



SYRO-MALABAR VISION

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CHRISTIAN UNITY A JOURNEY OF SYNODALITY AND WITNESS



In the first centuries of Christianity, Synods frequently took place in both East and West, showing the importance of ensuring the unity of God's people and the faithful proclamation of the Gospel.

Rev. Dr. Cherian Karukaparambil

Church is the seamless tunic of Jesus", says St. Augustine. It is often taken to symbolize the unity of the Church today. But this Seamless Robe of Christ is torn apart and made dreadful due to the wounds of division. The sad history of the St. Thomas Christian Church of India bears witness to the divisions that happened in the 16th and 17th centuries in the Church. Ever since the divisions in the Church, she has been committed to the efforts to heal the wounds of divisions and to realize the restoration of the unity of the Church of Christ. These ecumenical efforts of the St. Thomas Christians had a systematic beginning with the Roman Journey of Mar Joseph Kariattil and Fr. Thomas Paremmakkal, which continued through the efforts of Thachil Mathoo Tharakan and later through Nidhirickal Mani Kathanar at the end of the 19th Century. When these efforts had partial success in 1930 through the Reunion Movement, the Church of St. Thomas Christians underwent numerous challenges and tribulations. The Second Vatican Council, a new spring in the history of the Church, paved a new path in the history of Ecumenism. That Council "inaugurated a new ecumenical era of which the Synod is an expression and witness in its active desire to help the

whole Church advance along the path of full unity." Besides that, the time after the Council is marked with an array of magisterial teachings that herald a new dawn of Christian Unity.

Pope Benedict XVI, on the very next day of his election in 2005, called the cardinals together in the Sistine Chapel to outline his vision of the papacy and the priorities of his mission. He told the cardinals that fostering the unity of Christians would lie at the very pinnacle of his ministry. The Pope went on to say that the central role of the bishop of Rome is to be the guarantor of the unity of the followers of Christ. According to him, promoting Christian unity – is part of the "supreme and fundamental priority of the Church and of the Successor of Peter at the present time."

On 11 October 2024, addressing the second session of the 16. Bishops Synod at Vatican, Pope Francis called the efforts for Christian Unity or the Ecumenical Movement as a Synodal Journey. Like synodality, the unity of Christians is essential to their witness: *unity is for the sake of mission*. And addressing the fraternal delegates and leaders of other Christian Churches gathered for the occasion, Pope Francis echoed the words of Saint John XXIII, who, at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, expressed his longing "to

work and suffer for the dawn of the day when Christ's prayer at the Last Supper will be fulfilled for all".

Pope Francis explained that Christian unity and synodality are deeply intertwined and described synodality as the path God expects of the Church in the third millennium. Underlining the ecumenical dimension of the synodal approach, he said "it is a path to be travelled by all Christians": "The journey of synodality is and must be ecumenical". This journey, the Pope affirmed, is not about creating something new but about welcoming the gift of unity already given to us by the Holy Spirit.

In 2025 we have entered into a new Era of Synodal journey. In his Teaching *Spes non confundit* the bull of indication of the ordinary jubilee of the year 2025, Pope Francis reminds us of the celebration of the 1700 year of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325). The Council of Nicaea sought to preserve the Church's unity, which was seriously threatened by the denial of the full divinity of Jesus Christ and, hence, his consubstantiality with the Father. In the first centuries of Christianity, synods frequently took place in both East and West, showing the importance of ensuring the unity of God's People and the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. All the baptized, with their respective charisms and

"Put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:10).

The old has passed away, and it is time for us to embrace the new self, fashioned after the divine image.

Wishing all dear readers of Syro-Malabar Vision a blessed and grace-filled New Year, along with heartfelt prayers for joy, peace, and renewal in the Lord.



ministries, are responsible for ensuring that manifold signs of hope bear witness to God's presence in the world.

This commemoration provides a unique opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the common faith of Christians, as expressed in the Creed formulated during this Council, a faith that remains alive and fruitful in our days. In the post-apostolic time, the Church, having just emerged from hiding and persecution, was beginning to experience how difficult it was to share the same faith in the different cultural and political contexts of the time.

Although the Council of Nicaea decreed how the date of Easter should be calculated, subsequent divergences of interpretation led to the feast frequently being marked on different dates in East and West. To this day, different approaches to this question prevent celebrating the fundamental event of our faith on the same day. Providentially, a common celebration will take place in the year 2025.

In the context of these events, the Week of the Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated from 2025 January 18-25, invites us to search out the deposit of our faith and understand its meaning for the restoration of Unity in the Church. Living the apostolic faith together today does not imply re-opening the theological controversies of that time, which have continued down the centuries, but rather a prayerful re-reading of the scriptural foundations and ecclesial experiences that led to that Council and its decisions. Pope Francis reminds us "We do well to remind ourselves that many people, unaware of the controversies of the past, fail to understand how divisions in this regard can continue to exist" (*Spes non confundit*). ■

EDITORIAL



THAT WE MAY ALL BE ONE

As we step into a new year, the call for unity among Churches becomes more urgent than ever. Jesus' prayer, "That they may all be one" (Jn. 17:21), was not merely a plea for his disciples but a timeless mission for all who follow him. In a world rife with division and strife, Christ invites us to stand together - not only in unity but also to confront the challenges that threaten the faith and values we hold dear.

Kerala, with its rich Christian heritage, is home to a diversity of traditions and denominations. This diversity is a blessing but also brings differences that can sometimes divide believers. Yet, the challenges facing the Church in Kerala and across India today are too immense for any one Church to address alone. Social polarization, economic inequalities, and increasing experiences of intolerance and discrimination demand a united Christian response.

Divisions among Churches weaken our witness. When we neglect unity and fraternity, we fail to embody the love, hope, and peace at the heart of the Gospel. However, when we set aside our differences and come together as one body in Christ, we embrace the transformative power of Jesus to confront the injustices and trials of our time.

Unity among Christians is not optional - it is essential. The early Church, where believers stood together in faith and generosity, "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32), provides a powerful example. Today, we are called to embody that same spirit, reminding the world of the strength and beauty of unity in Jesus.

Let us therefore renew and strengthen initiatives for church unity. Churches that proclaim Jesus as Savior and live his Gospel must walk together in love and solidarity, facing the challenges of our times in the spirit of the Gospel. Through this united witness, we will advance the mission of faith with renewed strength and hope, testifying to the power of Christ to transform the world. ■

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A DAY TO REMEMBER

1 January : Holy Name of Jesus

3 January : The Divine Motherhood of Mary
Saint Kuriakose Elias

6 January : The Feast of Epiphany,
Episcopal Ordination of Mar Mathew Moolakatt (1999), The Mission Week of the Syro-Malabar Church begins

8 January : Death of Bishop Mar Alexander Choolaparambil (1951)

10 January : Saint John the Baptist, Death of Archbishop Mar Augustine Kandathil (1956)

11 January : Assumption of Office of the Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil (2024)

12 January : The Mission Week of the Syro-Malabar Church ends

14 January : Saint Devasahayam

17 January : Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

18 January : Unity Octave begins

20 January : Saint Sebastian

24 January : Evangelists, St. Francis De Sales

25 January : Unity Octave ends, The Conversion of Saint Paul

26 January : Death of Bishop Mar Mathai Makkil (1914)

28 January : St. Thomas Aquinas

29 January : The Syro-Malabar Church is elevated to Major Archiepiscopal Church and Mar Antony Padiyara is appointed the First Major Archbishop (1993)

29 January : World Day of Peace

30 January : St. John Bosco

FESTAL GREETINGS

JANUARY 20

JANUARY 31



Mar Sebastian
Vadakel MST



Mar Sebastian
Adayanthrath



Mar Sebastian
Vaniyapurackal



Mar Sebastian
Pozholiparambil



Mar Bosco
Puthur

ST BASIL THE GREAT (379)



Rev. Dr. Thomas Kuzhupil

St. Basil the Great, one of the three Ecumenical Fathers of the Greek patristic tradition, is celebrated as an apostle of love in the history of the Church. Born in Cappadocia, Asia Minor, he completed his higher education in Athens alongside his close friend Gregory of Nazianzus. After his baptism, he traveled through Syria and Egypt, living among Christian monks. In 370, he was appointed as the metropolitan of Cappadocia.

He is remembered as an exemplary pastor, an advocate for social justice, a theologian of the Trinity, a proponent of cenobitic monasticism, a promoter of charitable works, and a reformer of the liturgy. He passed away at the age of 49.

St. Basil is revered as a protector of the poor and the marginalized. He emphasized the intrinsic connection between divine worship and acts of mercy, viewing the liturgy as the summit of the Church's mission. His



liturgical reforms, undertaken during the rise of Arianism, had a lasting impact on the Greek liturgical tradition.

He played a pivotal role in developing Trinitarian theology, systematically refuting the heresies of Sabellianism, radical Arianism, and Macedonianism. St. Basil explained the Father as the *arche* (source) of the Trinity, affirming the unity of the three Persons while upholding the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He clarified that Fatherhood, Sonship, and Sanctification distinguish the three Persons, each deserving equal praise and honor. His insights on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit confirmed its divinity and influence within the Church.

Basil also made significant contributions to monasticism by formulating two sets of rules-55 longer and 313 shorter ones-which became the foundation for monastic practices in both Eastern and Western traditions. He emphasized that the love of God is central to monastic life, which also includes service to the Church and acts of charity. His work established a monastic way of life firmly rooted in biblical principles.

In the history of the Church, St. Basil remains the only Father honored with the title "the Great." His enduring legacy is celebrated in the Greek liturgical tradition through an anaphora that bears his name. ■

LET US BE CLOSE AND HOLD HANDS TO REDUCE DISTANCES

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



I remember the time when I served as a bishop in Shamshabad. Back then, we didn't have enough churches. During that time, other

Churches were remarkably generous, willingly offering their spaces for our use. These churches opened their doors to us after their services were over. I became familiar with shared spaces like cemeteries and places used in common.



From the Heart of the Father and Head

Church unity is a ministry rooted in the fellowship and collective responsibility of believers. While God is one, He is also triune. The Father creates, the Son saves, and the Holy Spirit continues the mission of salvation through the Church. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three Gods but one God. The words of John 17:20-23 are often called the Lord's Prayer for unity. In the famous 21st verse, Jesus prays, "That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I am in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may know that you sent me."

Throughout the history of the Church, ideological and liturgical differences have arisen, often threatening its unity. Early on, the Eastern Churches separated from

Moving forward, we should seek new opportunities for cooperation. Whether in social, educational, or missionary work, let us strive to work together with one mind and spirit. By doing so, we can fulfill the Lord's prayer and advance the cause of unity in ways that glorify God.



the Western Church, as seen in the divisions of the Church of Antioch and the Chaldean Church. In more recent times, the Western Reformation led to another significant division within the Church. Yet, even amid such separations, there has always been a thirst for unity.

The Church unity Octave serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of working toward the unity of the Church. Achieving this unity requires efforts on four levels, the first and foremost being prayer. We must pray for all churches to become the mystical body of Christ, unified in communion and shared responsibility. Whether through liturgy, canonical

prayer, or family prayer, we express our deep longing for unity by turning to God in prayer. Prayer remains the primary path to unity.

