



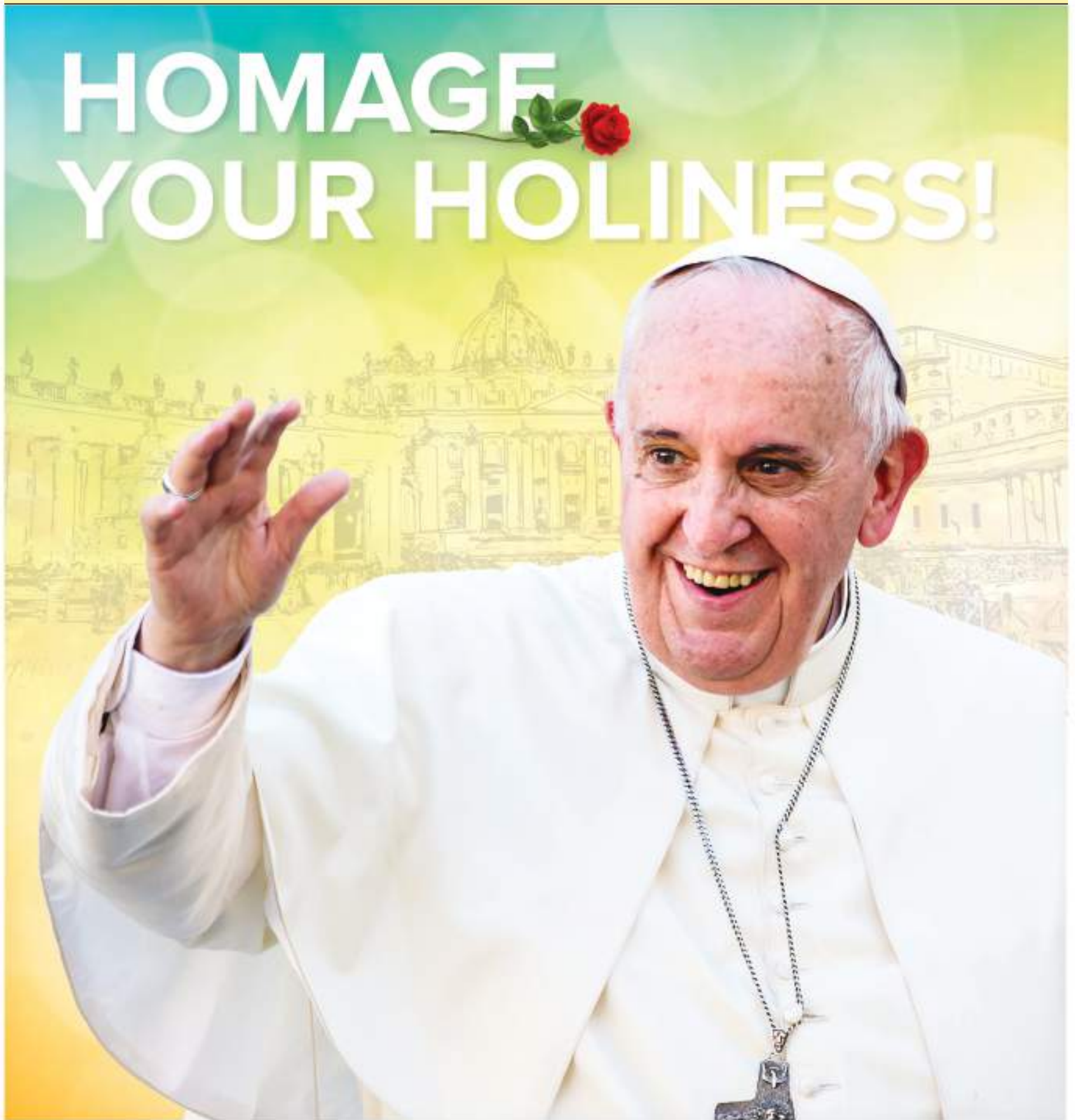
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THE DIVINE MESSENGER WHO SPOKE THE LANGUAGE OF HUMANITY

Rev. Fr. Bobby Alex Mannamplackal

Pope Francis was a Pontiff who saw each person as unique and was, in turn, uniquely loved by all. A statesman of remarkable stature, lauded by world leaders as the “sunlight of the 21st century,” he led the global Catholic Church for twelve years with humility

and grace. Following his departure, much has been written and heard about his greatness. People from various walks of life continue to share enduring memories of this extraordinary life. All of them say in unison: *He was our Pope*. Neither race, nor religion, nor ideology ever hindered that sentiment. A truly astonishing reality.

