When he became bishop, there were only seventeen Christians in Neo-

caesarea; but by the time of his death around A.D. 270, only seventeen pagans remained there. This remarkable transformation stands as the greatest miracle worked by God through him.

Amid the severe persecutions under Emperor Decius, he strengthened the faithful to courageously profess their faith. The feasts he organized in honor of the martyrs of persecution even attracted pagans to the Church. Gregory was truly a man of God. Many miracles occurred in his presence, and thus people began to call him in "Thaumaturgos," Greek meaning "Wonderworker."

Among his notable writings are a canonical letter that provides valuable insight into the discipline of the Church in the third century, and a panegyric delivered in praise of his teacher Origen after completing his studies at the School of Caesarea.



From the Heart of
the Father and Head

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



May the love and peace of the Risen Messiah, who conquered death, be with you. The message of the an-

gel—"He is not here; for He has been raised, as He said" (Matthew 28:6)-is the greatest promise of hope given to humanity. When the tomb was opened on the third day, overcoming the darkness of Good Friday, the history of the world was rewritten forever. Passing through the suffering of the Cross and the silence of the empty tomb, the Risen Lord tells us: "Do not be afraid; I am alive." These words continue to illuminate the darkness of our lives with hope. Therefore, this Easter season is not merely a celebration, but a proclamation of unwavering Christian hope even amidst trials.

The theology of the Resurrection is not merely the remembrance of a historical event, but the renewal of human nature itself. As St. Athanasius, a Father of the Church, teaches, "God became man so that we might become like God; through the Resurrection of the Messiah, death has forever lost its power." St. John Chrysostom proclaims in his famous Easter homily: "O death, where is your victory? O Hades, where is your sting? Christ is risen, and death is defeated." If through Adam death entered the world, through the new Adam, the Messiah, eternal life has come to us. Through the Resurrection, we are freed from the bondage of sin and raised to the dignity of being children of God. The empty tomb does not signify the absence of the Messiah, but rather reveals that He fills the entire universe. It marks a transformation from a presence confined within physical limits to a timeless and all-pervading divine reality. The empty tomb proclaims that the Messiah is not bound to any one place or time, but that the power of His Resurrection has spread to every corner of the world. The empty tomb assures us of the great truth that the Messiah is present as a light of hope even in the cries of the suffering and in the helplessness of war-torn lands.

J B Koshy Commission Report Continuation of page 1

of both the ruling and opposition parties raised the matter in the Legislative Assembly. As a result of these sustained efforts, the Cabinet meeting held on 24 February 2026 approved the report; it was officially published on 27 February,

EASTER: THE FEAST OF UNFAILING HOPE AND RESILIENCE



The Resurrection of the Messiah teaches us that life does not end in death and that darkness can never overcome light. With this firm faith, let us move forward. May this feast of the Resurrection become a new light for those living in the darkness of despair. Together with the Messiah, let us also rise into a new life of hope.

Our times are passing through great challenges. News of wars from different parts of the world and the cries of innocent people wound our hearts. When violence and the lust for power overshadow the dignity of human life, the message of Easter becomes all the more relevant. The sacrifice on the Cross was not a defeat, but a sign of God's mercy for the redemption of the world. "In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world" (John 16:33). These words of the Messiah are a great consolation to those afflicted by the devastations of war. The mystery of the Resurrection reminds us that no one can attain lasting victory through violence, but that true victory lies in surrender through love.

When the wars and cruelties of our time seek to extinguish hope in human hearts, we must remember that the heavy stone sealing the tomb of the Messiah was rolled away by divine power. Over the tombs of injustice and death, the

sun of hope will surely rise. As we pray for those who have been displaced from their homeland and those who have lost their loved ones in wars, each one of us becomes a messenger of hope. The first gift the Risen Messiah gave His disciples was peace. Receiving that peace into our hearts, let us strive to break down the walls of hatred and hostility.

The hope given by the Resurrection is not merely a doctrine of faith, but a living reality that must be reflected in our daily lives. Amid wars and divisions, we must also reflect on practical ways to live out this hope:

Be messengers of peace: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). As we pray for an end to wars, we must also bring peace into our families, workplaces, and Eparchial communities.

Practice forgiveness: Take the initiative to reconcile personal conflicts and resentments during this Easter season. Just as the Messiah forgave those who

crucified Him, forgiving others is a powerful witness to the Resurrection.

Console the suffering: Extend support-material or emotional-to a family or person burdened by poverty or illness. A smile or a word of comfort offered to someone living in despair can become for them the light of the Resurrection.

Witness Christian joy: The Fathers of the Church remind us that a Christian should never live as one perpetually in Good Friday. Even amidst life's struggles, the joy that springs from the conviction that the Messiah is risen must be shared with others. Thus, our very way of life should become a proclamation of hope.

The Resurrection of the Messiah teaches us that life does not end in death and that darkness can never overcome light. With this firm faith, let us move forward. May this feast of the Resurrection become a new light for those living in the darkness of despair. Together with the Messiah, let us also rise into a new life of hope. ■

and on 28 February, the Chief Minister convened a meeting of Church representatives to explain its contents. Representatives of the Syro-Malabar Church participated in this meeting.

Although the Syro-Malabar Church invested immense effort for the Commission, only a limited number of recommendations beneficial to the Church

have so far been implemented by the Government. Nevertheless, the availability of an authoritative document highlighting the backwardness of Christians in Kerala is a matter of satisfaction. Furthermore, the Commission's appointment prompted the Church to undertake self-assessment and study. In response to

the challenges identified, the Church has proclaimed the year 2026 as the "Year of Community Empowerment" and is moving forward with awareness programs and action plans. It is firmly hoped that the publication of the Commission's report during this very year will become a catalyst for the strong advancement of the community. ■

J. B. KOSHI COMMISSION REPORT: ANALYSIS OF THE RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS

COVER STORY ON CONVERTED CHRISTIANS



Dr. Sijo Jacob

President, DCMS, Archeparchy of Changanacherry

The Commission observes, citing Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution, that the denial of Scheduled Caste reservation to converted Christians amounts to religious discrimination. It recommends that such reservation be granted. While reservation falls under central legislation, the Commission also urges the State Government to take all possible measures in matters concerning employment, welfare, and economic upliftment of converted Christians. It acknowledges the absence of reliable population data



The Justice J. B. Koshy Commission Report may rightly be described as a *Magna Carta* for the holistic upliftment of the converted Christian community in Kerala. For, until now, no government had taken effective steps either to hear or to address the numerous issues faced by this community. The report, however, deals extensively with their diverse problems and proposes concrete solutions. Since this matter falls under Section C, Question Two of the Terms of Reference, it has been treated as a separate chapter in the report.

regarding this group and recommends a proper census. It estimates that the population may range between 3% and 6% (10–20 lakhs) and suggests that reservation quotas in welfare, economic, and social schemes be fixed—and increased—in proportion to their population after such enumeration. It also recommends the establishment of a separate commission for converted Christians, on the model of the Backward Classes Commission.

Further recommendations include revising the PSC rotation system to ensure adequate representation, conducting special recruitment drives in government services, and correcting anomalies in existing educational reservations, where SIUC categories have been included improperly. The Commission also

calls for increasing the fund allocation of the Converted Christians Corporation headquartered in Kottayam, providing low-interest loans, enhancing student scholarships, offering business loans, opening a regional office in Kannur, and reserving 85% of the Corporation's funds exclusively for converted Christians.

The report recommends restoring e-grants for students admitted under community quota and resolving issues related to stipends and lump-sum grants for students in self-financing institutions by withdrawing the State Government's appeal in the Supreme Court. It further proposes the establishment of special training centers for skill development, professional courses, and competitive examinations such as PSC and UPSC for

converted Christian youth and students.

Additional recommendations include reservation in LIFE housing schemes, financial assistance for house construction, land purchase, and maintenance, and allocation of special funds in local self-government institutions, similar to those provided for Scheduled Castes. The appointment of promoters, increased scholarships, provision of study materials, reservation in management quota seats, and representation in the State Minority Commission are also suggested. Finally, the Commission recommends revisiting and redefining the classification of converted Christians as stated in the Justice Kumarapillai Commission Report (1956, para 25). ■

COVER STORY ON COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF KUTTANAD



The major recommendations made in the J. B. Koshy Commission Report concerning Kuttanad are noteworthy not only for the Christian minorities of the region but for the stability and welfare of all communities residing there. Kuttanad, often described as the “Rice Bowl of Kerala,” has today become a land of hardships. The Commission rightly observes that instead of temporary solutions, permanent remedies are required. This report reflects a thorough and precise understanding of the region's geography, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, education, heritage, and culture. It proposes around forty-three recommendations aimed at preserving the ecological uniqueness of Kuttanad and making life sustainable in the region.



Antony Arilchira, Champakulam
(Retd. Deputy Tahsildar, Kuttanad)

Traditionally, integrated land and water use—combining paddy cultivation, livestock rearing, fishing, duck farming, and coconut cultivation—has been the backbone of livelihoods in Kuttanad. Therefore, integrated farming systems that enhance agricultural intensity are especially relevant. The Commission recommends declaring Kuttanad as a special agricultural zone and enacting appropriate legislation related to land use.

Housing

Suitable housing schemes tailored to the conditions of Kuttanad must be implemented. Being a densely populated region, there is a need for expanded housing facilities. Land in possession prior to January 1, 2015, should be reclassified in the BTR register to make it suitable for residential construction. The financial ceiling for houses under the LIFE Mission should be increased for Kuttanad. Titles (patta) should be granted to places of worship, educational institutions, and houses established before 2001.

Water Management

Permanent solutions, modeled on countries like the Netherlands, should

be adopted to control floodwaters. High bunds and shutters should be constructed by dividing the region into blocks. Projects must ensure access to safe drinking water for all. Rainwater harvesting schemes and water treatment plants should be established. Rivers and canals must be cleaned by removing waste and silt to ensure smooth water flow. During floods, high-capacity pumps should be used to remove water. At the Thottappally Spillway, powerful dewatering pumps should be installed to drain excess water into the sea.