Secondly, fostering unity requires dialogue. The Second Vatican Council itself issued a document on church unity, and popes throughout history have written apostolic letters underscoring the importance of ecumenical efforts. Unity cannot be achieved without sitting together, learning from one another, addressing shortcomings, and forming mutual understandings. Ecumenical dialogues are as vital as prayer, with entire departments

in the Holy See dedicated to this mission.

We must extend these discussions to the local level, opening avenues for collaboration. Through dialogue, let us explore areas for improvement, build stronger relationships, and work together more effectively. By focusing on shared goals rather than differences, we can strengthen our bonds.

Moving forward, we should seek new opportunities for cooperation. Whether in social, educational, or missionary work, let us strive to work together with one mind and spirit. By doing so, we can fulfill the Lord's prayer and advance the cause of unity in ways that glorify God. ■

MESSAGE OF THE CURIA BISHOP

Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurakal



Saint Mother Teresa once shared a poignant incident. A woman was found abandoned on the streets of Calcutta, frail and near death due to severe fever and hunger. Despite her weakened state, she cried out loudly, "My son did this." Moved with compassion, Mother Teresa pleaded with her, saying, "You must forgive your son. He may have acted out of a moment of weakness, but as a mother, you must show him forgiveness."

Mother Teresa later testified that it took several days of patient effort for this woman to finally say that she forgave her son. In her final moments, she repeated those words of forgiveness. This powerful example reminds us of forgiving love, which is embodied most profoundly on the cross of Jesus. Concerning those who falsely accused him, mocked him, and ultimately crucified him, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

FORGIVING LOVE AND THE ESSENCE OF ECUMENISM

For followers of Jesus, who died on the cross as the ultimate example of forgiveness, this lesson must be applied in their lives.



For followers of Jesus, who died on the cross as the ultimate example of forgiveness, this lesson must be applied in their lives. To be true disciples of Christ, one cannot preach or live the gospel effectively while divided, quarreling, or harboring grudges and hatred. Disagreements among early Christian communities serve as a reminder of this.

The Apostle Paul rebuked such divisions, writing, "Your meetings are doing harm instead of good" (1 Cor. 11:17). From the Church's earliest days to the present, divisions have arisen for various reasons and under different circumstances. Yet, alongside these divisions, efforts for unity have been a constant. While some attempts have borne fruit,

others have not.

Nevertheless, the persistence of ecumenical dialogues today stands as a testament to the enduring desire for unity. The Second Vatican Council, which emphasized church unity, declared, "Division is contrary to the will of Christ, a stumbling block to the world, and a hindrance to the great mission of preaching the gospel to all creation" (*Unitatis Redintegratio* No. 1).

Through discussions, ecumenical conferences, and study classes, many doors have been opened for divided groups to come together. However, true unity requires more than external dialogue. It calls for the grace to forgive, endure, and practice patience. Only by letting go of past hurts and embracing forgiving love can we truly follow Jesus' example.

Let us pray fervently for this great grace to unite in love, embody forgiveness, and advance the mission of Christ's Gospel. ■

CHRISTIAN UNITY - ECUMENISM

✦ We can be proud of the fact that even before the starting of official steps for Church unity at the global level in the 19th and 20th centuries, Church unity efforts have been very creative in Malankara (Kerala). We can continue those efforts in our generation also.

Fr. Cyril Thomas Thayyil

Why Different Churches?

Just as God is Trinity (Three-in-One), and as the twelve tribes of Israel were the continuation of Jacob's twelve sons in the Old Testament, so too Jesus Christ selected, trained, and anointed twelve apostles with the Holy Spirit, sending them to the ends of the earth, it is part of God's divine plan that there are multiple churches within the one, undivided Church of Christ. Our father, St. Thomas the Apostle, preached the Gospel in Persia (Partia) and Hendo (undivided India), establishing various Christian communities. St. Peter founded Christian communities in Rome and Antioch, while St. Paul established Christian communities in many places and addressed them through his letters.

Division and Reconciliation

At times, ignorance of history and theology has caused misunderstandings, unrest, and even divisions among Churches. Certain actions by individuals or groups have worsened these divisions over the centuries. However, the Second Vatican Council, particularly through Ecumenical and Liturgical Movements, has ushered in a new era of reconciliation.

Ecumenism: Mission and Challenge

The Church is inherently missionary as well as ecumenical. A true Christian must embrace both missionary and ecumenical roles. Although ecumenical gatherings involving bishops and theologians are widely publicized, there remains a challenge to implement Ecumenism at the grassroots level. Parishes, dioceses, and various organizations must actively organize ecumenical activities, such as joint Christmas celebrations, feasts, and meetings, to build unity through encounters and relationships. We have to reduce the distance between the churches through frequent meetings and prayer sessions.

Ecumenism in Kerala

Kerala provides favourable conditions for Christian unity due to its shared apostolic foundation and Syriac tradition, preserved for 19 centuries. The Syro-Malabar Church sees immediate scope for unity with churches of the same Syriac tradition, followed by other Christian communities.

In the first century itself, even before Christianity was established in the whole of Europe, it was established here in India and Persia. The disciple of Jesus Christ - son of God - evangelized Hendo (undivided India) and Persia (Partia). After the arrival and influence of Portuguese/European missionaries, St. Thomas Chris-



tians, who grew as a vibrant community in the spirit of the Law of St. Thomas, were started to be overcontrolled by the missionaries for almost 100 years (from the 1550s till 1650s). In conflict with the Portuguese missionaries, firstly, St. Thomas Christian community was divided into two, namely Pazhaya Koor (old party) and Puthen Koor (new party) and later on, both parties were divided into many. The old party was under the Portuguese Padroado and Roman Propaganda from the 16th century till the 19th century. The Church witnessed a number of changes in all respects of the oriental nature, Syriac Liturgy, Indian customs, etc.

The new party was antiochianized by the bishops from Antioch, and again, some of them were anglicanized by the English missionaries. Now two churches follow the ancient Chaldean Syriac (East Syriac) Liturgy and five churches in the new party follow the Antiochean rite (West Syriac).

The major divisions among the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala are as follows:

1. Syro-Malabar Catholic Church (Chaldean Syriac tradition)

2. Assyrian (Chaldean) Church of the East in India
3. Malabar Independent Syrian Church (Thozhiyoor)
4. Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church
5. Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
6. Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church
7. Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Almost all Churches have Ecumenical activities and active Ecumenical departments.

We can be proud of the fact that even before the starting of official steps for church unity at the global level in the 19th and 20th centuries, church unity efforts have been very creative in Malankara (Kerala). We can continue those efforts in our generation also. In the northern half of the 18th century, Marthoma VI from the Puthenloor sect tried to reunite with the Catholic Church and for its consent, Cariatil Mar Joseph Metropolitan and Governor Paremakal Mar Thoma Katanar from the Pazhayakoor sect made a difficult sea journey to Rome and Portugal and got permission. Again, in the northern half of the 19th century, Mar Divannasios V of the Puthenloor sect and Nidhirikal

Mani Katanar of the Pazhayakoor sect formed the Jathyaikya Sangham for the unity and strengthening of the churches and the community. However, these efforts were defeated by the European missionaries because of the lack of spirit of Ecumenism and the intolerance towards other traditions.

Church Unity Octave in January

The Church Unity Octave, observed from January 18–26 every year, fosters ecumenical prayer worldwide. Resources for this week are jointly prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The Catholic Church is the communion of 24 individual Catholic Churches of different Liturgical rites. Despite these divisions, the Holy Father Pope Francis invites all Christians to journey toward full communion.

KCBC (Kerala Catholic Bishop Council) and Syro-Malabar Church have active commissions for Ecumenism. This year, we are planning to celebrate the Church Unity Octave, which fruitfully relates to all Episcopal Churches in Kerala. ■

JESUS WHO DIED FOR US UNDER PONTIUS PILATE



Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil

The Paschal Mystery of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection is central to the Gospels. It is what the Apostles proclaimed and what the Church, following their example, must continue to proclaim to the world. God's plan of salvation is eternally fulfilled through the saving death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Death of Jesus as a Historical Reality

The Church affirms the historical reality of Jesus' death by explicitly mentioning Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, in the Creed. The Gospels depict the Jews as playing a significant role in Jesus' death, driven by envy and fear. Pilate, portrayed as innocent and somewhat helpless in the accounts, succumbed to the pressure of the crowd.

✠ **Jesus' passion, crucifixion, and resurrection remain the core of the apostles' message and the Church's proclamation. By prioritizing these paschal mysteries in her liturgy, the Church acknowledges the messianic mystery as the foundation of salvation and glory.**

Pontius Pilate, the fifth Roman governor of Judea (A.D. 26–36), resided in Caesarea and Jerusalem. His most detailed portrayal in the Gospels revolves around Jesus' trial and crucifixion (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18:28–19:42). Pilate appeared reluctant to condemn Jesus but ultimately yielded to the crowd's demands (Luke 23:20–23). He was later deposed by the Roman legate Vitellius in A.D. 36.

Through the Creed, we proclaim, "He suffered, died, was crucified, and was buried," affirming God's plan of salvation. Jesus' Passion, crucifixion, and resurrection remain the core of the Apostles' message and the Church's proclamation. By prioritizing these Paschal mysteries in her liturgy, the Church acknowledges the messianic mystery as the foundation of salvation and glory.

The Father's Will

Jesus' self-giving sacrifice on the cross, though deemed foolishness by the world, fulfilled the Father's plan of salvation. His suffering, death, and resurrection revealed

God's love and mercy, transforming suffering into the path to salvation (Luke 24:26–27). The cross, a symbol of suffering, becomes the key to experiencing salvation. Jesus, through his complete surrender to the Father's will, serves as our model for embracing the path of sacrifice.

The Gospels also reveal the complexities of Jesus' trial. While Judas, the Sanhedrin, and Pilate bore personal responsibility, the guilt cannot be ascribed to all Jews in Jerusalem, nor to Jews across history. Propaganda, mob influence, and ignorance played a role, as Jesus himself recognized, forgiving them from the cross. Peter continued this message of repentance and forgiveness after Pentecost.

As the Church declared in the Second Vatican Council, the statement "His blood be on us and on our children" cannot justify extending blame to Jews of other times and places. Instead, Christ's conformity to humanity culminated in his descent into Hades, a profound expression of his solidarity with all humanity. This descent introduces the proclamation of his resur-

rection, in which Christ, the source of life, conquers death and the devil (Hebrews 2:15). The risen Christ holds the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18).

The Unique Sacrifice of Christ

Christ, the divine person who embraces all humanity, became the head of the entire human race and offered the sacrifice of redemption for all. The Council of Trent emphasizes the singular nature of his sacrifice, declaring that his Passion on the Cross obtained our justification. The Church venerates the Cross, singing, "Reign, O Cross, our only hope."

Our Participation in Jesus' Sacrifice

The Cross represents Christ's unique and perfect sacrifice, as the "one mediator between God and men." Yet, because of his unity with humanity in his divine person, all are given the opportunity to partake in the Paschal Mystery in a way known only to God. Jesus calls his disciples to follow him by taking up their own crosses, participating in his redemptive work. ■

FCC WITH THE SIGN AND SEAL OF GOD

✠ **FRANCISCAN CLARIST CONGREGATION (FCC): A 136 YEAR GRACE-FILLED JOURNEY**

Mother Litty FCC

In the twelfth century, Saint Francis of Assisi embraced the evangelical life and began a new way of life that bore witness to the poor and humble Christ. St. Clare assimilated the spirit of St. Francis without diminishing it at all. This spirit spread to Kerala in the late nineteenth century.