What, then, enabled such a radiant personality to emerge in a modern world increasingly fractured by rising walls and intensifying conflicts? The answer lies in the man Jorge Mario Bergoglio—his roots, the land where he was raised, the religious order he joined, and the values he embraced.

From Latin America to the World

Pope Francis is the first Pontiff elected from the American continent and the first in over a thousand years to hail from outside Europe. Born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina—known globally for its football legends—he

Continued on page 4

EDITORIAL



A GREAT SHEPHERD WHO HELD THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH CLOSE TO HIS HEART

Pope Francis has completed his earthly pilgrimage. As the successor of Peter, the guardian of God's people, and the Vicar of Christ on earth, he fulfilled the sacred mandate to strengthen his brethren in faith. Now, he enters the annals of history—not merely as a Pontiff, but as a transformative figure whose presence redefined the papacy for our time. Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who humbly chose the name Francis, made clear from the outset that his shepherding would break convention and awaken compassion.

The moment he stepped onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica and bowed his head to the crowd, saying, "Before I bless you, pray for me," the Church beheld something new: a theology of humility, love, and mutuality embodied in a single gesture. From that moment forward, the world witnessed a dramatic shift—from the formality that once typified global ecclesial leadership to a papacy marked by warmth, brotherhood, and authentic human connection. In Pope Francis, the successor of Peter was not elevated above the people, but stood among them, as one of them.

Even in confronting the atrocities of war and the agony of displacement, he did not hide behind the veil of diplomatic convention. In the suffering of refugees, the cries of the poor, the wounds of the abused, and the isolation of the forgotten, Pope Francis saw the feet of Christ. And he knelt—not as a symbol or spectacle, but in spontaneous and heartfelt acts of reverence and love. These were not performances; they were encounters with the sacred in the margins of society. In this, his pontificate radiated a compassion that transcended boundaries of faiths and nations. His appeal was universal because his love was unfeigned. He was not content merely to comfort; he sought also to reform. Pope Francis worked tirelessly to infuse new life into Church systems, addressing what had gone astray and renewing what needed restoration. His leadership brought not only healing but also clarity and vision.

Among the global Church, the Syro-Malabar faithful remember Pope Francis with special gratitude. He held the Syro-Malabar Church close to his heart, taking pains to understand its ancient and apostolic heritage. He supported its global growth with genuine paternal concern and affirmed its unique liturgical identity. His attention was not superficial; it was rooted in a deep conviction of the Church's apostolic dignity and the justice of its pastoral aspirations. It was from this commitment that Pope Francis extended pastoral jurisdiction to the Syro-Malabar Church throughout India—a recognition of its roots that trace back to St. Thomas the Apostle, who brought the Gospel to Indian shores in A.D. 52. With equal attentiveness, he called for structures to ensure that Syro-Malabar faithful in the Gulf nations would be cared for in ways faithful to their liturgical and spiritual traditions. On May 13, 2024, the address of the Holy Father Pope Francis during an audience given to the newly appointed Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil and the Permanent Synod in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Palace was not just ceremonial, but was indeed a declaration of recognition and support from the successor of Peter to the Syro-Malabar Church. His extraordinary interventions to settle the conflicts in the Archeparchy of the Ernakulam-Angamaly were not mere administrative acts, but expressions of pastoral care and ecclesial unity. In doing so, Pope Francis left a legacy of involvement, empathy, and courageous leadership.

Now Pope Francis has departed from our midst. But the paths he illuminated must not remain lofty ideals frozen in tribute. They must become the way forward—a call to authentic renewal in the Church, beginning with obedience, unity, and love. Let our remembrance of this Holy Father, who embraced our Church with such rare affection, become a living testament through our fidelity to the Church and obedience to the Hierarchy!

Tributes of love rise in memory of Pope Francis—a radiant light in a fractured world, a shepherd who walked with the people, and a Father who never ceased to embrace his flock!