Instead of letting river water flow away, systems should be developed to store and purify it for use during dry seasons. A special authority should be constituted for the protection of backwaters and wetlands, along with effective mechanisms to remove water weeds.

Paddy Cultivation and Other Agriculture

A special crop insurance scheme and a dedicated debt relief commission should be established for Kuttanad farmers. Financial institutions under government control should open branches in the region. Under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram, a special infrastructure development plan for Kuttanad should be implemented. The famous and high-quality Kuttanad “Puncha rice” should be granted a special trademark.

While fixing support prices, the increase in production costs—including wages, fertilizers, and pesticides—must be considered to ensure farmers receive a reasonable profit. Payments should be made at the time of procurement, and

paddy should be collected immediately after harvest. Adequate compensation must be provided for crop loss due to floods, and agricultural debts should be fully waived. Modern rice mills should be established, and traditional seed varieties should be preserved with incentives. Systems for pest monitoring should be introduced, and production must be enhanced. Special schemes should also be initiated for animal and bird protection, and adequate compensation must be provided in cases of mass loss due to disease or other causes.

EWS (Economically Weaker Sections)

Farmers in Kuttanad who belong to economically weaker sections among the non-reserved categories are often denied EWS benefits on technical grounds. Due to recurring floods and crop losses, their primary agricultural land—paddy fields—does not yield sufficient income. While at least five acres are required for viable paddy cultivation, even farmers owning as little as two and a half acres are denied benefits. This anomaly must be corrected through appropriate government directives.

Considering the special conditions of Kuttanad, fee concessions, free hostel facilities, and travel concessions should be provided. Sports complexes should be established, job-oriented courses introduced, and free coaching centers started.

Tourism

For tourism development, grants should be provided to preserve ancestral homes over 100 years old. A heritage religious tourism circuit connecting the

famous places of worship in Kuttanadu should be developed. Alongside tourism development, strict regulations must be enforced, including banning non-recyclable plastics. The Changanacherry–Alappuzha tourism project should be implemented, and waterways in Kuttanadu should be developed for water tourism.

Healthcare Sector

Speedboat ambulance services should be introduced to ensure timely access to hospitals. Basic infrastructure in hospitals must be improved. Due to pollution of water and soil caused by waste and unscientific farming practices, there is an increase in differently-abled children. Special schemes for maternal and child care should be implemented.

An epidemiological survey on the high incidence of diseases in Kuttanad and studies on chronic toxicity should be conducted, followed by appropriate remedial measures. Special assistance schemes for cancer patients and the establishment of quality hospitals are also recommended.

Kuttanad is a designated Ramsar Site. Projects must be identified and implemented for its environmental protection. The report also recommends establishing an environmental and geographical research center in the name of I. C. Chacko. Altogether, the report presents a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at preserving and developing Kuttanad. If implemented without delay, these measures can ensure that this unique land remains livable and enjoyable for future generations. ■

COVER STORY

ON EDUCATION AND MINORITY RESERVATION



Dr. Mary Regina

(Director of Physical Plant, Kerala Agricultural University)

The Commission observes that, following the introduction of new laws and regulations, it has become increasingly difficult to manage educational institutions effectively. It points out that unaided institutions receive no government support, and in certain regions the absence of higher education institutions prevents students from pursuing studies beyond the tenth standard. The implementation of the single-window admission system has also led to the erosion of minority rights. Additionally, due to the lack of reservation, many economically weaker students are excluded from educational opportunities.

The Commission clearly establishes, with supporting data, that Christians do not receive minority benefits proportionate to their population when compared to other communities such as Muslims. It also expresses concern over the lack of new courses in colleges located in coastal and hilly regions, the absence of coaching centers for competitive examinations in Christian minority areas, and the lack of adequate grants for aided institutions to meet recurring and capital expenses.



The second chapter of the J. B. Koshy Commission Report deals extensively with the general issues faced by Christian minorities. Through 59 sections, it presents in detail the educational challenges of this minority community. The Commission acknowledges the immense contributions of Christians to education over more than two centuries, while also highlighting the difficulties faced in this sector.

By citing Articles 26 and 30 of the Constitution of India, the Commission elaborates on minority rights.

The Commission rightly states that the qualifying marks required to pass public examinations should be the same for all communities and that evaluation must be free from caste or religious considerations, as it measures knowledge. It also highlights discrimination in welfare schemes for Muslims and Christians, citing data from the Minority Welfare Department website, and recommends that such benefits be distributed based on population. Training centers, scholarships, and loans should be made more accessible to Christians.

In Christian higher secondary schools and colleges, both management quota and community quota seats should be increased to ensure greater access for students of the community. The income limits for various scholarships should be revised. The recommendation to consider SCCC category candidates when no SC/ST candidates are available, if implemented, would bring great relief to the community. The Commission also recommends that special schools be fully taken over by the government.

The report further discusses employment issues. It recommends that individual and group loans be provided through the Minority Development Finance Cor-

poration to help professionally qualified Christian students start enterprises. It points out discriminatory practices in welfare pensions, appointments, welfare funds, and central schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram, indicating the Commission's clear understanding of the discrimination faced by Christians.

The Commission also notes the anomalies in the legislation establishing the State Minority Commission and recommends that the government address and rectify them through proper legislative processes. It even suggests revising the names of commissions that determine reservation benefits.

The Commission asserts that it is illogical to label non-reserved categories as "forward communities." It recommends proportional representation for Christians in the administration of the Minority Commission, Minority Development Finance Corporation, and Minority Welfare Boards. Christian associations such as Catholic Health Association of India should be given due importance alongside corporate institutions in healthcare discussions. Representation should also be ensured in Child Welfare Committees, and Christians should be appointed on a rotational basis as chairpersons of the Orphanage Control Board.

Mechanisms must be established for prompt action on complaints against films and publications that insult Christian beliefs and practices. The police should remain vigilant regarding institutions involved in forced religious conversions, especially of girls. The Commission also discusses the irrationality and injustice of proposed legislations such as the Church Bill and the Kerala Marriage Registration Bill.

The report highlights the need to resolve difficulties related to land ownership rights for Christian institutions and places of worship, as well as issues concerning cemetery permissions. It also calls for measures to preserve Christian art forms.

The Commission elaborates on the need to revise EWS criteria and expand EWS reservation benefits. Overall, the report provides a comprehensive account of the various forms of discrimination faced by the Syro-Malabar community and the numerous benefits that should rightfully be extended to them. It emphasizes that ensuring welfare is essential for community empowerment. Each recommendation deserves careful study, and the community must reflect deeply and formulate appropriate policies for the future. ■

COVER STORY

ON DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH RANGE REGIONS



Dr. Josekutty J. Ozhukayil

(General Secretary, Catholic Congress)

The Commission calls for the removal of unnecessary restrictions and oppressive laws, and for the creation of conditions that ensure livelihood development, infrastructure growth, and a life free from fear for the local population. It recommends amendments to land revenue laws that currently prevent construction and the establishment of industrial or employment-generating enterprises even on revenue land near forest boundaries. It further suggests ensuring legal protection so that people can live without fear of wildlife intrusion outside forest boundaries.

The report recommends the withdrawal of the retrospective amendments introduced in 2020 to the Kerala Private Forest (Vesting and Assignment) Act of 1971, as well as the repeal of the



Based on the identification of 36 major challenges in the highland regions, the Justice J. B. Koshy Commission has proposed 25 key recommendations to be implemented through nine departments: Forest and Wildlife, Revenue, Tourism, Local Self-Government, Agriculture, Environment, General Education, Higher Education, and Disaster Management. The report offers a precise analysis of the crises affecting the lives of people in the Western Ghats region of the state, stretching from Amburi in the south to Badiyadka in the north. These challenges arise from factors such as wildlife attacks, land laws, forest and wildlife protection laws, various environmental regulations, construction bans, and conditional land titles. The report also provides concrete solutions to these issues.

EFL Act, 2003. It also proposes granting unconditional land titles to settlement lands occupied before 1 January 1997, and conducting a joint verification by the Revenue and Forest departments to demarcate forest boundaries. Furthermore, it recommends that Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) around wildlife sanctuaries and national parks should not be extended into inhabited areas or agricultural lands. The report also calls for a re-examination of the acquisition of 34,000 acres of cultivated land declared as forest under the EFL Act, 2003, or alternatively, the provision of compensation in accordance with the national compensation law.

To address wildlife attacks, the Commission suggests invoking provisions such as Sections 62 and 11(b) of the existing law to declare wild boars as vermin. It recommends granting permission to drive away animals entering

farmlands and residential areas, and to cull species that are not endangered. It also calls for the adoption of effective modern mechanisms to prevent wildlife from straying outside forest areas. The report emphasizes the need to amend land, forest, and environmental laws that restrict farmers' rights and freedom over their land, thereby ensuring their economic stability, employment opportunities, and future development. It further recommends the establishment of a Wildlife Compensation Claims Tribunal and the repeal of stringent laws enacted by the state in 1972, 2003, and 2020.

Additional recommendations include regulating wildlife populations in accordance with the carrying capacity of forests; withdrawing laws such as construction bans; making land titles granted to farmers unconditional; maintaining primary education facilities despite declining population density; introducing more courses in highland colleges;

promoting tourism; and removing restrictions that hinder infrastructure development. The report also calls for steps to enhance employment opportunities, industries, commercial centers, and cultural, health, and recreational facilities.

To prevent the misuse of legal provisions by the Forest Department against local inhabitants, the Commission recommends that arrests in forest-related cases should be made only with a court order, and that non-habitual offenders should be granted bail. It also clearly states that activities such as farming, house construction, digging wells, building cattle sheds and other structures, establishing places of worship and schools, and setting up workplaces should not be prohibited in the name of forest regulations. Furthermore, it recommends that people should not be evicted from legally held land under the pretext of disaster management laws without providing adequate compensation. ■

COVER STORY ON EWS RESERVATION



Rev. Fr. Sabin Thoommulil

Residential Plots and Agricultural Land

In Kerala, houses are typically located within agricultural land. However, according to central norms, only 2.1 cents in municipalities and 4.1 cents in panchayats are permitted as “residential plots.” As a result, farmers possessing land beyond this limit are denied reservation benefits, even if such land is used exclusively for agriculture. The Commission recommends that homesteads of farmers should continue to be treated



The Justice J. B. Koshy Commission observes that the 10% reservation implemented for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among the unreserved categories often fails to reach the deserving beneficiaries in Kerala. The primary reason identified is that criteria formulated with North Indian rural conditions in mind are applied unchanged in Kerala. To address these challenges, the Commission has proposed the following key recommendations.

as agricultural land, and that only designated housing colonies in urban areas should be considered as residential land.