A unit of the Franciscan Third Order was established and started functioning under the leadership of Puthenparampil Thommachan in Edatua, also known as "Kerala Assisi." A few pious women, who were members of the said Third Order, inspired by an ardent love of God, led a community life in a place called Kandiurumbu in Palai. The Franciscan Clarist Congregation was founded in Changanassery on 14 December 1888, when Bishop Charles Lavigne gave ecclesiastical approval to the fervent desire of these eight pious women to lead a true and complete Franciscan religious life.

The characteristics of this religious community, which closely imitated the poor and humble Jesus, were the spirit of prayer, a life of poverty, a life of hard work, the care of orphans, and service to the poor.

This religious congregation, which was nurtured under the paternal care of Bishop Lavigne and his successors, later grew and developed into independent branches as eparchial religious communi-



ties in various eparchies of Kerala. Following the call of the Second Vatican Council, this religious congregation, which moved along the path of renewal and adaptation, gradually reached the path of unification. In 1970, the Franciscan Clarist Congregation was unified and was elevated to Pontifical right on 1 March 1973.

The mission work, which began in Agra in 1960, has spread not only to various states of India but also to foreign countries. The sisters are engaged in various ministries in foreign countries like Italy, Germany, Australia, Switzerland, Spain, the USA, South Africa, Kenya,

Uganda, Papua New Guinea, Malawi, etc. The Franciscan Clarist Congregation is the second indigenous religious congregation for women in India. It currently has 26 provinces, four regions, and about 7,000 members. The heavenly buds of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation are Saint Alphonsa, the Blessed Martyr Rani Maria, and the Servant of God Collethamma.

The charism of this religious congregation, which moves forward by holding fast to the motto "To Holiness through Lowliness", lies in living the Gospel with humility of heart and attaining perfect love by taking heart the self-emptying of

the Poor, Humble and Crucified Jesus. Today, the FCC serves on all continents by leading a life in accordance with its charism and by making His face shine through the apostolate of prayer, evangelization, care of the orphans, service to the poor, education, care of the sick, social emancipation, faith formation, mass media and different special ministries for the marginalized. Many other ministries are undertaken by this congregation according to the needs of the time and place. May FCC Congregation flourish and spread across the world living out her charism by the grace of God. ■

PASTORAL VISIT OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP IN THE SOUTHERN VICARIATE OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

A BRIEFING ON THE VISIT HELD FROM 25 NOVEMBER TO 1 DECEMBER 2024.



The Arabian Peninsula has two Apostolic Vicariates for all the Catholic faithful of different sui iuris Churches. The Vicariate of Southern Arabia includes Oman, Yemen, and the 7 countries of UAE, such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm Al Qaiwain, Fujairah Ajman, and Ras Al Khaimah where the Governments have allowed the Christian faithful a certain freedom to practice their faith. On the other hand, countries like Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are part of the Vicariate of Northern Arabia, where restrictions exist for practising the faith in some places.

The six Eastern Catholic Patriarchal Churches are Coptic, Maronite, Melkite, Syrian, Chaldean, and Armenian, and on 6 August 2020, with a Rescript of Pope Francis, extended jurisdiction over the Arabian Peninsula for all these Churches. On 13 May 2024, during the first visit of the Major Archbishop to Pope Francis, the Pope declared orally jurisdictional rights for the Syro-Malabar Church over its faithful in the Gulf region even though the modus operandi is yet to be declared by the Holy See.

The Syro-Malabar Church has a powerful presence in the Southern Vicariate. The Major Archbishop visited three communities of Oman on the 25th and 26th of November in Muscat and Salalah, and from the 27 November to the 1 December, the three countries in the UAE such as Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Dubai. The program included celebrations of Holy Qurbana, ecumenical meetings, and meetings with priests serving the communities, pastoral groups, church officials and councils, catechism teachers,

and associations like the Syro-Malabar Cultural Association and the Global Catholic Congress. Every celebration was very well attended by the priests and faithful.

In Abu Dhabi, meaningful interaction and exchange of thoughts with the Apostolic Nuncio to the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Most Rev. Christophe Zakhia El-Kassis, added beauty to the visit. Later in Dubai, the Nuncio concelebrated the Holy Qurbana and greeted the community imparting the Apostolic blessings of the Holy Father.

In all the places, at the beginning of the concelebrated Holy Qurbana, the Apostolic Vicar, Bishop Paolo Martinelli, welcomed the Major Archbishop wholeheartedly with fraternal affection and vivacity, expressing unity and communion of the Churches. In his words of welcome, he thanked the Syro-Malabar Communities and lay persons for their active participation in the ecclesial life and the liturgical celebrations. He emphatically said that the Syro-Malabar community is not considered a language group but an *ecclesia sui iuris*. Being an apostolic Church originated by the preaching of the Apostle Thomas, preserving and practising its rites and traditions is the responsibility of the Catholic Church. At the same time, because of the presence of several sui iuris Church and language groups, it might not be possible to satisfy all the needs and requests. However, efforts are being made to respect and accommodate all according to the availability of space, time, and personnel.

The fraternal accompaniment of Bishop Paolo Martinelli with his curia members, priests, and other collaborators throughout the visit is immensely valued by the Syro-Malabar Church. Bishop Paolo, being a member of the Archdiocese of Milan, Italy, who follows the Ambrosian rite, has his deep knowledge and admiration for the patrimony of the Oriental rites and promised his wholehearted support for the future endeavours of the Syro-Malabar Church in the Gulf Region.

The Major Archbishop, addressing the faithful, emphasized the need to preserve the ecclesial identity of the Church and exhorted everyone to be witnesses of Christ throughout their lives wherever they live. He thanked the local Church for sharing the space and personnel for different sui iuris churches and requested the same in the future. He exhorted the faithful to keep the vision and mission of structuring a new ecclesiastical system in the Gulf Region, which is their place of migration or expatriation.

About 500,000 faithful, spread all over the Gulf Region, are generally pastured by Capuchin Fathers belonging

to different provinces along with a few others. In the global scenario of the Syro-Malabar Church, the Gulf region carries the most significant number of Catechism students, with thousands of students and teachers involved in attending and teaching Catechism every week despite the factors of lack of space, permissions, and other complexities. In the whole Gulf Region, the highest number of the Syro-Malabar faithful gathered was in Dubai, and all the seven emirates of UAE are very close to each other with a significant number of faithful in each place.

The whole Gulf region has a multicultural, linguistic, and religious environment where the Syro-Malabar faithful have, with their genuine efforts, tried to keep up their faith and traditions keeping their rite intact. The historic visit of the Major Archbishop in both vicariates has undoubtedly strengthened the ties among the Churches and communities in the Arabian Peninsula and will be instrumental for a smooth transition of the jurisdictional rights to the Syro-Malabar Church in the Gulf Region. ■



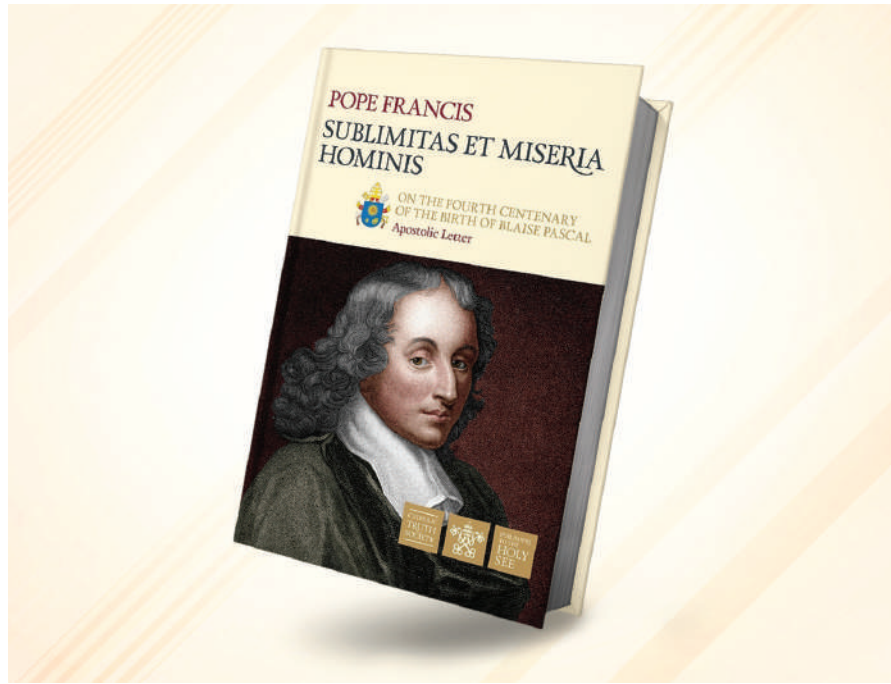
THE GRANDEUR AND MISERY OF MAN (2023)



JOURNEY OF FAITH & LEARNING
 Dr. Sinto Porathur

In his Apostolic Letter *Sublimitas et Miseria Hominis* (The Grandeur and Misery of Man), in 2023 Pope Francis pays tribute to Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) on the 400th anniversary of his birth. This document, comprising 29 paragraphs, provides an opportunity to reflect on Pascal's philosophical and theological contributions, particularly his integration of faith and reason.

Pope Francis describes Blaise Pascal as a man with an outstanding scientific mind and "a tireless seeker of truth". Pascal's contributions to science and mathematics are notable, including the development of one of the earliest forms of the calculator and his role as the initiator of modern probability theory. As a renowned mathematician, philosopher, and Christian apologist, Pascal's work continues to inspire and influence thinkers to this time. Pascal's magnum opus, *Pensées* (Thoughts), showcases his



Humans, as the crown of creation, are inherently flawed and that our reasoning abilities are insufficient to overcome our inherent sadness and melancholy.

intellectual brilliance and provides insight into his philosophical and theological frameworks.

A paradoxical combination of grandeur and misery marks Pascal's understanding of the human condition. He argues that humans, as the crown of creation, are inherently flawed and that our reasoning abilities are insufficient to overcome our inherent sadness and mel-

ancholy. Pascal's "night of fire" experience (in 1654), a mystical encounter with Jesus Christ, marked a turning point in his life. This experience, documented in his writings and inserted in the lining of his coat, reveals the profound impact of divine revelation on his understanding of human existence. This God-Experience brought him eternal happiness, vanquishing his melancholy and sadness. He became a man of other-centeredness, desiring to spend his final days with the poor and the afflicted.