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A DAY TO REMEMBER

May 1: Death Anniversary of Mar Mathew

Anikuzhikkattil (2020)

Episcopal Ordination Day of Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy (1973), Mar George Valiamattam (1988), Mar Andrews Thazhath (2004)

Feast Day of St. Joseph the Worker, patron of laborers

May 2 : Episcopal Ordination Day of Bishop Mar

Joseph Kallarangatt (2004)

Feast Day of St. Athanasius

May 3 : Feast Day of Apostles St. Philip and St. James

May 4 : Death Anniversary of Bishop Adolf Edwin

Medlycott (1918)

May 6 : Feast Day of St. Dominic Savio

May 11 : World Day of Prayer for Vocations

May 14 : Feast Day of Apostle St. Matthias

May 15 : Episcopal Ordination Day of Bishop Mar Jose Porunnedom (2004)

Feast Day of Mary, Protector of Harvests

May 18 : Feast Day of Mar Addai

May 20 : Inauguration First Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church (1993)

Enthronement First Major Archbishop Mar

Antony Padiyara (1993)

Episcopal Ordination Day of Bishop Mar Joseph

Perumthottam (2002)

May 26 : Episcopal Ordination Day of Archbishop

Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara (2012)

May 29 : Feast Day of the Ascension of Our Lord

Enthronement of Major Archbishop Mar George

Alencherry (2011)

May 31 : Episcopal Ordination Day of Bishop

Mar John Panamthottathil (2023)

Feast Day of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

May 16



Mar Joy Alappatt

▶▶ FESTAL GREETINGS ◀◀



PATHFINDERS

Rev. Dr. Alex Sebastian
Kollamkalam

Among the East Syriac Churches, the Anaphora of the Apostles used in liturgy is known by the names of Mar Addai and Mar Mari. Mar Addai, a disciple of St. Thomas the Apostle, was one among the seventy disciples of Jesus, as attested by St. Eusebius of Caesarea (Ecclesiastical History I, 13.4). The book Doctrine of Addai also states that he was one among the seventy-two disciples of the Lord. Instead of the name Addai, Eusebius uses the name Thaddeus in his Ecclesiastical History.

It is further recorded that King Abgar of Edessa, having heard of the miraculous powers of Jesus, sent him a letter requesting Him to come and heal him. Jesus responded saying that He had to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted by His Father and that after He returned to the Father, He would send one of His disciples. The one sent to King Abgar to fulfill this promise was Thaddeus, also known as Addai. Eusebius affirms that he personally read the historical records concerning Abgar and Jesus from the archives in Edessa (Ecclesiastical History I, 13.5). Soon after the ascension of Jesus, it was St. Thomas the Apostle

MAR ADDAI



who sent Mar Addai to Edessa to proclaim the Gospel.

Hearing about the wondrous deeds performed by Addai in Edessa, King Abgar invited him to the royal court. When Addai entered the court, the king saw in a vision that St. Thomas the Apostle was standing alongside him (Ecclesiastical History I, 13.13), and the king paid him homage with deep reverence.

When King Abgar said that if not for the Roman authority, he would have sent an army to rescue Jesus from the Jews, it was Mar Addai who made the king understand that Jesus fulfilled the will of His Father. After placing his hands on the king's head and healing him, Addai was asked by the king to preach about Jesus. Addai declared that he wished to preach the Lord publicly before the citizens of the kingdom (Ecclesiastical History I, 13.16,18,19). It was through Mar Addai that Edessa turned

to the Christian faith. The people, after hearing his preaching, destroyed the pagan altars and received baptism, as testified in the Doctrine of Addai.

Although the king wished to offer gold and silver to Addai, he refused, saying, "I who have renounced even what is mine, how can I take what belongs to another?" (Ecclesiastical History I, 13.20).

According to the Edessan calendar, all these events took place in the year 340 (AD 30), and the testimony of Eusebius aligns with the witness of Tertullian, Lactantius, and Augustine, who state that Jesus died in AD 30. While the Doctrine of Addai testifies that Addai's body was buried alongside the ancestors of the king, there is a historical error in the claim that his successor Aggai's successor Palut received episcopal consecration from Serapion of Antioch (190–203). ■

POPE FRANCIS, A GREAT LOVER OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



The profound care and strength offered by His Holiness Pope Francis to the Syro-Malabar Church during his twelve-year papacy cannot be adequately expressed in words.