House Area and Structural Features

The stipulation that a house must be below 1000 square feet is a significant disadvantage for farmers in Kerala. Considering the local practice of providing space attached to the house for storing agricultural produce and rearing livestock, the Commission recommends relaxing this limit. It also calls for increasing land extent limits, taking into ac-

count the specific conditions of regions such as Kuttanad and the highland areas.

Concessions in Education and Employment Sectors

Similar to the benefits granted to OBC categories, the Commission recommends extending age relaxation in PSC appointments and mark concessions in qualifying examinations such as SET and KTET to the EWS category. It further suggests that EWS reservation should be given retrospective effect in PSC notifications issued from January 2020 onwards, and that pending appointments should be regularized accordingly.

Areas Requiring Administrative Reform

To eliminate procedural hurdles in obtaining EWS certificates, the Commission recommends making the entire application process fully online. It also proposes the appointment of dedicated nodal officers in every district to address grievances effectively.

Conclusion

Given that states have constitutional authority to modify such criteria, the Commission emphasizes that these recommendations should be implemented urgently to support farmers and ordinary citizens in Kerala.

ON CHALLENGES IN RUNNING AIDED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Paragraphs 8 to 12 (pages 22 to 26) of the Justice J. B. Koshy Commission Report clearly explain the challenges faced by managements in administering Christian aided educational institutions. The report also outlines how the government should intervene constructively. For a proper understanding among the general public regarding Christian minority aided institutions, it is beneficial to read this section of the report. The relevant portion is summarized below:

- With the enactment of the Kerala Education Act in 1959 and the Direct Payment Order of 1972, previously existing Christian institutions became aided institutions, and the government assumed direct responsibility for paying teachers' salaries. However, there is no clear framework regarding how other responsibilities are to be fulfilled. In recent times, the obligation to ensure quality education and to provide statutory infrastructure facilities has increased significantly. Modern education requires substantial investment in scientific and technological infrastruc-

ture and development activities. Therefore, the government's responsibility toward students in aided schools is not fulfilled merely by paying teachers' salaries; attention must also be given to ensuring adequate infrastructural and technological standards.

- Since managements are not permitted to collect funds from students to meet infrastructural expenses based on student strength, it is only just that the government bears this cost. There are Christian institutions that educate up to 10,000 students. A school of such size requires at least ten acres of land in an urban area, which may be valued at a minimum of ₹200 crore at current market rates. The government may spend around ₹20 crore annually on teachers' salaries for such a school. However, if the land itself were utilized otherwise, it could yield comparable annual returns for the management. Additionally, buildings of about three lakh square feet would be required, costing approximately ₹60 crore, with an annual depreciation of about ₹6 crore. Along with other operational expenses, the man-

agement incurs an estimated visible and invisible capital expenditure of around ₹25,000 per student. Although similar costs should ideally exist in government schools, financial constraints often limit infrastructural development there.

- Private managements that provide better physical infrastructure thus render significant service to students. Government partnership in this regard would enhance overall educational progress. It is evident that managements bear expenses for non-salary components equivalent to what the government spends on salaries. The recurring costs of infrastructure and capital expenditure place a heavy financial burden on managements. This has led to widespread allegations that managements resort to irregular practices. In reality, the government should provide a fixed percentage of capital costs for buildings and infrastructure (excluding land value), along with a portion of recurring expenses, based on student strength. At the same time, the government must ensure that managements do not collect money for appointments.

Adequate grants would effectively curb such malpractices.

- If the government provides financial support for non-salary expenses in aided schools, it will contribute to improving educational quality. Proper utilization of such funds can be ensured by requiring audited accounts, which may be verified during school inspections by officials such as the AEO, DEO, and Deputy Director.
- Numerous complaints have been raised regarding issues faced by Christians, as a minority, in matters of teacher appointments in aided schools. These institutions were established by Christians through great sacrifice. While there is no dispute that aided institutions must comply with prevailing laws and government regulations—particularly in matters of educational standards, syllabus, and teacher qualifications—care must be taken to ensure that new laws and circulars do not deprive qualified Christian candidates of their rightful opportunity for appointment.

THE ONE WHO ROBBED PARADISE

✿ “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). This declaration, made by Jesus while hanging between two crucified thieves, was not merely a word of consolation; rather, it is a profound theology of grace and faith. At that moment when everyone had abandoned Jesus, the deep confession of faith arising from a man branded as a criminal, and the resulting promise of eternal life, stands as one of the foundation stones of the Christian faith.



EXPLORING BIBLE QUESTIONS

Rev. Dr. Tom Olikkarott

One of the most painful moments in human history: the Messiah hangs on the cross at Calvary, bearing the burden of the world's sins. Amidst physical torture and mockery, a promise made by Jesus during his final breaths remains a wonder even today: “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). This declaration, made by Jesus while hanging between two crucified thieves, was not merely a word of consolation; rather, it is a profound theology of grace and faith. At that moment when everyone had abandoned Jesus, the deep confession of faith arising from a man branded as a criminal, and the resulting promise of eternal life, stands as one of the foundation stones of the Christian faith.

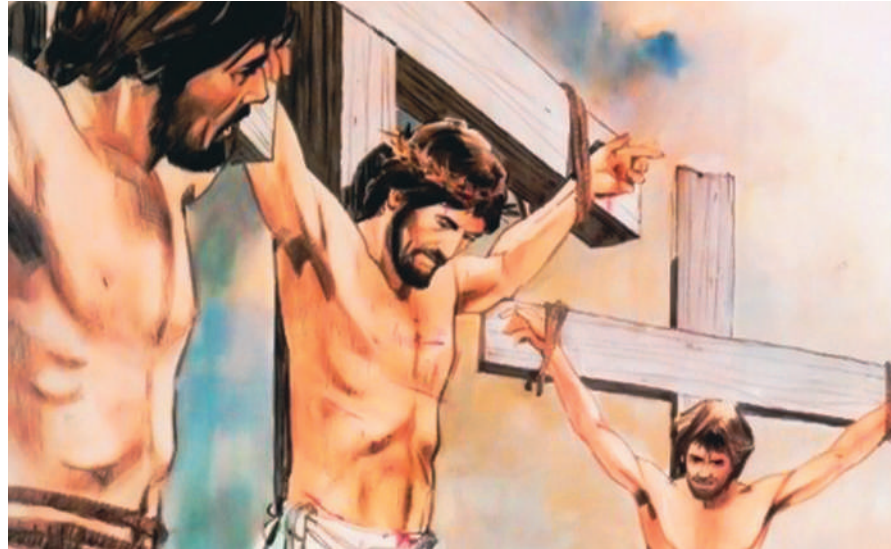
The Punctuation Debate

In the original Greek manuscripts, there were no punctuation marks. Therefore, this sentence is often interpreted in two ways:

A: “...Truly I say to you, today you will be with me...”

B: “...Truly today I say to you, you will be with me...”

The Traditional Interpretation: “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Here, “today” indicates the time of arrival in Paradise. The word



“today” (*Sēmeron*) is used to signify the immediate presence of divine salvation. Thus, it emphasizes the truth of the “Immediate Afterlife”—that the soul joins Christ immediately after death.

The Alternative Interpretation: “Truly I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise.” Here, “today” refers to the time Jesus is speaking. According to this view, Jesus is emphasizing the certainty of His promise. It means: “In this most hopeless moment (today), I give you this assurance.” In the Old Testament, we see the phrase “I command you today” in several places (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6, 7:11, 8:1). In those instances, “today” refers to the time the command is given, not necessarily the time it is fulfilled. Those who support this interpretation believe Jesus used this Semitic idiom here. Furthermore, after the resurrection, Jesus’ words to Mary Magdalene are noteworthy: “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father...”

Jesus was crucified on Friday and rose on Sunday. If Jesus states even on Sunday morning that He has not yet gone to the Father (Heaven/Paradise), how did the thief reach Paradise on Friday? This interpretation—“I tell you today”—is used to resolve this apparent contradiction. It argues that the promise is made *today*, but the entry happens in the future. This view helps bring harmony with other scriptural passages regarding Jesus’ resurrection (specifically John 20:17). However, the majority of Church Fathers follow the first interpretation—that the moment a believer accepts the Messiah, they become worthy of Paradise.

Theological Significance

- *Sēmeron* (Today): This is a major theme in Luke’s Gospel (the Lukan “Today”). It is used here with the same gravity as when Jesus told Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house.” It clarifies that salvation is not something that must happen only in the distant future,

but something that occurs the very moment one accepts the Messiah.

- *Met’ emou* (With Me): The Greek word ‘*Meta*’ here indicates more than just physical proximity; it signifies a deep fellowship. He who shared in the pain of the crucifixion also shares in His glory.

Perspectives of Church Fathers

Church Fathers have depicted the Good Thief (St. Dismas) as a great model of faith:

- St. Augustine: He observed that “when the disciples fled in fear and everyone rejected Jesus, this man was able to behold his King in one who hung dying.” Augustine famously described this as the “Theft of Paradise.”

- St. John Chrysostom: “The gate of Paradise was first opened for a thief; a thief entered that garden where no one else had gone, not because of his deeds, but because of the mercy of the Messiah on the cross.”

- St. Cyril of Jerusalem: He describes this as “The Miracle of Faith.” He highlights the Good Thief as the first person to recognize that Jesus’ death was not a failure but the beginning of a new Kingdom.