According to Pope Francis, Pascal's life and works teach us that a seeker of ultimate truth should be open to transcend the limitations of natural reason. He warns against the influence of neo-Pelagianism, which neglects the role of divine grace. The restless seeking of truth leads us to Christ- the eternal truth and this personal encounter transforms and inspires us to serve our fellow beings as in the life of Blaise Pascal. Pope Francis, in the final paragraph of the document, writes, "May the brilliant work of Blaise Pascal and the example of his life, so profoundly immersed in Jesus Christ, help us to persevere to the end on the path of truth, conversion and charity" (para 29). ■

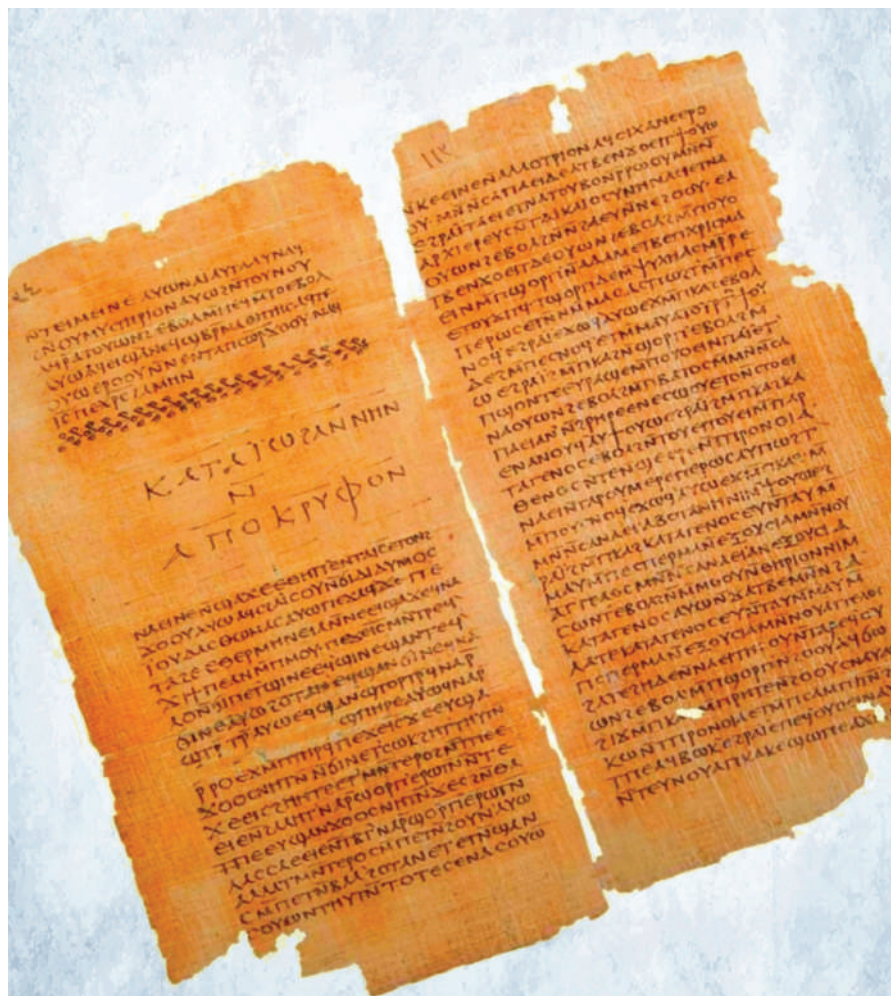
THE ACTS OF THOMAS: A RELIABLE SOURCE FOR EXPLORING THE INDIAN APOSTOLATE OF SAINT THOMAS



Fr James Puliurumpil

The Acts of Thomas is one of the essential sources for studying the history of the mission of St Thomas in India. This book discusses the apostle's voyage to India, his ministry, miracles, martyrdom and burial in India. According to this work, the India where Thomas first arrived was India ruled by King Gundaporus, which can be called Indo-Partia, which corresponds to North West India before India's partition.

Being an apocryphal work, it should be studied diligently and critically, taking into account its peculiar literary genre. It is neither pure history nor sheer legend. It is neither a biography nor a missionary travelogue. While some historians discard it as being full of imagination and romantic descriptions, others make use of it by trying to discover the historical allusions it provides. If so, the subject dealt with in this work is as follows: Thomas first preached the gospel in Partia, the kingdom of Gundaporus and then in South



India, in the kingdom of Masdai, where Thomas became a martyr. The Acts of Thomas uses language with a double

meaning, literal and theological, as do certain gospel passages. It is not certainly history as we understand it today. There-

fore, instead of dismissing it as a legend or fiction, we have to study it critically. Such a critical approach can contribute a lot to the study of the origins of Indian Christianity. According to recent studies, this book is written between 220 and 230, but there is no unanimous opinion with regard to its author.

There are different opinions regarding the original language of this book. The majority holds the view that it was written in Syriac, but there are also writers who say that its original language was Greek. Modern studies say that it was originally composed in Syriac and was translated into Greek several times. The early Syriac version was lost, and the present Syriac version is a translation of the Greek. The contents of the book show that the Greek version goes back to an earlier Syriac version. Though some deviations exist in the Syriac and Greek versions, they do not differ much. The original Syriac and Greek versions of the Acts of Thomas underwent several modifications in the course of centuries. This work manifests various features of early Syrian Christianity. As this book deals primarily with the activities of St Thomas in India, it is a reliable source to study the apostolic mission of St. Thomas in India. ■

WANT TO BE HAPPY? Don't just laugh with others; laugh at yourself too! Stand before a mirror, smile, and say, "You're doing great!" This self-acceptance can be a wellspring of joy

Even Jesus calls us to be happy always. Yet, many joys we experience fade as quickly as they come. Why? Often, the seeds of happiness fall by the wayside or onto rocky ground. For lasting happiness, those seeds need to land in good soil, where they can be nourished, grow, and bear fruit. But how do we cultivate such deep and enduring joy?

Pope Francis, in his book *A Good Life: 15 Essential Habits for Living with Hope and Joy* (originally published in Italian in 2022 and later translated into English), offers profound insights on this journey to happiness:

Look Within and Reflect

Our life is the most precious book we've ever received, yet we rarely open it. As Saint Augustine said, the truth resides within. By evaluating our lives and actions, we gain fresh perspectives. Instead of comparing ourselves to others or dwelling on jealousy, introspection reveals reasons to be proud and joyful.

Recognize Your Uniqueness

In God's eyes, each of us is precious and irreplaceable. While others may share similarities with us, no one is our equal in essence. Embracing our individuality leads to self-acceptance, which is the foundation of authentic happiness.

Reflect Your Inner Beauty

True beauty isn't about fashion or outward appearances; it's the divine



reflection of God within us. While external beauty fades, inner beauty-rooted in virtues like courage, love, purity, and integrity-endures and grows stronger with time.

Laugh at Yourself

Don't just laugh with others; laugh at yourself too! Stand before a mirror, smile, and say, "You're doing great!" This self-acceptance can be a wellspring of joy.

Embrace Restlessness with Purpose

Healthy restlessness drives us toward growth. Desires, goals, and ambitions inspire us to move forward and embrace change. Stagnation, on the other hand,

leads to boredom. Never settle or believe you've reached your limits. As Pope Francis warns, don't be like Peter Pan-capable of flying, but unable to grow.

Dream Big

God places no limits on our dreams or horizons. He calls us to strive for great things with joy and courage. Remember, we are also tasked with fulfilling God's dreams for us.

Be Courageous

Happiness requires courage. It takes boldness to make the right decisions, take responsibility for our lives, and swim against the tide when necessary. Be active participants in life-don't be a passive

spectator watching from the sidelines or stuck in neutral.

Trust in God's Best

Believe that God's plan for us is good. Trust His will, knowing He desires our happiness and selflessness. This faith instills peace and joy in our hearts.

Seek Light Amidst Darkness

In life's darkest moments, seek out the light. Cast off the veils of fear and lift your eyes upwards to find hope and clarity.

By embracing these habits, we can discover lasting happiness and share it with others, radiating the joy of Christ in all that we do. ■

COMFORT




FAMILY CORNER

The word "comfort" is something we often use in daily life. For example, when we try on new clothes, we think about whether they are comfortable. It's not just about physical ease; it's also about feeling confident, looking good, and being at ease with ourselves.

Comfort is just as important in relationships, especially in marriage. It means offering support and peace to each other. A marriage should be a partnership where both people feel cared for, instead of one enjoying all the benefits while the other struggles.

One major reason for the rise in divorces and broken marriages is the lack of comfort between partners. They stop being a source of support for each other through their words, actions, and

 **Comfort is just as important in relationships, especially in marriage. It means offering support and peace to each other. A marriage should be a partnership where both people feel cared for, instead of one enjoying all the benefits while the other struggles.**



behaviour. Without this mutual care, the relationship becomes weak and begins to fall apart.

When facing difficult times, couples should offer each other emotional support and encouragement. Only when they can talk openly and share their feelings do

they truly become a source of comfort for one another. If a partner fails to provide this comfort, the other may feel disconnected and drift further away, even due to small or big events in daily life. Over time, this creates a growing gap between them, making the relationship weaker.

In times of need, when a partner fails to provide support or stand by the other, it can lead to deep disappointment and hurt. Many relationships fall apart because of this critical mistake. Sadly, this is often overlooked as a serious issue in relationships. People tend to see problems like alcoholism, physical abuse, or unfaithfulness as major faults in family life. However, the inability to provide comfort, emotional support, or a sense of contentment is just as significant and is a common reason for relationship breakdowns today.

Married couples begin their journey with a promise to stay together until the end of their lives. However, when they forget the importance of giving each other comfort, challenges and hardships can creep into their relationship. To avoid this, couples need to become a source of comfort for one another. As Christ said, "Come to me, all who carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest," married couples should support and comfort each other to make their life together beautiful and joyful. ■

Vinayak Nirmal

All women are blessed with all their goodness and shortcomings in their own life. Yet, Mary alone is proclaimed as being blessed by the special grace of God. The angel Gabriel, who was appointed to announce the good news, was the first to give such a title to Mary. "You are blessed among women."

Perhaps because Mary, a woman, was blessed, every woman who is appointed to stand by her side becomes blessed. Every woman must live by receiving a share of Mary's blessing. Yet, don't many women forget that they are blessed at some point in their lives? In any case, it is essential that we travel through the paths of Mary's grace. We can understand from the angel's description what are the factors that make Mary blessed.

Full of Grace

"Hail, Mary, full of grace" is the angel's address. It was not a mere superficial address. Because Mary was full of grace; only grace. There is goodness in all human beings. There is no doubt about that. Along with that, we have evil in us. There are also elements of goodness in those whom we accuse of being evil.

There are also elements of evil in those whom we praise as being more full of goodness. Therefore, we cannot calculate anyone as being completely full of goodness or only evil. But Mary was completely full of grace. How can one who is exempted even from original sin be subject to evil? Anyone who lives and behaves with the fear of God and arranges life according to the will of God becomes the owner of a good life. We love, worship, and seek intercession more from Mary because she was crowned with goodness

that no other saint had. The saints were human beings. They were born with sin and lived with sinners. Therefore, they had various kinds of sinful tendencies. It was through the constant struggle and survival with it throughout their lifetime that they finally attained the status of saints.

The Blessedness of Mary's Womb

Sometimes, even those who are considered holy, like St. Francis of Assisi, who is known as the "Second Christ," are swayed by the desires of the flesh and have to strive to overcome them to attain purity. But such purification was not necessary for Mary. By birth, nature, and action, she was a tabernacle and abode of goodness. There was no other human being like Mary who was specially ordained by God to live without any defilement. Why should we hesitate to venerate such a Mary? Our eyes should be anointed to see the goodness in others. When we look at Mary with anointed eyes, we see her as a rising star shining with the light of goodness.

Fruit of the Womb Blessed

Mary was blessed also because of the fruit of her womb. Mary was graced to carry the Lord in her womb and heart alike. The one chosen by God to be the Mother of the Savior was Mary, who waited to be the handmaid of the one chosen by God to be the Mother of the Savior. To hold God in her hands, to feed God, to have God as a child in her lap - what woman in the world has such a fortune, other than Mary?