When I had my first audience with



From the Heart of the Father and Head

the Holy Father after assuming office as the Major Archbishop on May 13, 2024, he told me with great clarity and conviction that although the Syro-Malabar Church currently does not hold pastoral jurisdiction in the Gulf regions, he recognizes our merit and is therefore granting us that right. He further explained that the canonical formalities regarding this matter would be communicated through the respective Dicastery.

In line with the Holy Father's directive, discussions were held under the leadership of Cardinal Parolin between representatives of the Syro-Malabar Church and officials from the relevant Dicastery. A decision has now been reached, and what remains is only the implementation of that decision.

One cannot forget the historic letter written by Pope Francis to the Bishops of

India on October 9, 2017. It was through this letter that he granted the Syro-Malabar Church All India Jurisdiction and established the Eparchy of Shamshabad. In this letter, the Pope emphasizes how the three individual churches in India—distinct in identity—should work together harmoniously and in fraternal spirit for the evangelization of the nation. It is a document that teaches us the beauty of ecclesial communion and underscores the vital importance of expressing our ecclesial identity within the Indian context.

I recall with gratitude how, during various difficult moments in the life of our Church—especially in matters concerning liturgy—the Pope communicated with us not only through letters but even via video messages. What stands out in Pope Francis' leadership is his unique approach: he came to know us personally and guided us with heartfelt love. Even in our most trying times, he never abandoned us but walked closely by our side.

It was during the papacy of Pope Francis that the ancient and prominent Basilica of Santa Anastasia, located in the heart of Rome, was granted to the Syro-Malabar Church for our pastoral use. This was a remarkable gesture that visibly expressed his deep affection for our Church. Today, the Holy Qurbana in the Syro-Malabar rite is celebrated daily in this Basilica. For our faithful scattered across Rome, this church has become a great spiritual blessing, offering a sacred space to celebrate our feasts and observe our traditions. No words can adequately



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convey the depth of our gratitude to Pope Francis for this generous gift.

Another visible sign of the Pope's love and trust in our Church was his elevation of Msgr. George Jacob Koovakkad to the rank of Cardinal and his appointment as the head of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue. Such decisions reflect the Holy Father's confidence in and concern for the Syro-Malabar Church.

With deep gratitude for the love, care, and strength that Pope Francis has bestowed upon our Church, I now offer my heartfelt homage before the memory of this holy shepherd. I am confident that from his place in heaven, the Holy Father will continue to intercede for our Church and strengthen us through his prayers. May the intercession of the Holy Father remain with us always.

MESSAGE OF THE CURIA BISHOP

Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurakal



On March 13, 2013, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, was elected the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church. Taking the name Francis, he officially assumed his role as Supreme Pontiff on March 19, 2013—the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

From the very outset, his words and deeds bore the mark of a distinctive and deeply personal pastoral style. Immediately after his election, when he appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica for the first time, he bowed his head and asked the faithful to pray for him before offering his blessing—an unforgettable moment that captured the hearts of millions. For the twelve years that followed, he never relinquished that place in people's hearts.

Choosing to reside at the Casa Santa Marta rather than the Apostolic Palace, in order to maintain closeness with

FRANCIS: THEN AND NOW

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the people; returning from a serious illness and 38-day hospital stay only

to immediately reappear in St. Peter's Basilica and Square to greet the faithful;

and offering his final blessing to the world on Easter Sunday 2025, only to pass into eternity the very next day—these are all deeply moving and enduring memories engraved in the minds of the global faithful.

People flocked from everywhere to see a Holy Father whose words and actions mirrored each other in harmony. On November 6, 2013, the world was given a closer look at the Pope's boundless compassion. On that day, Vinicio Riva, a 53-year-old man from Vicenza in northern Italy, afflicted by neurofibromatosis and severely disfigured, arrived at the Vatican with a longing to attend the Pope's general audience. When he boarded a bus to Rome and attempted to sit next to someone, the person shouted, "Don't come near!"

Continuation of page 1



➤ **He powerfully conveyed that God is not confined to traditionally perceived “holy places” but is present like a shadow even in unexpected people and situations.**

grew up in an era marked by crisis and limitation. Amidst health issues and hardships, his immigrant family held firmly to their faith. From his parents, Mario Bergoglio and Regina Sivori, he imbibed the foundations of Christian belief.