Conclusion

The brief conversation between Jesus and the Good Thief on the cross at Calvary is the pinnacle of Christian hope and divine grace. While there are diverse interpretations of the word “today,” the essence of the promise remains the same: the gates of Heaven will always be open before true repentance. The transformation of that thief—from judgment to salvation, and from guilt to the joy of Paradise—proclaims the hope available to every sinner in the Messiah. The great truth revealed to the world in those final moments on the cross is that man is justified not by his own works, but by faith in the supreme sacrifice of the Messiah. The faith of that thief, who recognized the Messiah as his King even in the shadow of death, remains a profound lesson for generations today. ■

MYLAPORE: THE ORIGIN AND CENTRE OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA



LITURGICAL
RESEARCH
CENTRE STUDY
SERIES

Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil

As part of the proclamation of the Gospel in India, St. Thomas the Apostle established Christian communities in North India as well as in several towns of South India. The beginnings of the Church were laid during his first missionary journey in North India, which was then part of the Parthian Empire, and during his second missionary journey in South India, known at that time as “Tamilakam,” which included present-day Kerala.

Mylapore was the second most important city in South India, while the foremost was Muziris on the Malabar coast of Kerala. Mylapore was

considered the fourth most important city in India at that time. The cities of Bharuch in Gujarat, Muziris in Kerala, and Taxila (in present-day Pakistan) held the first, second, and third positions respectively in importance. Among these four cities, Mylapore had a distinctive significance, as it was regarded as the gateway to the East, including China. Thus, while Muziris functioned as the gateway to the West, Mylapore served as the gateway to the East, highlighting the prominence of these two cities. Of these, Muziris is believed to be the place where St. Thomas the Apostle first arrived, whereas Mylapore is the place where the Apostle attained his eternal rest.

The martyrdom of St. Thomas the Apostle at Mylapore made this city one of the most beloved and significant places for the St. Thomas Christians and for Indian Christianity as a whole. It can

rightly be said that Mylapore is both the origin and the central seat of the Church in India. In the early centuries, Mylapore functioned as the centre of the Church. At the beginning of the medieval period, Kollam and later Kodungallur became important ecclesiastical centres. According to Portuguese records, from the seventh century until the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century, Kodungallur was the residence of the Metropolitans of the St. Thomas Christians.

There are numerous historical records affirming that St. Thomas the Apostle was martyred and buried at Mylapore. One of the most important sources is the work *Acts of Thomas*, composed in the early third century, which gives a detailed account of the Apostle’s martyrdom in its thirteenth chapter. Many Church Fathers have also recorded significant details

regarding the martyrdom and burial of the Apostle in their writings, and these sources are available to us today. Archaeological studies and the accounts of foreign travelers further corroborate these traditions.

Portuguese historical records testify that the tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle at Mylapore was held in great veneration in earlier centuries. They also note that not only Christians but even non-Christians regarded this sacred place with profound reverence. The tomb of the Apostle played a vital role in the spiritual life of the St. Thomas Christians. Pilgrimages to Mylapore were a regular practice among them, and such pilgrimages were considered a means of attaining spiritual fulfillment. The soil brought from the tomb at Mylapore was believed to possess healing power and was held to be effective even in curing diseases. ■

THE HISTORIC CATHOLIC CONGRESS GRAND GATHERING AT KANNUR

Kannur: The Catholic Congress is not a political force but a community force, said Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. He was inaugurating and delivering the presidential address at the 108th anniversary conference of the All Kerala Catholic Congress, held at Bishop Mar Sebastian Valloppilly Nagar at the Kannur Police Maidan, under the slogan “Community Empowerment for National Progress.”

The community has undertaken what the government ought to have done in the field of education—schools are its contribution. At a time when children did not wear uniforms according to caste distinctions, it was the reform initiated by the Catholic Church that introduced uniforms in schools. The uniform system was implemented to make it clear that caste discrimination has no place in schools. It was also the Catholic community that affirmed equal rights for women in education. There was a time when no one opted for nursing as a profession. It was the community that recognized the need for women’s service in the healthcare sector and deputed



sisters into this field. At a time when no one came forward to become nurses, the Catholic Church transformed nursing into a ministry of service.

Though the districts of Kannur and Kasaragod were created by the government, it was migrant farmers who shaped these regions into what they are today. Crops like tapioca and paddy are contributions of the community. The government should be ready to provide pensions and health insurance to farmers. Killing a human being does not seem to be an issue, but killing wild animals that destroy crops becomes a problem. Farmers’ land must be protected. Their children should be given educational benefits and job reservation. The government must be prepared to extend due consideration to communities that do not have reservation benefits, said Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil.



Global President Rajeev Kochuparambil presided over the function. Thalassery Archeparchy Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany delivered the keynote address, and Bishop Legate Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil gave the benedictory address. Messages were delivered by Kottayam Archeparchy Auxiliary Bishop Mar Joseph Pandarasseril, Palakkad Eparchy Bishop Mar Peter Kochupurackal, and Archbishop Emeritus Mar George Njaralakatt. Global Director Fr. Dr. Philip Kaviyil delivered the introductory address, and

General Secretary Dr. Joskutty J. Ozhukayil presented the theme. Global Treasurer Adv. Tony Punchakkunnel presented the political resolution, and Thalassery Archeparchy General Secretary Jimmy Ayithamattam presented the organizational report. Philip Veliyath, President of the Catholic Congress Thalassery Archeparchy, welcomed the gathering, and Global Vice President Tresa Liz Sebastian delivered the vote of thanks. The inauguration of the Global Business Network portal initiated by the Catholic Congress was also performed by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. The flag was handed over to the representative of the Catholic Congress of the Changanacherry Archeparchy, where the 109th conference will be held.

Prior to the conference, a grand rally of nearly one lakh participants began from Bishop Mar Sebastian Valloppilly Nagar at the Kannur Police Maidan and was flagged off by Archbishop Emeritus Mar George Valiyamattam. Bishops, priests, global office bearers of the Catholic Congress, sisters, representatives from the 19 foranes of the Thalassery Archeparchy, and delegates from various eparchies participated in the rally. The rally passed through Kannur town and concluded at the conference venue. The Delegates’ Conference Held Prior to the Main Conference at the Pallikkunnu Sreepuram Barumariam Pastoral Centre was inaugurated by Kottayam Archeparchy Auxiliary Bishop Mar Joseph Pandarasseril.



FORMATORS MUST ENCULCATE AN ECCLESIAL VISION: MAJOR ARCHBISHOP



Kakkanad: Seminary formators bear a great responsibility in shaping a deep ecclesial vision among seminarians and equipping them to face the challenges of the times, said Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. He was speak-

ing at the gathering of Major Seminary professors held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church. The Major Archbishop particularly highlighted the decisive role played by Major Seminary teachers in

forming the future promise of the Church.

The Major Archbishop reminded that seminary formation is not merely an academic pursuit, but rather the formation of an ecclesial way of life rooted in the identity and tra-

dition of the Church. Students must be given integral formation grounded in the five foundational dimensions of priestly formation: spiritual, pastoral, human, intellectual, and missionary. He also emphasized that professors must cultivate in students a vision rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Church. In view of changing pastoral contexts, the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church decided to introduce timely reforms in priestly formation. Accordingly, this meeting of Major Seminary professors was convened under the leadership of the Commission for the Clergy to study, analyze, and discuss the practical implementation of the proposed

changes in seminary formation. The Synod also envisions initiating these reforms from the very stage of Minor Seminary formation, which is the foundational phase of priestly training.

The meeting was attended by rectors, institute presidents, and professors from various Major Seminaries of the Church. Mar Tony Neelankavil, Chairman of the Synodal Commission for the Clergy; Mar Alex Tharamangalam, Commission member; and Church Chancellor Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil, among others, addressed the gathering. The program was coordinated by Fr. Tom Olikkarott, Secretary of the Commission for the Clergy, along with Fr. Augustine Kallely and Sr. Leticia S.M.C. The meeting, held on March 15 and 16, brought together professors from the Major Seminaries of Mangalapuzha, Vadavathoor, Thrissur, and Kunnoth.

MAJOR ARCHBISHOP UNDERTAKES PILGRIMAGE TO MALAYATTOOR KURISUMUDI



Kakkanad: Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil undertook a pilgrimage to Malayattoor Kurisumudi. After offering prayers before the statue of St. Thomas the

Apostle, he began his pilgrimage. Upon reaching Kurisumudi, Mar Thattil was welcomed by Fr. Antony Naduvathussery, Spiritual Director of Kurisumudi. After praying at the Kurisumudi church, he venerated the Golden Cross and the footprint of St. Thomas the Apostle. The Major Archbishop climbed down the hill after blessing the faithful who approached him.

On his way back, the Major Archbishop met the laborers

engaged in work at Kurisumudi under the employment guarantee scheme, shared friendly interaction with them, and offered prayers for them. Priests and sisters from the Major Archiepiscopal Curia of the Syro-Malabar Church accompanied the Major Archbishop. Mar Raphael Thattil had previously undertaken this pilgrimage in 2019, when he walked on foot from Thrissur to Kurisumudi.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE SISTERS OF THE DESTITUTE BEGIN



Aluva: The centenary celebrations of the SD Religious Congregation at Chunagamvely have commenced. The public meeting held in connection with the celebrations was inaugurated by Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. Fr. Jose Puthiyedath, Vicar General of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy; Fr. Mathew Pothalil, Vicar General of the Vincentian Congregation; Mother Rosily Jose, Superior General of the Adoration Congregation; and Saju Mathai, President of Keezhmad Panchayat, along with priests and religious, were present at

the function.

SD Superior General Sr. Liz Grace delivered the keynote address. General Councillor Sr. Pauline Therese and St. Mary's Provincial Superior Sr. Reisy Thaliyan also spoke. The release of the centenary logo, the choral presentation of the centenary song by 100 SD sisters, and various cultural programs were part of the celebrations. Upholding the motto "The love of Christ urges us," the congregation is implementing several charitable initiatives for the upliftment of the poor and programs for youth empowerment as part of the centenary celebrations.