Mary's womb was blessed. It is when one is born from a blessed womb that the fruit of the womb becomes blessed. It should also be understood here that when good children are born, both the mothers and the children born from the

MARY, THE BLESSED!

JANUARY 3, FEAST OF THE DIVINE MOTHERHOOD OF MARY

wombs of good mothers become a cause for blessing. There is also a reminder here that the preparations for birth should be done with utmost purity.

Joseph, Mary's Match

Mary's blessedness should be evaluated in another way as well. The reason for Mary's blessing is that she got a husband like Joseph. Joseph was a husband who could stand with God and see and understand Mary. Every woman becomes blessed by being associated with the goodness of her husband. Even though Mary went through many hardships, she did not falter because she had a husband who could think and act with God. Some blessings should be counted by being associated with one's spouse.

Reason for Mediation with Mary

The words of the angel also clearly explain why we seek Mary's intercession. The Lord is with you, says the angel. God has assured many through His word that He will be with them wherever they go. But Mary's significance lies in the fact that this divine presence goes one step further. Here is the English translation of the provided Malayalam text:

The Power of Mary's Intercession

It is an undeniable fact that the Lord is with you. There is no doubt or question about it. Although the Scriptures tell us that God has promised to be with us wherever we go, we also see instances where the divine presence seems to withdraw from certain individuals in specific situations.



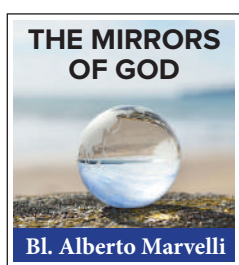
However, this is never the case with Mary. God was always with her, at all times.

Just as it is beneficial to have someone familiar with a place accompany you on a journey, and comforting to have a courageous person by your side when venturing into the unknown, so too is the assistance of a person who has God's presence with them.

If our journey is with someone who has God's presence, our paths will not go astray. We can claim and possess the goodness that is not ours, the goodness that we do not possess, through that person. This is the power of intercession with Mary.

Walk with Mary. That path leads to Christ, for Mary walks to Christ, through Christ, and for Christ. To be with Mary is to be with God. Therefore, invite Mary into all aspects of your life. Prayer to the Mother is prayer to God, for the Mother prays to God. What else can one who has God's presence pray for? ■

THE SACRED CALL OF PUBLIC SERVICE



Alberto sat at the dinner table with his mother nearby. As they ate, his mother noticed a beggar standing in their courtyard. Without hesitation, she took a portion of food from Alberto's plate and gave it to the poor man. While doing so, she said to her son, "Christ has come to us, and He is hungry too." This simple act of compassion left a lasting impression on young Alberto, sparking a lifelong dedication to serving the poor and vulnerable.

Born on March 21, 1918, in Italy, Alberto was the second of six children of Luigi Marvelli and Maria. The family faced a severe crisis when Luigi passed away in March 1933. Despite these challenges, Alberto grew up deeply rooted in Christian virtues. His daily life revolved around morning prayers, personal devotions, spiritual reading, attending Mass,



and receiving Holy Communion.

Later, in Turin, he became the president of the Catholic Action Lay Apostolate. After earning an engineering degree from Bologna University, Alberto worked at Fiat in Turin. However, it was during the tumultuous years of World War II that his extraordinary gifts and virtues came to light.

Forced to flee his homeland with his family during the war, Alberto nonetheless returned to his hometown daily to care for the sick and provide for the needy. Whether it was food, clothing, or medicine, Alberto ensured that those in need received essential supplies. He also

saved many people from Nazi prisons during this time.

After the war, Alberto was appointed an administrator of the Town Council. Demonstrating his commitment to public service, he established a soup kitchen to feed the poor and personally took part in distributing food. His vision extended beyond charity, as he actively worked to represent Christian values in Italian politics. Tragically, Alberto's life was cut short in a vehicle accident on October 5, 1946, as plans were underway to formally involve him in politics.

Archbishop Angelo Comastri captured the essence of Alberto's life in a radio address following his death: "Alberto's life proves that one can be both a politician and a saint. He is a shining example of honesty in politics and public service."

The process of canonizing Alberto Marvelli began on March 29, 1952, when the Congregation for the Causes of Saints granted him the title "Servant of God." His beatification process was officially initiated under Pope Paul VI on January 16, 1975. An investigation held in Rimini from July 13, 1975, to August 17, 1976,

was later validated by the Congregation in Rome on May 29, 1981. The formal dossier (*Positio*) was completed in 1983, and theologians approved it on October 23, 1985. Pope John Paul II declared Alberto "Venerable" on March 22, 1986, recognizing his life of heroic virtue.

A miracle attributed to Alberto involved the healing of Dr. Tito Malfatti from Bologna, who recovered from an aggressive hernia in August 1991. This miraculous healing was examined by a tribunal led by Cardinal Giacomo Biffi. On November 14, 2002, a medical panel declared that the healing had no scientific explanation. Theologians approved this finding on March 4, 2003, and the Congregation confirmed it on May 20, 2003. Pope John Paul II officially confirmed the miracle on July 7, 2003, and personally beatified Alberto on September 5, 2004, in Loreto. Over 250,000 people gathered to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Alberto Marvelli's life continues to inspire as a testament to the union of faith, service, and integrity. He remains a powerful example of how one can transform the world through selfless love and unwavering devotion to God. ■

“FOR WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM” (MATT 2, 2)



EXPLORING BIBLE QUESTIONS

Rev. Dr. Joseph Maleparambil MCBS

In a series of richly textured stories, evangelist Matthew describes Jesus' origins (Matt 1-2), which contains accounts of positive characters recognizing Jesus, Son of God and the king of Jews and negative characters representing false values. Outstanding among them is the fascinating account of the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, messiah, king of the Jews and Son of God (Matt 2,1-12). God is the hidden actor in ordinary and extraordinary ways in this account of the visit of the magi.

The historical background of this account of the visit of magi is evident in

the affirmation of the evangelist that the birth of Jesus occurred 'in the days of King Herod', a negative figure in the account of the origins of Jesus, a client king of Rome (37-4 B.C.E.). Opposed to the negative character of King Herod are the 'magi from the east'. Magi are often identified as pagan magicians or star-gazers, Persian priests, and possibly wise men sensible to the presence and activity of God in history and among his people. Contemporary writings of the first century CE considered them as men indulged in astronomy and astrology and claimed to possess secret knowledge and occult powers.

The term 'magos' was viewed as a synonym of 'magician' in the Greek astronomical writings. They interpreted signs and omens, observed the new moon and the planets, indicated the lucky and unlucky days, and explained the intricacies of the calendar. They are not Jews; instead, they are representatives of the outsiders (Gen 2,8; 13,14) who have believed in the

Gospel and have understood the supernatural signs of the divine saviour-King (Matt 2,2;27,11,29,37; 28,19). Evangelist Matthew portrays them positively as coming from the east, 'seeking the newborn king' (2,2), eventually paying him homage (2,11), and like the Jewish Joseph, receiving revelation by dream (2,12).

Stars are associated with the special births of great figures in antiquity. But the mention of 'star' evokes Balam's messianic prophecy of a star arising from Jacob (Num 24,17) or perhaps an angelic being as modern interpreters would claim (Job 38,7). It was widely noted in antiquity that the births and deaths of great figures were accompanied by natural phenomena. But the motif of the star probably owes more to Num 24,17, which states that "and a star shall come forth out of Jacob", than to such natural phenomena. An additional support in this line is found in Matthew's presentation is that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem from Mic 5,1-2 and 2 Sam

5,2 (Matt 2,6); i.e., the birth of Jesus is in accord with God's will fore-told in the scriptures.

The magi understood the unusual movement and guidance of the star, pointing to the birth of the divine saviour king. They evoke the messianic hope of Israel and act in accordance with the biblical prophecies, while the false king and the elite (scribes, high priests) stand on the opposite side and begin truly an evil game against Jesus. The magi are those who sincerely search for and find the right king and put their knowledge to the proper end. They set out from the far east (Matt 28,19), commend themselves to God's guidance and worship the king-messiah. The readers/hearers are invited to follow the model of these holy men in searching, finding, and worshipping the newborn saviour and go back according to the guidance God revealed to them. Thus, the pilgrimage of the nations has commenced. ■

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN THE HOLY QURBANA: A MANIFESTATION OF UNITY

Thus, the petition for God's name to be hallowed is an invitation to be holy and blameless before Him (Eph 1:4).



LITURGY

Rev. Sr. Kochuthresia Kavunkal MTS

The Holy *Qurbana*, the supreme sacrament of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, encompasses the fullness of divine grace. The spirit of the Holy *Qurbana* can be encapsulated in the Lord's Prayer, the essence of the Gospel (CCC 2761). The content of the Lord's Prayer can be summed up in two words: the glory of God and the sanctification of humanity.

The Lord's Prayer, as structured in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy, incorporates the proclamation of God's supreme holiness from Isaiah 6:3 with the prayer found in the Gospels. In the Syro-Malabar Church's Holy *Qurbana*, the Lord's Prayer, with the Canon, is recited at the beginning of the liturgy and end of the Holy *Qurbana*, and the Lord's Prayer without the Can-

on is recited before receiving the Holy Communion.

Reconciliation and unity are the foundational principles essential for the realization of God's glory and human sanctification. It is to strengthen the relationship between humanity and God, and among humans themselves, that the incarnate Christ both strove and taught the Lord's Prayer. While the term "Our Father in heaven" signifies the glorious and holy God, the term "Our" includes all of humanity. Calling God "Father" obligates us to live as His children, as taught by St. Cyprian. Moreover, St. John Chrysostom (CCC 671) reminds us that one with a cruel and inhumane heart cannot call the all-merciful God 'Father'.

The first part of the Lord's prayer directs us to the reality of God's glory. The visible manifestation of His holiness can also be seen in the Canon of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus teaches us to live so that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Mat 5:16). Thus, the petition for God's name to be hallowed is an invitation to be holy and blameless before Him (Eph 1:4).

The proclamation 'The kingdom of heaven is near', the Christ first announcement, points to the truth that the kingdom of heaven is the Christ Himself. The prayer 'Your kingdom come' calls for the arrival of the kingdom envisioned by Christ. 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' is a plea intertwined with the coming of that kingdom. Therefore, sanctification and a life aligned with God's will are essential conditions for prayer.

The second part of the Lord's Prayer focuses on what is necessary for individual sanctification. Here too, every person is called to foster a communal spirit. This prayer expresses solidarity with the needs and sufferings of humanity. The imagery of global hunger compels the followers of Christ to fulfil their responsibilities towards their brethren, both in personal conduct and in their unity with the human family. The prayer for daily bread refers particularly to the Word of God received by faith and the Body of Christ received in the Holy Communion.

The prayer, 'forgive us our debts and sins', is a plea for mercy. If we do not forgive those who have wronged us, the flow

of mercy will not reach our hearts. The subsequent part reminds us that where there is no reconciliation, where there is no unity, the remission of sins cannot occur. This can also be understood in connection with the reconciliation rite in the Holy *Qurbana*. 'The Peace of the Heavenly Hosts', recited before Psalm 51, is a prayer for establishing reconciliation in the world, the Church, and nations. It is an appeal to remove conflicts and wars and to achieve peace and harmony.