Political and economic instability in Argentina enabled him to see poverty and marginalization up close. His lived experiences trained him to treat the vulnerable with care. Compassion, integrity, simplicity, and humility became integral to his character.

The Joy of the Gospel

Gentle and heartfelt in all his interactions, Pope Francis’ demeanor reflected his inner convictions. Yet, when the moment called for it, he was never hesitant to speak uncomfortable truths or to take firm stances. Whether it was the construction of walls on the U.S.- Mexico border, the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, the bombings in Gaza, or the sight of hungry people wandering the streets of Rome, his moral outrage was evident.

He firmly asserted that clericalism in the Church and patriarchy in society must undergo reform. He consistently emphasized that dedication should lead to joy and strove to express the “joy of the Gospel” even in the face of crises.

A Clear Message through Simplicity

On March 13, 2013, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was elected the 266th successor to Saint Peter. Almost immediately, he expressed his vision not through words, but through action. Choosing the name and style of Francis of Assisi, he sent a clear message about his path.

He abandoned traditional papal symbols such as red shoes and golden crosses in favor of simpler attire. Before giving the traditional *Urbi et Orbi* blessing, he humbly asked for the people’s prayers and blessings—gestures symbolizing a necessary return to the foundational identity of being the “servant of the servants of God.”

In the Language of the People

Pope Francis is uniquely known for his efforts to seek out the lost sheep. He communicated in a language that everyone could understand—one of love, gentleness, and conviction. Even many agnostics and non-believers encountered the divine through him.

Regardless of place or circumstance, he spoke of God and the divine to all, and many hearts were deeply touched. As a member of the Society of Jesus, he brought the core of Ignatian spirituality to life—demonstrating to the world how to live seeking God who is present in all things, at all times, and in every place.

He powerfully conveyed that God is not confined to traditionally perceived “holy places” but is present like a shadow even in unexpected people and situations. He called everyone—especially Christians—to recognize and revere the saints in our midst: in our own homes and neighborhoods. Through this invitation, Pope Francis reminded us that holiness is possible for all, everywhere.

A Media Luminary

When Pope Francis began his papacy, the world was at the peak of a social media revolution. It is noteworthy that he navigated this reality with great wisdom and grace. While Saint John Paul II was

a beloved figure in the traditional media era, Pope Francis embraced the expanded possibilities of digital media to take evangelization in new directions.

He remained ever approachable to the media. By embracing traditional values while introducing modern modes of expression, he explored every possible avenue for evangelization. His appearances on Italy’s popular RAI television programs, where he engaged with everyday hosts, helped raise the reach of the Gospel to extraordinary levels.

A Language that United Humanity

Pope Francis always spoke in a language accessible to everyone. His words redefined meanings and gave new dimensions to familiar terms. Though born into an Italian immigrant family in Argentina, he deliberately refrained from overusing his fluency in Italian and Spanish. Instead, he chose plain, simple words that carried deep and relatable meanings—thereby creating a universal language of fraternity that transcended borders and ideologies.

Whenever he spoke, people felt, “He is speaking to me.”

Herald of Ecological Stewardship

Through encyclicals like *Laudato Si’* (“Praise Be to You”) and other apostolic exhortations, Pope Francis emerged as a prophetic voice for environmental care. He urged the world to love and respect nature and the planet. His appeals to cherish and protect Earth have been foundational for many decisions taken by the United Nations and global organizations working on environmental issues.

Advocate of Gender Equality

Pope Francis also took significant steps in appointing women to key Vatican positions. Notably, he appointed Sr. Simona Brambilla as the prefect of a major Vatican Dicastery, Sr. Nathalie Becquart as undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, and Sr. Raffaella Petrini as governor of the Vatican City State. These appointments marked important strides toward the empowerment of women within the Church.

Honored by Great and Small Alike

Leaders and high-level delegates from over 130 nations came to the Vatican to pay their respects during his funeral rites. They filled St. Peter’s Square and the Basilica with reverent tributes. The private meeting between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during this time drew particular international attention.