MONS. GEORGE POTTAKKAL ORDAINED BISHOP IN GERMANY



Mainz: Mons. George Pottakkal, a member of the Carmelite Religious Congregation



and of the Kothamangalam Eparchy, was ordained as the seventh Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Mainz, which was established in AD 304. Fr. Joshi George Pottakkal is the first priest born outside Europe to

become an Auxiliary Bishop in a German diocese. A member of the Kothamangalam Eparchy and of the St. Thomas Province, Thrissur (Chettupuzha), Fr. Joshi is the second son of the late George and Eliamma of the Pottakkal family from Meenkunnam in Arakuzha Panchayat, Ernakulam district. Born in 1977, Fr. Joshi George Pottakkal is the third bishop of foreign origin in the German Bishops' Conference.

The episcopal ordination was principally celebrated by Bishop Dr. Peter Kohlgraf of Mainz. Archbishop Dr. Stephan

Burger of Freiburg and Bishop Dr. Wilmar Santin O. Cam of the Itaituba Eparchy served as co-consecrators. Fourteen bishops participated in the ceremony. From Kerala, Mar George Madathikandathil, Bishop of the Kothamangalam Eparchy, and Mar Stephen Chirappanath, Apostolic Visitor of the Syro-Malabar Church in Europe, were present. Also in attendance were Fr. Desiderio Garcia (Spain), Superior General of the Carmelite Mother Congregation; Fr. Robert Puthushery, General Councillor from Kerala; Fr. Peter Schroeder, German

Provincial; and Fr. Thankachan Paul Njaliyath, Provincial of the St. Thomas Province, India, along with members of the Carmelite Congregation, sisters, and Malayali priests and religious serving in Germany. Faithful from various countries, representatives from political and social spheres, and the family members of Bishop Joshi George were also present.

Mons. Joshi George Pottakkal, who has been serving in Germany for 22 years, was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Mainz on November 26, 2025, by Pope Leo XIV.

VATICAN APPROVES ALPHA INSTITUTE



Thalassery: The Alpha Higher Institute of Religious Sciences, a theological study center functioning under the Archeparchy of Tellicherry, has received approval from

the Dicastery for Culture and Education. With this recognition, the institute will be able to commence a three-year regular theology degree course (Baccalaureate of Religious Science) in affiliation with Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram.

The inaugural ceremony of the announcement was officiated by Thalassery Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany along with Archbishops Emeritus Mar George Valiyamattam and Mar

George Njaralakatt by lighting the ceremonial lamp. The decree was officially proclaimed by Fr. Dr. Mathew Attungal CMI, President of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bengaluru.

Fr. Dr. Joji Kakkaramattathil, Dean of the Tele Alpha Centre for Religious Sciences, presented the report. Speeches were delivered by Fr. Dr. Philip Kaviyil (President), Fr. Dr. Paul Kochappilly CMI (Dean of the Theology Faculty, Dharmaram

Vidya Kshetram), Fr. Dr. Joy Kakkannattu CMI (Dharmaram representative at Alpha), Fr. Dr. Mathew Kottukappally (Director of Alpha Higher Institute), and Fr. Dr. Jacob Vennayappillil (Staff Representative).

Classes at the Alpha Higher Institute are conducted under the guidance of eminent faculty. Religious sisters, catechists, retired professionals, and all those who have completed Plus Two education are eligible to apply for the course.

JOINED MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCILS OF THE ARCHEPARCHY OF TRICHUR



Kodakara: The joint meeting of the Presbyteral Councils of the five eparchies under the Thrissur Province called for an end to the continuing discrimination by political movements against Christians. The conference was inaugurated

by Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. Thrissur Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath, Irinjalakuda Bishop Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Palakkad Eparchy Bishop Mar Peter Kochupurackal, Ramanathapuram

Eparchy Bishop Mar Paul Alappatt, Hosur Eparchy Bishop Mar Sebastian Pozholiparambil, Melbourne Eparchy Bishop Mar Bosco Puthur, along with Vicars General, curia officials, and members of the Presbyteral Councils from various

eparchies, participated in the gathering. Fr. Dr. James Kokkavayalil, Fr. Dr. Mathew Ilathparambil, Dr. Mary Regina, and Prof. K.M. Francis led the sessions.

The meeting demanded that political parties clearly state what actions they would take regarding the issues long raised by Christians if they come to power. It observed that the problems faced by farmers in the high range regions are not being adequately discussed and criticized the government's liquor policy as deceptive. The conference

welcomed the release of the J. B. Koshi Commission report and called for the political will to implement its recommendations. It stated that both those in power and those aspiring to govern must clarify their stance on these matters. Though interventions in the appointment of differently-abled teachers came after prolonged struggles, the conference noted that discrimination and a hostile attitude toward educational institutions continue. The joint meeting of the Presbyteral Councils also demanded that attempts to undermine the rights of the Christian minority through indirect means be abandoned.

POLITICAL PARTIES MUST STOP INDIFFERENCE TO CHRISTIAN ISSUES: MAR PAULY KANNOOKADAN



Irinjalakuda: Political parties must correct their indifferent attitude toward the fundamental issues and demands of the Christian community, said Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Bishop of the Irinjalakuda Eparchy. At least at this stage, when elections are approaching, leaders must clearly state what actions they would take regarding such

issues if they come to power. He was inaugurating the Pastoral Council conference of the Irinjalakuda Eparchy.

No political front or party has proposed effective solutions to the issues consistently raised by Christians over the years. Violations of minority rights, liquor policies that undermine families and society, the prob-

lems of high range farmers, and the concerns of coastal communities continue to trouble the Christian community. In this context, Mar Pauly Kannookadan called upon voters to exercise their franchise wisely by supporting honest representatives who are committed to the welfare of the wider society. Every faithful must cast their vote

responsibly and encourage others to do the same. All believers should be ready to participate in efforts to strengthen the Syro-Malabar community, which is facing serious challenges in various sectors. The Catholic Congress must take leadership in community empowerment through the empowerment of the laity. Units of the Catholic Congress should be established in all parishes.

A discussion on the theme "Empowerment of the Christian Community for a Better Tomorrow" was led by Rev. Dr. Michael Pulickan CMI, Secretary

of the KCBC Vigilance Commission; Joyce Mary Antony, Chairperson of Muvattupuzha Municipality and entrepreneur; and Adv. Joji Chirayil, PRO of the Changanacherry Archeparchy. Adv. Shiny Jojo Chittilappilly served as moderator.

Vicars General Mons. Antu Alappadan, Mons. Jose Maliekal, and Mons. Wilson Eerathara; Pastoral Council General Secretary Rev. Dr. Rijoy Pazhayattil; and Secretaries Geo Jose and Adv. Anlin Francis also spoke. Concern and regret were expressed over the continuing discrimination, irrespective of political differences, against Christian educational institutions and hospitals.

FATHERS MUST BECOME GUARDIANS AGAINST THE MENACE OF DRUGS: MAR JOSE PULICKAL



Kanjirappally: Just as St. Joseph protected the Holy Family from grave dangers, fathers today must become vigilant guardians to protect their families and society from the menace of drug abuse that is de-

stroying the very foundations of family life, said Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of the Kanjirappally Eparchy. He also reminded that every father must assume the role of a protector of the family, the Church, and society. He was

inaugurating the fathers' gathering titled "With a Fatherly Heart" held at the Kanjirappally Pastoral Centre Auditorium.

The gathering was organized in connection with the feast of St. Joseph, the third death anni-

versary of Mar Joseph Powathil, the first bishop of the eparchy, and the silver jubilee of the diocesan Fathers' Forum. Mar Jose Pulickal stated that Mar Joseph Powathil, who took firm stands for the upliftment of society in communion with the Church, remains a great model for all. He added that the insights drawn from his life should help in giving thanks for the blessings received through him and in moving forward in

unity with the Church.

The gathering, presided over by Dr. Saju Kochuveetil, was welcomed by diocesan director Fr. Mathew Olikkal. Sebastian Thannikal, Shijo Thoniyankal, and Reji Kaippanplackal delivered addresses. Fathers bearing the name Joseph who participated in the gathering were specially honored. Various cultural programs presented by fathers added color to the event. Members of the Fathers' Forum from different parishes under the 13 foranes of the eparchy participated in the gathering.



Rev. Dr. Paul Achandy CMI



NEW LEADERSHIP FOR CMI CONGREGATION

Kochi: The 39th General Body of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate elected the new leadership of the congregation for the next six years. Rev. Dr.

Paul Achandy CMI has been appointed as the new Prior General. Having previously served as Prior General from 2014 to 2020, he had been coordinat-

ing mission activities in Kenya for the past three years. Fr. Paul Achandy is a personality with long-standing experience in the administrative affairs and

missionary activities of the congregation. The General Body also elected other members of the new governing council. Fr. Benny Nalkara assumed office as Vicar General and Councillor for Pastoral Apostolate. Fr. Binoy Elavunkal was elected Councillor for Education and Media, while Fr. Tom Arakkal was appointed Councillor for Social Service and Healthcare. Fr. Joseph Ponmani will serve as Councillor for Finance, and

Fr. Shijo Attupuram will take charge as General Auditor.

The Carmelites of Mary Immaculate is the first indigenous religious congregation in India. It was founded on May 11, 1831, at Mannanam by St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Palackal Thoma Malpan, and Porukara Thoma Kathanar. The congregation has played a decisive role in the spiritual and social development of the Christian community and society at large in Kerala.

DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF CARDINAL MAR ANTONY PADIYARA



Kochi: The 26th death anniversary of Cardinal Mar Antony Padiyara, the first Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, was observed. The commemorative observances began with the Holy *Qurbana* held on March 23 at Mount St. Thomas, the Major Archiepiscopal Curia of the Church. This

was followed by special prayers and memorial services at the tomb of Mar Padiyara at St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica.

The ceremonies were led by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil as the principal celebrant. Metropolitan Vicar Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany, Priests from the Major

Archiepiscopal Curia and the Curia Members of Archeparchy Ernakulam-Angamaly were participated in the prayer services. During the function, Mar Raphael Thattil recalled the outstanding contributions made by Cardinal Padiyara to the growth of the Church as its first Major Archbishop.