Following this is the *Karozutha* of Reconciliation, which can be seen as an expansion of the prayer 'forgive us our debts and sins'. Here, too, there is a communal dimension as we pray, 'O Lord, forgive the sins and transgressions of Your servants'. Similarly, it is a plea to remove strife, conflict, enmity, and hatred and to enable us, with unity and concord, to participate in the divine mysteries of Christ.

'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil' is a petition made while keeping the entirety of sinful humanity in view, asking for purification in holiness. The concluding doxology, which proclaims God's kingdom, power, and glory, seals the first three petitions.

In the Lord's prayer, every individual prays in unity. For those who are baptized, it is impossible to pray to the Father without bringing before Him all those for whom He gave His beloved Son. Therefore, when the Lord's Prayer is recited with sincerity, all divisions vanish, and reconciliation and unity with both God and humanity are realized. ■



DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

NOVEMBER 19 TO DECEMBER 20

November

- **19 Tuesday:** Hosted Monsignor Peter I Vaccari, President of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, and a delegation at Mount St. Thomas.
- **20 Wednesday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at Mount St. Thomas with priests celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their ordination and participated in the celebratory events.
- **23 Saturday:** Consecrated the Cathedral of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne, Australia, celebrated Holy *Qurbana*, and delivered a message.
- **24 Sunday:** Consecrated Cardinal-designate Monsignor George Koovakad as Bishop at St. Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.
- **25 Monday – 30 Saturday:**
Visited Syro-Malabar communities in the Southern Vicariate of the Gulf.
Celebrated Holy Mass and engaged with individuals and various groups.

Met with Archbishop Christophe Zakhia El-Kassis, Apostolic Nuncio to the UAE

Bishop Paolo Martinelli, Apostolic Vicar, accompanied the visit.

December

- **2 Monday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at Mount St. Thomas with deacons from all eparchies and religious congregations to be ordained this year and held an interactive session.
- **4 Wednesday:** Participated in the KCBC meeting at Palarivattom POC.
- **7 Friday:** Attended the ceremony of creating new cardinals at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican, and conveyed congratulations and best wishes from the Syro-Malabar Church to Cardinal Mar George Koovakad.
- **8 Saturday**
Morning: Joined Pope Francis in celebrating Holy Mass with the newly appointed cardinals at St. Peter's Basilica on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Afternoon: Attended the reception for Cardinal George Koovakad at the Minor Basilica of St. Anastasia in Rome, followed by Holy *Qurbana*.

- **12 Thursday:** Received Archbishop Flavio Pace, the Secretary of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity and Monsignor Hyacinth, the Under-Secretary, at Mount St. Thomas.
Presided over the meeting of the Provincial Superiors of the male and female religious congregations in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly
- **18 Wednesday:** Greeted the participants of the meeting of the Safe Environment Committee at Mount St. Thomas.
Erected the Special Tribunal for the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **19 Thursday:** Delivered a message at the Christmas celebration for Ernakulam district journalists at Mount St. Thomas, followed by hosting a tea party.
- **20 Friday:** Blessed the renovated Chancery at Mount St. Thomas.

PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL AND ITS FUNCTIONS



CANON LAW

Rev. Dr. Joseph Mattathil

Question: Can you explain the eparchial presbyteral council, how members are elected to it, and what their functions are?

The Presbyteral Council is a body of priests that represents the presbyterate within the Eparchy. This Council assists the Eparchial Bishop by providing advice on matters related to the pastoral needs and affairs of the Eparchy. The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) mandates the establishment of such a council in all eparchies (CCEO c. 264). It is important that this Council is structured to ensure representation from all the priests of the Eparchy. Each presbyteral council must have its own statutes, which need to be approved by the eparchial bishop, provided they do not contradict the norms of both common law and the particular law of the respective Church *sui iuris* (c. 265). Members of the presbyteral council are elected in three different ways.

1. According to Common Law, an appropriate portion of the members of the presbyteral council must be elected by the priests themselves, in accordance with the norms of the Particular Law of the respective Church *sui iuris* (c. 266, 1°). In the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church, it is specified that



at least fifty per cent of the members of the presbyteral council shall be elected by the priests themselves (Art. 15).

2. Some priests are members of the presbyteral council by virtue of the office they hold, such as the members of the Curia in the Eparchy. If the statutes of the Eparchy stipulate that certain individuals are members of this council by virtue of their office, they are considered *ex officio* members of the presbyteral council (c. 266, 2°).

3. The Bishop also has the right to freely appoint a few members to the presbyteral council (c. 266, 2°).

As mentioned above, the members of the presbyteral council fall into these three categories.

All priests who are ascribed within the Eparchy, as well as the other priests who have a domicile or quasi-domicile in the Eparchy and at the same time exercise some function for the good of the Eparchy, have the right to elect, vote and be elected to the presbyteral council.

Furthermore, according to the statutes, active and passive voice can also be conferred upon other priests who have domicile and quasi domicile in the Eparchy (c. 267). The common law stipulates that whenever the statutes of the Eparchy are formed, they should be arranged in such a way that all classes of priests in the Eparchy are represented (c. 268).

The common law ensures that the presbyteral council maintains a continuous relationship with the eparchial bishop. The eparchial bishop is responsible for convening and presiding over the presbyteral council, setting its agenda, and considering proposals from its members.

In important matters, particularly those specifically outlined in Common Law, the bishop is required to consult the presbyteral council. For instance, this includes convening an eparchial assembly (c. 236), establishing, suppressing, and modifying the boundaries of foranes (c. 276), creating personal parishes (c. 280 §1), and erecting, modifying, or

suppressing parishes (c. 280 §2). These are just a few examples of such matters.

The eparchial bishop is the head of the presbyteral council. The members cannot convene it without the eparchial bishop, who alone is responsible for making public the decisions made in the council.

The terms of office for elected or appointed members shall be outlined in the statutes. Members of the presbyteral council are to be designated for a term specified in the statutes, ensuring that the entire presbyteral council or a portion of it is renewed within a five-year period (c. 270 §1). When the eparchial see is vacant, the presbyteral council ceases its functions, which are then fulfilled by the college of eparchial consultors. The eparchial bishop must establish a new presbyteral council within one year of taking canonical possession of the Eparchy (c. 270 §2).

The bishop has the authority to dissolve the presbyteral council under certain circumstances, such as when the council acts in a manner that harms the common good of the Eparchy or seriously abuses its functions. Before making this decision, the bishop must consult with the Metropolitan of the Archeparchy to which he belongs. In the case of the Metropolitan See itself, the archbishop will consult with the most senior eparchial bishop, who is subject to the same Metropolitan authority. Additionally, the law requires that the eparchial bishop establish a new presbyteral council within one year (c. 270 §3). ■

KANJIRAPALLY EPARCHY YOUTH CONFERENCE: A CELEBRATION OF YOUTH POWER



Kuttikanam: The Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop, Mar Raphael Thattil, described the youth as the greatest asset of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally during his inaugural address at the Eparchial SMYM youth conference, *Nasrani Yuvashakti 2024*. The event was held at Marian Autonomous College, Kuttikanam.

“A Church that loses its youth becomes an aging Church,” remarked Mar Raphael Thattil, emphasizing the pivotal role of young people. “Youth are the cornerstone of its vitality and future. The Eparchy of Kanjirapally is like a stone vessel holding the finest, most exquisite wine of the Syro-Malabar Church - a true testament to noble and vibrant Christian faith,” he added.

Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal of the Kanjirapally, in his benedictory address, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the strength and promise of the youth. “You are the courageous torchbearers of the Nasrani Catholic family, carrying forward the legacy of St. Thomas the Apostle. Be strong in faith, as you are the dreams and voice of the Eparchy,” he said.

Addressing the challenges faced by the younger generation, he cautioned against the trend of migrating abroad after completing 12th grade. “It is concerning to see many being lured by advertisements and leaving in large numbers. Kerala offers great opportunities. You are the seeds meant to sprout and grow here, enriching our community,”

he urged.

The conference was presided over by SMYM Eparchial President Alan S. Velloor, with an introductory speech by Eparchial Director Fr. Thomas Nariparayil. Kerala State Film Award winner Vinci Aloysius graced the event as the chief guest. Other dignitaries included Vicar General Rev. Dr. Joseph Vellamattom, SMYM General Secretary Alan Padinjarekkara, and Annmaria Kollasseril, who also delivered speeches.

The gathering witnessed enthusiastic participation from around 3,000 youth representing 148 parishes of the Kanjirapally Eparchy, marking the event as a vibrant celebration of faith, heritage, and the power of youth.

DEACONS' MEETING HELD AT MOUNT ST. THOMAS



Kakkanad: A meeting of deacons preparing for priestly ordination in the Syro-Malabar Church was conducted on December 2 at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkannad. This year, 289 clerical students from various eparchies and religious communities of the Syro-Malabar Church have completed their formation and are ready to embrace the priesthood. Out of these, 221 deacons attended the meeting, which ran from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil celebrated the Holy Qurbana and delivered an inspiring message to the deacons. Following this, he inaugurated the general meeting, emphasizing the spiritual and pastoral responsibilities awaiting the future priests.

Mar Tony Neelankavil, Chairman of the Commission for Clergy, and Mar Sebastian Vaniyapuralackal, the Curia Bishop, also graced

the occasion with their presence and words of encouragement. The day's programmes were skillfully coordinated by Fr. Joji Kallingal, the secretary of the Commission for Clergy and Sr. Lincy Augustine MSMI.

This gathering served as a significant moment for the Church, fostering unity and a shared sense of purpose among the deacons as they approach the milestone of priestly ordination.

POSTHUMOUS AWARD TO SR. MARY LITTY FOR HER SERVICE



Moovattupuzha: The Bishop Mar Mathew Pothanamuzhi Foundation Award, instituted by the Bishop Mar Mathew Pothanamuzhi Foundation Charitable Trust, was posthumously conferred upon Sister Mary Littty for her outstanding service in the Congregation of Divine Providence.

Sister Maria Ojas, representing the Congregation of Divine Providence, received the award on behalf of Sr. Mary Littty from Monsignor Pius Malekandathil, the manager of Nirmala College. The award included a cash prize of ₹25,000 and a certificate of appreciation. The occasion

also featured a memorial lecture in honor of Bishop Mar Mathew Pothanamuzhi. The event was presided over by Rev. Dr. Thomas Pothanamuzhi, with renowned writer Ambikasuthan Mangad as the chief guest. College Principal Rev. Dr. Justin K. Kuriakose, Bursar Fr. Paul Kalathur, Fr. Antony Poroorkara, P.M. Mathew, Sister Preethi, and programme coordinators Nibu Thomson and Anita J. Mattam also spoke at the ceremony.

THAMARASSERY MARY MATHA CATHEDRAL CONCLUDES SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS



Thamarassery: The three-day celebration of the parish feast honoring the Divine Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the heavenly patroness of the parish, and the Silver Jubilee of the cathedral's consecration came to a grand conclusion at the Thamarassery Mary Matha Cathedral.

The Syro-Malabar Major Archbishop, Mar Raphael Thattil, was warmly welcomed to the Cathedral courtyard by Mar Remigius Inchananiyil, Bishop of Thamarassery. Mar Raphael Thattil presided over the thanksgiving Holy *Qurbana*, with Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil, Msgr.