Pope Francis made earnest efforts to find a resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. When his body was brought to the Basilica of St. Mary Major for burial, the world noted who was chosen to carry it and who was invited to offer flowers. Both dignitaries and the poor were present there. In accordance with the Pope’s own wishes, the last viewing before burial was granted primarily to the homeless people of Rome.

A Universal Shepherd of All

The Catholic Church is both universal and inclusive. Pope Francis, who firmly held onto the mission of reclaiming the lost sheep, captured the hearts of the world with his preferential option for the poor and progressive vision. This prophetic voice of humanity now steps behind the curtain of time, having gifted the world a vision of Earth as a more compassionate, loving, and hopeful home. ■

ECCLESIAL TEACHINGS OF POPE FRANCIS



JOURNEY OF FAITH & LEARNING

Rev. Dr. Sebastian Chalackal

Pope Francis has consistently demonstrated a distinctly pastoral approach in his teachings. Moving away from the typical mode of instruction that relies heavily on definitions, theological frameworks, and formal presentations, he has succeeded in offering ecclesial teachings in a practical and accessible manner. His reflections are not analytical dissertations in the academic sense, but rather, he perceives and communicates ecclesial matters through the eyes of a shepherd. This article presents a concise summary of the encyclicals and apostolic exhortations of Pope Francis.

1. Encyclicals

Pope Francis has authored four encyclicals:

1.1. *Lumen Fidei* (“The Light of Faith”)

This first encyclical of Pope Francis was published on July 5, 2013, during the Year of Faith observed by the Universal Church. The initial draft was completed by Pope Benedict XVI before his resignation. Pope Francis adopted the text, adding his own insights to complete the document. It contains four chapters and centers on the theme: *Faith is Light*. This light illuminates the human heart and touches every sphere of human existence. It is a divine light that does not originate from us, but from God. We are merely instruments, with God being the ultimate actor.

1.2. *Laudato Si* (“Praise Be to You”)

Published on June 18, 2015, this encyclical addresses environmental issues. Inspired by the ecological vision of St. Francis of Assisi, it spans six chapters and outlines the challenges our common home—the Earth—faces, the root causes of these crises, and practical responses. Among the challenges are pollution, climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, declining quality of human life, and global inequalities. Though technology has advanced civilization, some interpret science as a license to exploit nature for consumption or as a disposable commodity. The encyclical asserts that nature should not be viewed as separate from us or merely as our habitat—we are an integral part of it.

1.3. *Fratelli Tutti* (“All Brothers”)

This encyclical was released on October 4, 2020, drawing inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi’s vision of universal fraternity. Through its eight chapters, Pope Francis advocates a vision of global human fraternity. Topics include social,



✦ **Through his ecclesial teachings, Pope Francis demonstrates a profound ability to engage with the contemporary world. His writings offer both spiritual insight and practical wisdom—not only for Christians but for people of all faiths. They serve as guiding lights for our times.**

political, and economic responsibilities toward one another as children of God and brothers and sisters; the inherent dignity and equality of all people; preferential concern for the poor; community; peace-building; and environmental stewardship. The encyclical laments the growing disregard for the dignity and worth of individuals, particularly the poor and differently abled. While human rights are theoretically accepted, exploitation and elimination of individuals for vested interests persist. Despite claims of poverty eradication, economic inequality has worsened, and basic necessities remain inaccessible for many. Pope Francis reminds us to see Christ in the neglected and wounded.

1.4. *Dilexit Nos* (“He Loved Us”)

Published on October 24, 2024, this encyclical focuses on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially His human and divine love. It commemorates the 350th anniversary of Jesus’ apparitions to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the apostle of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Comprising five chapters, the encyclical presents God as compassionate and near—revealed through Jesus’ words and actions. Jesus paid attentive care to individuals and their needs. True devotion to His Sacred Heart should guide us to love God and our brothers and sisters. Among the noblest acts of reciprocating Christ’s love is to love others with sincerity.

2. Apostolic Exhortations

Pope Francis has issued seven apostolic exhortations:

2.1. *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”)

Issued on November 24, 2013, this exhortation discusses evangelization in the modern world. It reflects on the Synod held in Rome from October 7–28, 2012, which focused on the transmission of the Christian faith and new evangelization. In five chapters, the Pope elaborates on the Church’s missionary role and social dimension. It explores the joy of sharing the Gospel and the joy of Christian life. Pope Francis highlights the challenges and distinct characteristics of evangelizing in today’s context.