UNITY INITIATIVES LAUNCHED AT PALA



Pala: A meeting of clergy and lay representatives of the Nazrani community, rooted in the heritage of St. Thomas the Apostle and the Syriac tradition, was held under the leadership of bishops at the Bish-

op's House, Pala. The meeting was inaugurated by Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, while the keynote address was delivered by Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis.

In his inaugural address, Baselios Marthoma Mathews III emphasized that unity among the Nazranis is the need of the time. He added that there is a responsibility to ensure that laws related to religious conversion are not unconstitutional.

Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis noted that the fragmented St. Thomas Nazrani community can move forward together in areas where unity is possible. He also pointed out that there is an increasing tendency to suspect the social services carried

out by Christians in the name of Christ. The coming together of the Nazranis, he affirmed, is not communalism but a strengthening force for the entire nation.

The meeting, presided over by Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, saw the participation of 11 episcopal representatives from seven Nazrani Churches. In his presidential address, Mar Joseph Kallarangatt observed that organizing at the community level is easier and more necessary than achieving ecclesial unity. He reminded that fragmentation itself should become a reason for coming together.

YEAR OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INAUGURATED AT MANANTHAVADY

Mananthavady: In the context of the Syro-Malabar Year of Community Empowerment, the first meeting of the Pastoral Council of the Mananthavady Eparchy for this year was held at Dwaraka Corporate Auditorium. The diocesan-level inauguration of the Year of Community Empowerment and the release of special guidelines were carried out by Mar Jose Porunnam, Bishop of the eparchy of Mananthavady. In his inaugural address, he emphasized the necessity of strengthening the community both spiritually and socially.

“Community Empowerment: Ecclesial Ministry and Community Unity in Changing Contexts” was led by Fr. Roy Kannamchira CMI, Director of Deepika Children's League. He elaborated on the importance of the Year of Community Empowerment and the vigilance required of the community in the present social context.

Fr. Jinoj Palathadathil, Director of WSSS, presented a report on the progress of the Chooralmala housing project. Additionally, the annual accounts and budget of the eparchy were presented before



A session on the theme

the council by Procurator Fr. Jose Kocharackal. Members of the Pastoral Council, executive

members of various organizations and departments, forane council executives, central com-

mittee members, and resource persons participated in the meeting.

UNITY OF THE CHURCHES IS THE NEED OF THE TIME: MAR JOSEPH KALLARANGATT



Pala: The unity of the Churches is a necessity of the

present time and is essential for the strength, survival, and

growth of the community, said Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, Bish-

op of the Pala Eparchy. He was presiding over and addressing the Syro-Malabar community empowerment conferences held at various centers in the eparchy. He further added that the presence of the faithful of the Church should be strengthened in the fields of politics and public administration.

As part of the Syro-Malabar Church's declaration of 2026 as the Year of Community Empowerment, conferences were

organized at six centers under the leadership of 20 foranes in the Pala Eparchy. On Sunday, March 8, a conference was held at the premises of St. George Forane Church, led by 22 parishes under the foranes of Aruvithura, Poonjar, Kuttikkal, and Theekoy. On Sunday, March 15, another conference was conducted at St. Mary's Forane Church, with the participation of 22 parishes under the Kaduthuruthy, Muttuchira, and Kothanalloor foranes.

THOUSANDS PARTICIPATED IN PALAYOOR PILGRIMAGE



Thrissur: Around ten thousand faithful participated in the 29th grand pilgrimage to Palayoor Church organized by the Thrissur Archeparchy. Following the Holy Qurbana at Lourdes Cathedral, the pilgrimage was inaugurated by Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath

by handing over the papal flag to Fr. Jose Vallooran, Vicar of Lourdes Cathedral.

Along with the main pilgrimage procession, ten regional pilgrim marches representing sixteen foranes also commenced. Pilgrimages from Chelakkara, Erumapetty, Wa-

dakkanchery, Kottekkad, Velur, Mattam, Pazhuvil, Kandasankadavu, Valappad coastal region, and Chavakkad coast converged at the Palayoor shrine.

The second phase of the pilgrimage began after the Holy Qurbana at St. Joseph Shrine, inaugurated by Auxiliary Bish-

op Mar Tony Neelankavil by handing over the papal flag to Fr. Antony Chembakashery, Vicar of the shrine. Mons. Josco received the flag at Pancharamukku.

The pilgrim procession reaching Palayoor was received by Cardinal Anthony Poola, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, along with Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath, Auxiliary Bishop Mar Tony Neelankavil, and Mar Bosco Puthur.

A portrait of the late Archbishop Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy

and a ceremonial lamp from his tomb were placed at the public meeting venue at Palayoor. The public meeting held at Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy Nagar was inaugurated by Cardinal Anthony Poola, with Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath presiding. Mar Tony Neelankavil, Mar Bosco Puthur, Archpriest Fr. Davis Kannampuzha, Mons. Jaison Koonamplackal, Mons. Jose Konikkara, General Convener Fr. John Paul Chemmanoor, and Pastoral Council Secretary Joshi Vadakkan also addressed the gathering.

PASTORAL COUNCIL DEMANDS POLITICAL PARTIES TO TAKE POSITIONS

Thrissur: The Pastoral Council of the Thrissur Archeparchy has called upon political parties to clearly state their positions, before the elections, on the Justice J. B. Koshi Commission Report submitted to address the backwardness of the Christian community in the state, the EWS criteria, and the liquor policy. The delay of nearly three years in publishing the Koshi Commission Report, which was submitted in May 2023, had caused serious concern within the community. While the Council welcomed the government's decision to officially publish the report, it demanded urgent steps to implement its recommendations in a time-bound manner. The

Council also pointed out the need for the government to hold follow-up discussions with Church authorities and community leaders in this regard.

The meeting criticized the lack of action even after three years to revise the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) criteria for non-reserved communities. It stressed that the EWS criteria must be revised immediately in line with OBC standards. The Council also strongly condemned the government's policy shifts that increase the consumption and availability of alcohol. It demanded that political movements and fronts break their silence on these three major issues and clarify their positions to the public be-



fore the elections.

Justice J. B. Koshi, who attended the Pastoral Council meeting as the chief guest, spoke about the living conditions faced by Christians. He stated that the backwardness of Christians in the state is a reality and that he has directly understood the hardships faced by ordinary people in the high range and coastal regions. He also pointed out that members of the community are not sufficiently

aware of scholarships and other benefits provided by the government for minority communities and emphasized the responsibility of community organizations to undertake awareness initiatives in this regard.

The meeting also marked the beginning of the sacerdotal golden jubilee celebrations of Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath. Mar Andrews Thazhath and Justice J. B. Koshi jointly lit the ceremonial lamp. Mar

Bosco Puthur delivered a felicitation address. Rev. Fr. Arun Kalamattathil presented the subjects.

Vicars General Mons. Jaison Koonamplackal and Mons. Jose Konikkara, Fr. Shijo Chiriyankandath, Pastoral Council Secretary Joshi Vadakkan, Elsie Vincent, and A. D. Shaju also spoke at the meeting. Thrissur Mayor Niji Justin, Sebastian Choondal, and Dr. Mary Regina were honored on the occasion.

SECOND PANATHADY PILGRIMAGE CONCLUDED



Thalassery: The second Panathady San Jose pilgrimage organized under the leadership of the Thalassery Archeparchy concluded in a deeply prayerful atmosphere. The pilgrimage was held on March 18 and 19 in connection with the feast of St. Joseph, the patron of the

Archeparchy. Around 5,000 pilgrims from five foranes in the Kasaragod region—Kanhagad, Malom, Vellarikkundu, Kasaragod, and Panathady—participated. This year's pilgrimage once again manifested the deep devotion of the migrant community toward St. Joseph.

The pilgrimage group from Malom forane was directly led by Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany. The faithful undertook a foot pilgrimage of nearly 18 kilometers, praying the Rosary along the way. Pilgrims from the Vellarikkundu and Kanhagad foranes walked about 14 kilometers from St. Sebastian's Church, Padimaruth, while those from the Kasaragod forane walked a similar distance from St. George's Church, Padup. Faithful also joined from the

Panathur region after covering a distance of 13 kilometers. The pilgrimage began on March 18 with Eucharistic adoration and the proclamation of the Word at various centers, followed by special night prayers titled "San Jose Night." By around 3:00 a.m. on March 19, pilgrims from different centers gathered at St. Joseph's Church, Panathady. At 4:00 a.m., a solemn Holy Qurbana was celebrated with Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany as the principal celebrant.

Vicars General Mons. Antony Muthukunnel, Mons. Sebastian Palackuzhy, and Mons. Mathew Elamthuruthipadavil, along with Chancellor Fr. Joseph Mutathukunnel and forane vicars including Fr. Johnson Anthiyakalam, Fr. Joseph Thaikkunnumpuram, Fr. George Kalapura, Fr. George Vallimala, and Fr. Joseph Poovatholil, led the pilgrimage. Nearly 100 priests, around 250 religious, seminarians of the archeparchy, and about 5,000 faithful took part in this spiritual journey.

KULATHUVAYAL PILGRIMAGE, THOUSANDS PARTICIPATED



Thamarassery: As part of the Lenten observances, thousands of faithful participated in the Kulathuvayal pilgrimage held in connection with the Fortieth

Friday observance, under the leadership of Bishop Mar Remigios Inchananiyil of the Thamarassery Eparchy.

The ninth Kulathuvayal pil-

grimage commenced from the Thamarassery Mary Matha Cathedral and concluded at the St. George Pilgrimage Centre, Kulathuvayal. Bishop Mar Remi-

gios Inchananiyil was the principal celebrant of the Holy Qurbana. Vicar General Monsignor Abraham Vayalil and Forane Vicar of St. Thomas Forane

Church, Koorachundu, Rev. Fr. Vincent Kandathil, celebrated. Eparchial Chancellor Rev. Fr. Sebastian Kavalakkatt and Rector of the Kulathuvayal Pilgrimage Centre, Rev. Dr. Thomas Kalarickal, provided leadership for the event. A large number of priests, religious, seminarians, youth, and thousands of faithful took part in the pilgrimage.



DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

MARCH 9 - MARCH 27

- **9 Sunday:** Minister P. Rajeev called on His Beatitude the Major Archbishop at Mount St. Thomas.
- **12 Thursday:** Inaugurated the Provincial Metropolitan Synod of Trichur and the Provincial Presbyterial Council at Sahrudaya College of Management Studies, Irinjalakuda.
- **14 Saturday:** Celebrated the Holy Qurbana at St. Joseph Cathedral, Tellicherry.
- **14 Saturday:** Inaugurated the 108th anniversary of the Catholic Congress at Kannur and addressed the Rally.
- **15 Sunday:** Delivered message at the conclusion of the Forty Hours' Adoration at St. Joseph's Church, Kottamam in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **15 Sunday:** Celebrated the Holy Qurbana marking the inauguration of the General Chapter of the CMI at Chavara Hills.
- **16 Monday:** Celebrated the Holy Qurbana with the major seminary formators at Mount St. Thomas.
- **17 Tuesday:** Blessed the new office of A.I.C.O of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly at the Archbishop's House, Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **19 Thursday:** Celebrated the Holy Qurbana and inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Sisters of the Destitute at their Mother House, Chunangavelly.
- **23 Monday:** Celebrated the memorial Holy Qurbana for Cardinal Antony Padiyara at Mount St. Thomas and the Office of the dead at his tomb in St. Mary's Cathedral, Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **24 Tuesday:** Made a pilgrimage to the St. Thomas International Shrine at Malayattoor, Kurishumudi.
- **25 Wednesday:** Officiated at the canonical exhumation and reconnaissance of the Servant of God Fr. Canisius CMI, at St. Teresa's Monastery, Ambazhakad.

FOUNTAINS OF PURE LOVE

THE SOCIETY OF NIRMALA DASIS SISTERS (SNDS) IS A DEDICATED RELIGIOUS SOCIETY THAT HAS BEEN SERVING THE SICK AND THE DESTITUTE FOR THE PAST 55 YEARS.



The Society of Nirmala Dasi Sisters (SNDS) was founded jointly by Mar Joseph Kundukulam, known as the "Father of the Poor," and Monsignor Joseph Vilanganachan, known as the "Protector of the Poor." About six kilometers west of Thrissur town, in the village of Pullazhi, St. Christina's Home was established by Mar Kundukulam, which later evolved into the Society of Nirmala Dasi Sisters. St. Christina's Home was originally started with the aim of caring for unwed mothers and their children. In the early days, the inmates were

under the care of the Carmelite sisters. However, due to the shortage of sufficient sisters and the increasing number of inmates, there arose a need for more dedicated personnel. This situation led to reflection on the necessity of a religious society devoted exclusively to this field. As a result of prayer and discernment, the founding fathers decided to establish a religious society dedicated to serving the poor, the abandoned, and the most marginalized in society. Thus, the Society of Nirmala Dasi Sisters (SNDS) was formed with an initial group of sixteen

young women.

On 23 November 1971, by Decree No. 1499, the Pious Association and its constitution received approval from the Thrissur Archbishop's House. The members of this pious association were given the name "Nirmala Dasi Sisters." They took a pledge to live as consecrated persons, practicing evangelical virtues through a simple and hardworking life, serving the most suffering and abandoned in society, and drawing strength from prayer while sharing the love of Christ through their service. They also accepted the

Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, as their patroness and intercessor.

In 1980, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II approved the constitution of the Society and granted it pontifical recognition. On 8 December 2006, the Syro-Malabar Church's Major Archbishop, Mar Varkey Vithayathil, elevated this Society to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal institute. The Generalate and the Novitiate house are situated in the village of Mulayam, about 14 kilometers east of Thrissur town.

Today, the apostolate of the Society of Nirmala Dasi Sisters has spread across various states and continents. In Kerala, the Society is present in five Eparchies, and it also serves in one Eparchy each in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra, and in three Eparchies in Telangana. Beyond India, it is active in six Eparchies in Kenya, and in one Eparchy each in Uganda, Hungary, and Germany. Altogether, in 20 Eparchies, 247 Nirmala Dasi Sisters serve

in 50 houses, bearing witness to Christ through various charitable ministries. At present, six novices, five postulants, five aspirants, and eight candidates are undergoing formation.

With hearts filled with purity and holy intentions, the Society of Nirmala Dasi Sisters reaches out to the most neglected and abandoned sections of society, including the chronically ill, leprosy patients, the intellectually challenged, AIDS patients, the mentally ill, the elderly, the dying, the homeless, and those addicted to alcohol and drugs. Parish ministry and home visits are also among the important areas of their service. The spiritual strength for their apostolate is drawn from their life of prayer, especially from Eucharistic adoration. At the perpetual adoration center near the novitiate house, the sisters spend one week each in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., drawing divine strength that sustains their mission of service.

PRO-LIFE DAY, STATE-LEVEL CELEBRATION HELD



Thalassery: The 2026 State-Level Pro-Life Day celebration organized by the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council Pro-Life Committee was held at the Pastoral Centre of the Thalassery Archeparchy. The theme for this year was "Protection of Life for Social Well-being." Marking the beginning of the celebrations, Vicar General Mons. Sebastian Palakkuzhy of-

ferred the Holy Qurbana. KCBC Pro-Life State President Johnson Choorepparambil hoisted the flag. Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany inaugurated the public meeting, while Bishop Dr. Joseph Mar Thomas of the Sultan Bathery Eparchy presided. As a remembrance of the Pro-Life Day celebration, the bishops planted saplings.

KCBC Pro-Life State Com-

mittee Chairman Bishop Dr. Thomas Mar Eusebius delivered an online message. Director Fr. Dr. Cleetus Kathirparambil, General Secretary James Aazhchankadan, Treasurer Tomy Plathottam, Thalassery Archeparchy Pro-Life Committee Director Fr. Joby Kovatt, President Lawrence Kadikkattu, Syro-Malabar Pro-Life Apostolate Secretary Joyce Mukkudam,

animators Sr. Mary George, George F. Xavier, Sabu Jose, and KCBC Pro-Life Cultural Forum Coordinator Antony Pathros spoke. Tomy Olickal, Sr. Linta CHF, Nobert Kakkariyil, Semily Sunil, and Sheeba Thekkedath provided leadership.

Classes were led by Dr. Francis J. Aratt on "Protection of Life for Social Well-being" and Dr. Felix James on "New Forms and Trends of Life-Destroying Addictions." On the occasion, institutions such as Poopparambu Maria Bhavan, Ambalathara Snehalayam, Kolayad Snehabhavan, and Karuvanchal Ashabhavan were honored, along with Fr. Priyesh Kalarim-

uryil and the family of Shajiboby Verananickal couple blessed with ten children. Around fifty individuals engaged in running charitable homes in various places were also honored by the Thalassery Archeparchy under the title "Good Samaritan Gathering."

Representatives of the Parassala Pro-Life Committee received the flag on behalf of the Parassala Eparchy, which will host the 2027 Pro-Life Day celebrations. More than two hundred representatives from all the eparchies of Kerala participated in the event. A Rosary rally with a Pro-Life intention, along with various cultural programs and a fellowship meal, also formed part of the celebrations.



SYRO-MALABAR EPARCHY OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE MELBOURE

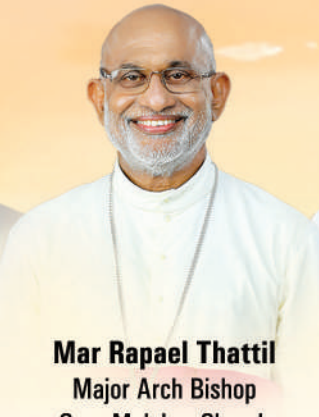
'Santhom' Chancery, 6 Greenock Court Greenvale VIC - 3059, office.melbourne@syromalabar.org.au



EPARCHIAL CURIA



Pope Leo XIV



Mar Rapael Thattil
Major Arch Bishop
Syro Malabar Church



Mar Bosco Puthur
Bishop Emeritus
Melbourne Diocese



Mar John
Panamthottathil CMI
Bishop of Melbome



Fr Francis Kolencherry
Vicar General



Fr Sijeesh Pullankunnel
Chancellor

SYRO-MALABAR EPARCHY OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE MELBOURE

The St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne is a significant ecclesiastical landmark, serving as the spiritual home for Syro-Malabar Catholics across Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania. It is only the second eparchy (diocese) of the Syro-Malabar Church established outside of India.

1. Early Beginnings (1960s – 1990s):

The history of the community in Melbourne began with small-scale migration in the late 1960s. For decades, these pioneer families maintained their faith through informal networks.

The First Qurbana: The first Syro-Malabar Holy Qurbana (Mass) in Melbourne was celebrated in the mid-1980s by Fr. Jacob Kavungal, SVD, at St. Paschal's Chapel in Box Hill.

Community Growth: The 1990s saw an influx of families, leading to the formation of the Malayalee Catholic Society of Victoria in 2000. This group was instrumental in organizing monthly services and advocating for a permanent chaplain.

2. Formal Structure (2000 – 2013)

As the population grew—largely due to the migration of healthcare and skilled professionals—the need for a formal canonical structure became urgent.

2004: A dedicated Parish structure was inaugurated under the guidance of Fr. John Oravankara, the first appointed chaplain.

Expansion: By the early 2010s, the community had grown to twelve different Mass centers across Melbourne, supported by priests serving within the Latin Rite Archdiocese.

3. Establishment of the Eparchy (2014)

On January 11, 2014, Pope Francis officially announced the establishment of the Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle of Melbourne.

First Eparch: Mar Bosco Puthur was appointed as the first Bishop. He was formally installed at St. Patrick's Cathedral on March 25, 2014.

Jurisdiction: Initially covering all of Australia, the Eparchy's jurisdiction was extended in 2021 to include New Zealand and Oceania.

4. Modern Era and Recent Milestones:

The Eparchy has transitioned from a migrant mission to a settled, thriving Eastern Catholic presence in the Pacific.