Abraham Vayalil, the Vicar General, Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil, the Major Archiepiscopal Curia Chancellor and Alphonsa Minor Seminary Rector Fr. Kurian Thannickal, and around 25 priests of the Eparchy as celebrants.

The celebrations included a solemn procession, intercessory prayers and *agape*. The event was coordinated under the leadership of Vicar Fr. Mathew Pulimoottil, Assistant Vicar Fr. Jithin Nariveli, and the trustees Adv. Mathew Mangalamadathil, Kurian Karimpanakkal, Chackochan Praikalam, Jobish Thundathil, and Shaji Valavanananickal.

CHRISTMAS IS THE HUMAN INCARNATION OF GOD'S LOVE: MAR THATTIL



Kakkanad: “Christmas is the human incarnation of God's love,” proclaimed Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil during the Christmas Gathering for media personnel held at Mount St. Thomas, the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church. The gathering brought together journalists from print and visual media, creating a joyful occasion to celebrate the message of love and hope that Christmas embodies.

Mar Raphael Thattil extended heartfelt Christmas greetings and distributed gifts, sharing the spirit of the Nativity. In his message, he emphasized that Jesus not only taught love but lived it fully, culminating in the ultimate sacrifice of laying down His life for His friends. “This profound act of love is the reason the Son of God was born in a humble manger,” he reflected.

The Major Archbishop further highlighted the call of Christmas

to unity and companionship. “The God who came to walk with humanity calls us to walk together as well, reminding us that we are all fellow travelers,” he said, urging everyone to embrace the spirit of togetherness in their lives.

The event began with a warm welcome by Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil, Chancellor of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, who expressed appreciation for the media's role in society. Fr. Antony Vadakkekara VC, the Church's PRO and Media Commission Secretary, also addressed the gathering, offering gratitude for the media's contributions and wishing them a joyful Christmas.

The gathering was a testament to the Church's commitment to fostering relationships with media professionals and to spreading the universal message of love, unity, and hope that Christmas signifies.

REV. DR. LUKE THADATHIL APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY, ALUVA



Aluva: Rev. Dr. Luke Thadathil, a priest of the eparchy of Mananthavady, has been appointed as the President of the Pontifical Institute of Theology, Aluva. He is the first person from the Malabar region to attain this prestigious position. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Thadathil served as the Vice President of the Pontifical

Institute and a faculty member at the Mangalapuzha Seminary in Aluva. The appointment was made by Cardinal Mar Baselios Cleemis, the President of the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC), following the recommendation of the Dicastery for Culture and Education at the Vatican. The official announcement was made by Mar Pauly Kannookadan, KCBC Vice President at the Carmelgiri Seminary in Aluva, where the appointment letter was read publicly. This milestone highlights Dr. Thadathil's personal achievements.

SPECIAL TRIBUNAL ESTABLISHED FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS IN ERNAKULAM-ANGAMALY

Kakkanad: A special tribunal has been established at the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia, Mount St. Thomas, to address disciplinary issues within the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly. This tribunal, instituted on December 18, 2024, by a Decree from Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, aims to resolve ongoing challenges, particularly related to the Syro-Malabar Church's liturgical practices and other disciplinary matters.

Under Canon 89 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the Major Archbishop is vested with the responsibility of overseeing the discipline of clergy. The tribunal will handle cases involving non-compliance

with lawful orders and warnings, adhering to canonical procedures outlined by Church law.

Although disciplinary tribunals are customarily established at the eparchial level, the Apostolic Administrator, Mar Bosco Puthur, informed ecclesiastical authorities that a functional tribunal in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly was not feasible under the present circumstances. As a result, with the approval of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches in Rome, this special tribunal was established to address the pressing need for order and compliance.

The tribunal is granted authority to take canonical action against priests, religious, and laity found guilty of indis-

pline within the Archeparchy. It will function according to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and relevant Church laws.

The tribunal will be presided over by Canon Law scholar Fr. James Mathew Pampara CMI, with Fr. Jose Marattil and Fr. Joy Paliyekara serving as judges. Fr. Gervasis Anithottathil has been appointed as the Promoter of Justice, while Fr. Joseph Kamichery will act as the Notary. Advocates assisting the tribunal include Fr. Joseph Paruvummel, Fr. Francis Aloor, and Fr. Mathew Kallarackal. This decisive step reflects the Church's commitment to fostering unity and ensuring proper discipline within the Archeparchy

A NEW DAWN OF HOPE AND SHELTER: EPARCHY OF KALYAN



As part of the Karunya Trust's Nivas project, eight tribal families experienced the joy of a fresh start, as their dream of a safe and dignified home became a reality

today. The newly constructed houses were inaugurated in a heartwarming ceremony by Fr. Rajesh Mathew, Director of Kalyan Diocesan Catechism,

surrounded by gratitude and blessings.

For these families, a house is more than just a structure; it represents the foundation of security, dignity, and a brighter future for their children. Each brick stands as a testament to the collective compassion of donors, well-wishers, and the unwavering commitment of Karunya Trust to uplift those in need.

RECOGNIZE THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY POWER: MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL



Dubai: The empowerment of the global Syro-Malabar community is a vital mission of the Church, emphasized Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil during the inauguration of the Catholic Congress Gulf Region Leaders' Meet held in Dubai. He called upon the Catholic Congress to spearhead efforts in uniting community members across the globe, highlighting the pivotal role of collaboration in achieving holistic development.

Mar Thattil stressed the importance of fostering partnerships among Church members in social, economic, and cultural fields. He urged the Catholic Congress to act as a bridge connecting those who have immigrated to various countries for employment, education, or business pursuits. The Church, he noted, will continue to design and implement programs that ensure the comprehensive growth and support of its members, particularly in the Gulf region.

Rajeev Kochuparambil, the

Global President of the Catholic Congress, used the platform to announce the creation of a global network of community members, a step towards enhancing communication and cooperation across borders. The event also featured a benedictory address by Bishop Paolo Martinelli of the Vicariate of Southern Arabia, and a keynote speech by Bishop Remigiose Inchananiyil, who shared insights on the role of faith-based communities in addressing contemporary challenges.

The gathering saw the active participation of notable clergy and laity, including Rev. Fr. Francis Eluvathingal, Rev. Dr. Philip Kavil, Dr. Joskutty Olukayil, Davis Edakkalathur, Benny Pulikkakkara, Fr. Geo Kadavi, and Rev. Fr. P.M. Peter OFM, who shared their perspectives on community leadership and service. This significant meeting underlines the Church's commitment to empowering the global Syro-Malabar community by fostering unity, collaboration, and holistic growth.



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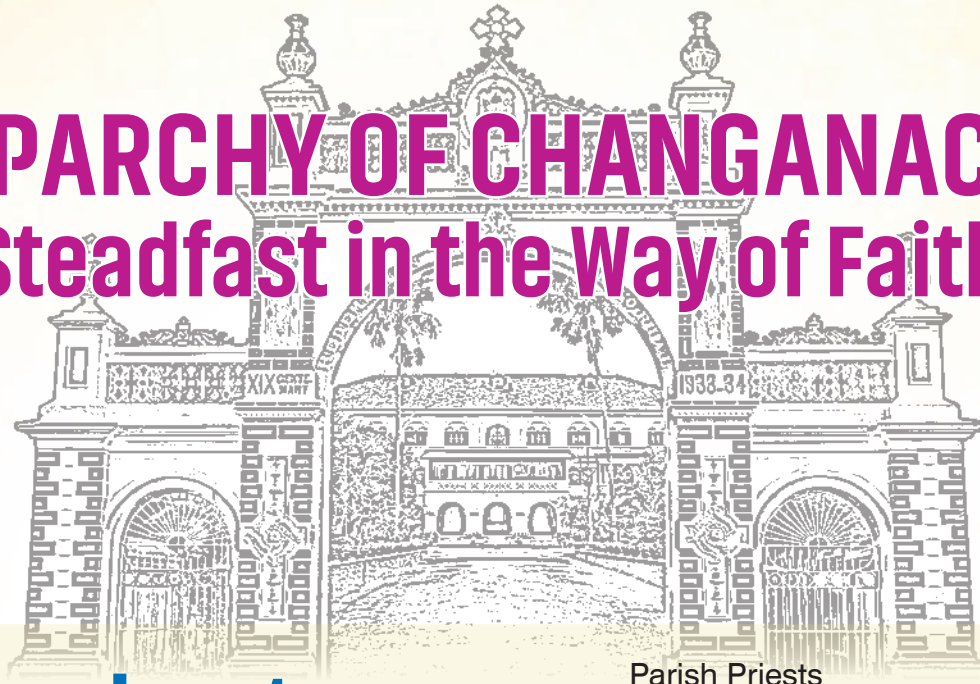
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ARCHEPARCHY OF CHANGANACHERRY

Steadfast in the Way of Faith



Archeparchy at a Glance

Heavenly Patron:

St. Joseph

Bishops from the Archeparchy:

- Cardinal Mar George Alencherry
- Cardinal Mar George Koovakad
- Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam
- Archbishop Mar George Kocherry
- Archbishop Mar Alex Kaliyanil
- Bishop Mar Thomas Padiyath
- Bishop Mar Thomas Thuruthimattam CST
- Bishop Mar James Athikalam MST

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Parish Priests | 497 |
| Religious/Mission Priests | 982 |
| Nuns | 4000 |
| Lay faithful | 4,06,000 |
| Families | 80,000 |
| Forane Churches | 18 |
| Parishes | 214 |
| Chapel | 23 |
| Departments | 15 |
| Religious Men | 19 |
| Religious Women | 52 |
| Arts & Science Colleges | 16 |
| Professional Colleges | 10 |
| Schools | 200 |
| Care Homes | 96 |
| Hospitals | 22 |

Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil A Brief Profile



Birth

1972 February 1972

Parents

T.J. Joseph, Mariamma

Priestly Ordination

2000 January 1, Mar Joseph Powathil

Auxiliary Bishop

2017 January 14

Ordained as Bishop

2017 April 23, Mar Joseph Perumthottam

Motto

My Grace is sufficient for you

Archbishop

2024 October 31

Education

School- St. Joseph's LP School, Changanacherry
 Sacred Heart English Medium School, Changanacherry
 Pre-Degree- SB College, Changanacherry
 Seminary- St. Thomas Minor Seminary, Kurichy
 St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor
 Higher Studies- MA English Literature, Kerala University
 Doctorate in Psychology, Georgian University, Rome

Pastoral Care

Asst. Vicar- Athirampuzha (2000-01), Nedumkunnam (2001-03),
 Edathua (Koilmukku) (2003-04)
 Vicar- Thazhathuvadakara (2004), Director- Danahalaya (2011-17)

Offices

Chairman- Syro-Malabar Media Commission
 Chairman- Vadavathoor Seminary Commission
 Convenor- Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission,
 Chairman- KCBC Vocation Commission
 Member- Syro Malabar Liturgy Commission
 Member- CBCI Environment Commission

The Prelates who Shepherded the Archeparchy



Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam
2007 - 2024



Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil
1986 - 2007



Archbishop Mar Antony Padiyara
1970 - 1986



Servant of God,
Archbishop Mar Mathew Kavukattu
1950 - 1970



Mar James Kalacherry
1927 - 1950



Blessed Mar Thomas Kurialassery
1911 - 1927



Mar Mathew Makkil
1896 - 1911



Mar Charles Lavinge
1886 - 1896

Cardinals who hail from the Archeparchy



Cardinal Mar Antony Padiyara



Cardinal Mar George Alencherry



Cardinal Mar George Koovakad

Former Apostolic Nuncio



Mar George Kocherry



Mar Thomas Padiyath
Auxiliary Bishop,
Shamshabad

Bishops from Changanacherry Serving in other Eparchies



Mar Thomas Thuruthimattam,
Bishop Emeritus of
Gorakhpur



Mar James Athikalam MST,
Bishop, Eparchy of Sagar



Mar Alex Kaaliyanil,
Archbishop,
Zimbabwe Baulwayo

Suffragan Eparchial Bishops



Pala
Mar Joseph Kallarangattu



Kanjirappally
Mar Joseph Pulikkal



Thuckalay
Mar George Rajendran SDB

Foranes

Changanacherry Archeparchy is divided into 18 Forane Churches. They are Changanacherry, Alappuzha, Amboori, Athirampuzha, Champakulam, Chengannur, Edathua, Kollam-Ayur, Kottayam, Kudamaloor, Kurumpanadam, Manimala, Muhamma, Nedumkunnam, Pulincunnu, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrickodithanam and Thuruthy. Parishes come under the Forane Churches. Several big parishes do have smaller chapels or 'Kurisupally' under them.