Second Bishop: Following the retirement of Mar Bosco Puthur, Mar John Panamthottathil, CMI, was appointed as the second Eparch in early 2023 and installed on May 31, 2023.

St. Alphonsa Cathedral: A major historical milestone was reached on November 23, 2024, with the consecration of the St. Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Cathedral in Epping. The ceremony was led by the Major Archbishop, Mar Raphael Thattil.

Growth Statistics: As of recent reports, the Eparchy serves over 65,000 parishioners across Australia with dozens of parishes and missions



ST. ALPHONSA CATHEDRAL



SEMINARY FORMATION

John Paul II Minor Seminary of the Eparchy of St Thomas, Melbourne : Since the inauguration of the Eparchy of St Thomas, Melbourne in 2014, a major goal was to provide priests for pastoral care across communities in Australia.

After long and prayerful discernment and in consultation with various bodies, Bishop Bosco Puthur decided to start a minor seminary in Kerala to help achieve that goal. We found a suitable place for the seminary at Pazhayannur, in Thrissur, Kerala, where the Malabar Missionary Brothers graciously consented to give us a lease on their house for our purposes. Rev. Dr. Lawrence Thaikattil, from the Archdiocese of Thrissur, was appointed as the Rector of

the Seminary. The minor seminary started functioning on 18 June 2016. Its formal inauguration was on 20 August 2016.

Due to the inconvenience of the location at Pazhayannur, the seminary was shifted to Thirumudikunnu, Koraty, Kerala on 30 November 2016, to a building belonging to the Sisters of Sacred Science.

The St. John Paul II Minor Seminary is the house of formation for the students who are aspiring in their journey to priesthood, to be shepherds. At the Minor Seminary, the candidates are given initial spiritual Orientation and Formation to enable them to discern God's plan in their lives, and to prepare them to minister in the Australian Syro Malabar Church.



SANTHOME GROVE

A Historic Landmark in the Growth of the Eparchy The Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne has marked a monumental chapter in its history by acquiring the prestigious 200-acre estate formerly managed by the Pallottine community. Located just 65 kilometers from Melbourne city, this serene sanctuary—now rechristened Santhome Grove—was solemnly blessed by the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, Mar Raphael Thattil, on July 11, 2025.



The Mountain-top Shrine: A sacred hilltop crucifix offering a space for reflection and panoramic serenity. The Chapel: A beautiful worship space capable of accommodating over 300 people for the Holy Qurbana.

Residential Facilities: Over 70 rooms providing comfortable stay for nearly 200 guests.

Youth & Education Hub: A dedicated campsite tailored for over 70 students and youth activities.

The Dining Hall: A spacious hall with a seating capacity for 100+ guests.

Spiritual Retreats: Abundant quiet zones and specialized facilities perfectly suited for silent prayer, meditation, and deep spiritual retreats.

NEW ZEALAND MISSIONS & COMMUNITIES

MISSIONS

Auckland
Our Mother of Perpetual Help Syro Malabar Mission

Christ Church Syro-Malabar Mission | Palmerston North - St. Joseph Syro-Malabar Mission

Farnorth Syro-Malabar Mission | Rotorua Syro-Malabar Mission

Greymouth Syro-Malabar Mission | Tauranga - St. Joseph Syro-Malabar Mission

Hamilton- Sacred Hearts Syro-Malabar Mission | Wellington - St. Mary's Syro-Malabar Mission

Levin Syro-Malabar Mission | Whangeraï Syro-Malabar Mission

COMMUNITIES

WANGANUI Syro-Malabar Community

HASTINGS St. Alphonsa Syro Malabar Community

DUNEDIN Syro-Malabar Community

AUSTRALIA MISSIONS & PARISHES

MINOR MISSION

Katherine NT - Minor Mission
Tenant Creek NT - Minor Mission
Mackay QLD - Minor Mission
Bundaberg QLD - Minor Mission
Wodonga VIC - Minor Mission
Mildura VIC - Minor Mission
Bunbury WA - Minor Mission
Derby WA - Minor Mission
Geraldton WA - Minor Mission

PARISHES

CANBERRA ACT
St Alphonsa Parish
DARWIN NT
St Alphonsa Parish
BRISBANE NORTH QLD
St. Alphonsa Parish
BRISBANE SOUTH QLD
St. Thomas The Apostle Parish
TOWNSVILLE QLD
St Alphonsa Parish
ADELAIDE CENTRAL SA
St Alphonsa Parish
ADELAIDE NORTH SA
St Euphrosia Parish
ADELAIDE SOUTH SA
St Mary's Parish

MELBOURNE CATHEDRAL VIC
St Alphonsa Cathedral Parish
MELBOURNE KNANAYA VIC
St Mary's Knanaya Parish
MELBOURNE SOUTH - EAST VIC
St Thomas the Apostle Parish
MELBOURNE WEST VIC
St Mary's Parish
PERTH WA
St. Joseph's Parish

MISSIONS

NOWRA NSW
St Jude Mission
ORANGE NSW
St Kuriakose Elias Chavara Mission
PENRITH NSW
Marian Mission
HORNSBY NSW
St THomas Mission
VILLAWOOD NSW
Christ the king Mission
WAGGA WAGGA NSW
St Mary's Mission
WOLLONGONG NSW
St Thomas Mission
WYOMING NSW
Holy Family Mission
WYONG NSW
St Alphonsa Mission
ALICE SPRINGS NT
St Mary's Mission
BRISBANE KNANAYA QLD
Holy Fmaily Knanaya Mission

CAIRNS QLD
St Thomas Mission
GOLD COAST WLD
Mary Matha Mission
IPSWICH QLD
Ave Maria Mission
SORINGFIELD QLD
st Joseph's Mission
SUNSHINE COAST QLD
St Mary's Mission
TOOWOOMBA QLD
St Mary's Mission
HOBART TAS
St Thomas Mission
BALLARAT VIC
St Mary's Mission
BENDIGO VIC
St Mary's Mission
GEELONG VIC
St Sebastian Mission
SHEPPARTON VIC
St Alhomsa Mission

POPE LEO XIV MOVES TO THE APOSTOLIC PALACE



Vatican City: The Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, has moved into his official residence in the Vatican—the Apostolic Palace. Nearly ten months after his election as Pope, the Director of the

Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, informed journalists that on the afternoon of Saturday, February 14, the Holy Father relocated from his previous residence to the Apostolic Palace.

The Holy See also announced that the Pope's closest collaborators, including his secretaries, have moved along with him to the Apostolic Palace. Even after being elected as the Successor of Peter, Pope Leo XIV had continued to reside in the Dicastery complex where he

had lived while serving as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops.

Since Pope Francis, who assumed office after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in 2013, chose to reside at Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican, the Apostolic Palace had remained unused for nearly thirteen years. It is to this palace that the new Successor of Peter has now moved. The palace consists of several floors, including the office with the window from which the Holy Father leads

the Sunday Angelus prayer, a library, a small chapel, and various other rooms. After being elected Bishop of Rome on May 8, 2025, Pope Leo XIV had visited the palace on May 11 and reopened the papal apartment that had been used by Pope Francis and sealed on April 21 following his death. Pope Pius X was the first to reside in the apartment currently used by the Pope in the Apostolic Palace, living there from 1903 to 1914.

WE CANNOT REMAIN SILENT BEFORE THE SUFFERINGS OF HUMANITY: POPE LEO XIV

Vatican City: Pope Pope Leo XIV stated that we cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings and hardships faced by people amid wars and conflicts. Speaking while leading the Angelus prayer along with around ten thousand people in the Vatican on Sunday, March 22, the Holy Father emphasized that it

is the whole of humanity that bears the wounds inflicted by wars. He reminded that when people are wounded in wars, all of humanity shares in that suffering.

The Pope further said that the continuation of wars across the world, spreading death and suffering, is a disgrace to hu-

manity, and that the cries of those enduring such hardships reach God. He urged those involved in conflicts to put an end to hostilities. Highlighting the importance of sincere and peaceful dialogue in ending wars and conflicts, the Holy Father strongly reiterated his earlier appeals for peace.



REALISE THE BEAUTY OF VOCATIONS: POPE LEO XIV



Vatican City: In his message for the 63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, observed on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Holy Father Pope Leo XIV emphasized that those who look through the eyes of spirituality will recognize the profound beauty of journeying behind Christ the Shepherd. The Holy Father highlighted the unique nature and inherent value of a divine call, reminding the faithful that those who follow Jesus—the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep-

lead a life as beautiful as His own. He noted that every vocation is a magnificent gift, both for the individual who receives it and for the entire Church. The Pope further reminded that vocations flourish and mature only through active faith, continuous prayer, and fraternal support, eventually becoming a path of joy and salvation for the whole world. To realize a vocation in its full splendor, the Holy Father urged that discernment guided by the light of the Holy Spirit is essential.

ARCHBISHOP LEOPOLDO GIRELLI IS ASSIGNED NEW MISSION



New Delhi: Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, who served as the representative of the Holy See in India and Nepal, has been appointed as the new Apostolic Nuncio to Croatia by Pope Leo XIV. The official announcement was made by the Vatican on March 13. He had been serving the Church in India since March 13, 2021, and had visited


Kerala on several occasions.

He was born on March 13, 1953, in Predore, Bergamo, in the Lombardy region of northern Italy. He entered the diplomatic service of the Vatican in July 1987. The Archbishop has served in papal diplomatic missions in Cameroon and New Zealand and has also worked in the Vatican section of the Unit-


ed States Department of State, as well as serving as Counselor at the Apostolic Nunciature in the United States.

On April 13, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as Apostolic Nuncio to Indonesia and Titular Archbishop of Capri. He has also served as Nuncio to Singapore, Malaysia,

Brunei, and Israel; Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine; Non-Resident Pontifical Representative to Vietnam; and Apostolic Nuncio to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is expected that the announcement of the new Apostolic Nuncio to India will be made soon.



15th Death Anniversary
CARDINAL MAR VARKEY VITHAYATHIL
(Second Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church)



31st Death Anniversary
ARCHBISHOP MAR ABRAHAM KATTUMANA
(Pontifical delegate of the Syro-Malabar Church from 1992-1995)