Saints from the Archeparchy



St. Alphonsa



St. Chavara Kuriakose Elias

THE CARE-HOMES IN THE ARCHEPARCHY



| Responsibility | Number |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Changanacherry Archdiocese | 14 |
| Religious Homes | 73 |
| Laity | 9 |

| Department | Number |
|--|--------|
| Charity Homes for Children | 17 |
| Special School | 20 |
| Mental Health Centre | 17 |
| Old age Homes | 22 |
| Rehabilitation for the Differently Abled | 20 |

Humanitarian Projects of the Archeparchy

1. Colour A Home- House Building Project
2. Colour A Dream- Educational and Project
3. Sebastian Kunnath Jubilee Trust
4. Crisis Aid Fund
5. Mar Powathil Dalit Christian Welfare Fund 100 Crore Kuttanad Flood Disaster Relief Project

MILESTONES

- 20.05.1887 By Pope Leo XIII's encyclical "Quod iam Pridem," the Vicariates of Kottayam and Thrissur were established.
- 10.05.1888 Most Rev. Dr. Charles Lavinge SJ, French Jesuit is appointed the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam.
- 21.03.1891 The Head Quarters of the Vicariate is shifted to Changanacherry.
- 28.07.1896 Kottayam, Trichur Vicariates are re-ordered and re-named as Changanacherry, Trichur, Ernakulam Vicariates and Mar Louis Pazheparampil is the Vicar Apostolic of Ernakulam.
- 11.08.1896 Mar Mathew Makkil is the Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry.
- 29.08.1911 Kottayam Vicariate established for the Knanaya Community (Thekkumbhagar). Mar Mathew Makkil became the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam.
- 15.11.1911 Mar Thomas Kurialassery became the Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry.
- 21.12.1923 Syro-Malabar hierarchy is established. The Suffragan Eparchies of Changanacherry Trichur and Kottayam come under the Archeparchy of Ernakulam.

- 29.10.1927 Mar James Kalassery is the Bishop of Changanacherry.
- 25.07.1950 Changanacherry is bifurcated and Eparchy of Pala is founded. Mar Sebastian Vayalil became the Bishop of Pala. Mar Mathew Kavukattu became the Bishop of Changanacherry.
- 29.04.1955 The territories of the Eparchy of Changanacherry is extended upto Kanyakumari.
- 22.08.1956 Changanacherry is raised to an Archeparchy with Kottayam and Pala as its Suffragan Eparchies. Mar Mathew Kavukattu appointed as the Archbishop.
- 14.06.1970 Mar Antony Padiyara is appointed as the Archbishop of Changanacherry.
- 29.01.1972 Mar Joseph Powathil is appointed as the Auxiliary Bishop of Changanacherry.
- 26.02.1977 Changanacherry is bifurcated and the Eparchy of Kanjirappally is established. Mar Joseph Powathil is the first Bishop of Kanjirappally.
- 16.11.1985 Mar Joseph Powathil is appointed the Archbishop of Changanacherry.

- 17.01.1986 Mar Powathil takes charge as the Archbishop of Changanacherry.
- 08.02.1986 Archeparchy joyfully welcomes Pope John Paul II at Kottayam. Syro-Malabar Raza Qurbana text is inaugurated.
- 16.12.1992 Syro-Malabar Church is elevated to the rank of Major Arche-Episcopal Church. Mar Antony Padiyara is appointed the first major Archbishop.
- 18.12.1996 Changanacherry is bifurcated and the Eparchy of Thuckalay is established. Mar George Alencherry is the first Bishop of Thuckalay.
- 25.05.2002 Mar Joseph Perumthottam became the Auxiliary Bishop of Changanacherry
- 12.10.2008 Proud daughter of Archeparchy Blessed Alphonsa canonized as a saint
- 23.11.2014 Proud son of Archeparchy Blessed Chavara Kuriakose Elias canonized as a saint
- 23.04.2017 Mar Thomas Tharayil is appointed the Auxiliary Bishop of Changanacherry
- 30.09.2024 Mar Thomas Tharayil is appointed the Archbishop of Changanacherry
- 31.10.2024 Mar Thomas Tharayil takes charge as the Archbishop of Changanacherry.

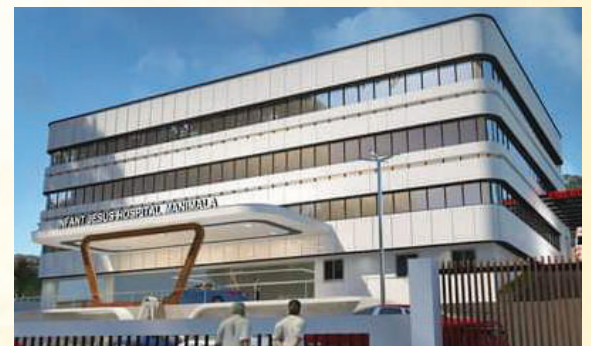
Hospitals/Health Centres in the Archeparchy



St. Thomas Hospital
Chethipuzha



Sahrudaya Hospital
Alappuzha



Infant Jesus Hospital
Manimala

JUBILEE YEAR CELEBRATIONS BEGIN



Vatican City: The Great Jubilee Year, a momentous occasion in the Catholic Church, officially commenced with Pope Francis opening the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica during Christmas Mass. This sacred act marks the beginning of a yearlong celebration that will conclude on January 6, 2026.

As part of this Jubilee Year, five Holy Doors in Rome have been ceremonially opened, including the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica, the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the Basilica of St. Paul, and, uniquely, the chapel door in Rebibbia prison. This marks the first time in Church history that a

Holy Door has been opened in a prison, emphasizing the Church's mission of hope and redemption.

The Jubilee, with its theme "Pilgrims of Hope," celebrates 2025 years since the birth of Christ and reflects the Catholic Church's tradition of dedicating holy years for spiritual renewal and unity. The announcement of this Jubilee Year came on May 9, 2024, through Pope Francis' Papal Bull "Hope Does Not Disappoint Us."

Pilgrims participating in the Holy Year celebrations, including those attending the organized pilgrimages, will have the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence. This powerful

spiritual grace underscores the Church's invitation to believers worldwide to embrace hope and renewal in their lives.

The tradition of Jubilee Years dates back to Pope Boniface VIII, who declared the first official Jubilee in 1300. The custom of celebrating the Jubilee every 25 years was later instituted by Pope Paul II in 1470, ensuring a periodic call for reflection, repentance, and renewed faith.

This Jubilee invites Catholics worldwide to unite as "Pilgrims of Hope," rediscovering their faith and fostering a spirit of community in an era deeply in need of hope and solidarity.

ESA FINAL REPORT: STATE GOVERNMENT MUST ENSURE JUSTICE FOR THE PEOPLE - SYRO-MALABAR PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION

The 8,590.69 sq km area currently recommended as ESA (Ecologically Sensitive Area) across 98 villages repeats errors from the Ummen V. Ummen Committee report and the 2018 submission by the state government. The failure to rectify the inaccuracies in the draft notifications, which cited 9,107 sq km of forest across 123 villages, demands immediate correction and amendment.

The government is accused of submitting the report a month ago without consultations in the gram sabhas, a step that must be urgently addressed. The report must also clarify whether the ESA areas are designated under the names of revenue villages; if so, necessary corrections must be made. Furthermore, the state government must justify why the claimed final report has not been made accessible to the public.

In 2018, the central government rejected the ESA report involving 92 villages because it

was prepared without engaging the local populace. Instead of drafting a new report, the state has now subdivided 123 villages into 131, added six additional villages, and resubmitted the report as 98 villages, seeking central approval. This approach retains numerous villages with less than 20% forest cover and high population density—particularly in the Malabar region—as ESA, contrary to the exclusions granted to similar villages in the 2018 report. Such practices must be ceased.

While no other states have pushed for a final ESA notification, Kerala's urgency to request a special notification in Parliament, despite unresolved errors and the absence of a transparent final report, raises significant concerns. The state government is urged to adopt a fair approach to the ESA issue, which impacts millions in highland areas; demanded the Public Affairs Commission in a statement.



ARCHBISHOP MAR GEORGE KOOVAKAD ELEVATED TO CARDINAL

Vatican City: In a historic moment for the Syro-Malabar Church and the Indian Church, Archbishop Mar George Koovakad has been elevated to the rank of cardinal by Pope Francis in a ceremony held on 07 December 2024 in St. Peter's Basilica. Mar Koovakad, hailing from the Archdiocese of Changanacherry, becomes the first priest from India to receive this honor while still serving as a priest. He is among 21 new cardinals created by the Holy Father.

The ceremony witnessed a grand gathering of dignitaries and Church leaders, including Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, and Cardinal Mar Baselios Cleemis, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Church. A special central delegation led

by Union Minister Shri. George Kurien also graced the event. The Archdiocese of Changanacherry was represented by a twelve-member official delegation, including Protosyncellus Monsignor Antony Ethakkatt and relatives of Mar Koovakad.

A reception ceremony was held on December 8 at the Basilica of St. Anastasia in Rome, granted by Pope Francis to the Syro-Malabar Church. The event was attended by leading figures such as Mar Thomas Tharayil, Archbishop Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara, Bishop Thomas Padiyath, along with numerous priests, religious members, and lay faithful.

Following the Divine Liturgy celebrated by the new Cardinal, a congratulatory meeting was

organized. The Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, Mar Raphael Thattil, delivered a speech, emphasizing the significance of the elevation. Cardinal Mar George Alencherry addressed the gathering with a benediction speech.

The ceremonies, marked by vibrant cultural performances symbolized the unity and joy of the Syro-Malabar Church. The event was meticulously coordinated under the leadership of Mar Stephen Chirappanath, the Apostolic Visitor to Europe, and Fr. Babu Panattuparambil, Rector of the Basilica.

The elevation of Mar George Koovakad underscores the global recognition of the Indian Church's contributions to the universal Church and serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for the faithful worldwide.