2.2. *Amoris Laetitia* (“The Joy of Love”)

Published on April 8, 2016, this exhortation builds upon the two Synods on the family held in 2014 and 2015, integrating their insights with Pope Francis’ own teachings. Spread across nine chapters, the document views the family as a unit of interconnected relationships and community. The Church is the family of families. Supporting family life is a core duty of the Church.

2.3. *Gaudete et Exsultate* (“Rejoice and Be Glad”)

Released on March 19, 2018, this exhortation emphasizes the call to holiness. It should be read in the context of *Evangelii Gaudium*. Through five chapters, the Pope reflects on the inseparable link between holiness and joy. The gift of holiness is abundantly poured out by the Holy Spirit upon all the faithful. Besides canonized saints and martyrs, many live holy lives among us—our parents, siblings, clergy, and religious. Each person must strive toward holiness according to their own state in life.

2.4. *Christus Vivit* (“Christ Lives”)

Addressed to young people, this

exhortation begins with the affirmation: “Christ lives; He is our hope.” It emerged from the Youth Synod held from October 3–28, 2018, in the Vatican. Comprising nine chapters, the document addresses how today’s youth often fall prey to ideological manipulations or the schemes of political and economic powers. Pope Francis assures that God loves young people and urges the Church to walk with them as a supportive community.

2.5. *Querida Amazonia* (“Beloved Amazonia”)

Published on February 12, 2020, this four-chapter exhortation draws on the Synod held from October 4–27, 2019, focused on new paths for the Church in the Amazon and integral ecology. It reflects the discussions and insights of bishops, indigenous representatives, and experts. The document provides a general roadmap for addressing the Amazon region’s social, ecological, pastoral, and moral challenges across nine countries.

2.6. *Laudate Deum* (“Praise God”)

Signed on October 4, 2023—the feast of St. Francis of Assisi—this exhortation serves as a continuation and contextual update of the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*. Its central concern is the climate crisis, which Pope Francis identifies as the greatest current threat to humanity. Divided into six parts and comprising 73 sections, it emphasizes the urgency of public awareness and our shared responsibility to preserve ecological balance in creation.

2.7. *C’est la Confiance* (“It Is Confidence”)

Published on October 15, 2023, this exhortation begins with the words of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: “It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love.” It was released in honor of the 150th anniversary of her birth, the centenary of her canonization, and in recognition of her being included by the United Nations among the most influential spiritual figures of the age. The document, spread over four chapters, encapsulates the core spirituality of St. Thérèse.

Conclusion

Beyond these encyclicals and apostolic exhortations, Pope Francis has also issued apostolic letters, *motu proprio*, and apostolic constitutions. Many of these documents are essential for the governance and day-to-day functioning of the Church. Through his ecclesial teachings, Pope Francis demonstrates a profound ability to engage with the contemporary world. His writings offer both spiritual insight and practical wisdom—not only for Christians but for people of all faiths. They serve as guiding lights for our times. ■

Sr. Tina Kunnel SKD (Mother General)

The evangelical counsels, which lead to charity, join their followers to the Church and its mystery in a special way. Since this is so, the spiritual life of these people should then be devoted to the welfare of the whole Church" (LG 44). Drawing inspiration from this Council teaching, Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy, the Bishop of the Eparchy of Mananthavady (1973 - 1995), encouraged religious congregations and their diverse charisms and apostolates. According to Perfectae Caritatis No 19, "Particularly in those areas, where churches are recently established, those forms of religious life should be promoted and developed which take into account the genius and way of life of the inhabitants and the customs and conditions of the regions." It was the pressing pastoral and missionary needs of the Eparchy of Mananthavady that encouraged Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy to form a new religious Society.

The Eparchy of Mananthavady was established for the migrant population from central Kerala. As people continued to migrate, Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy recognised the need for a group of dedicated women who would directly serve and empower the people in local parish communities which were backward in educational, social, cultural and spiritual domains. This idea, strongly supported by many, was acknowledged as a necessity. Convinced of this need and discerning the will of God in the voices of many, and encouraged and confirmed by the clergy and laity of the Eparchy, Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy, the then Bishop of

KRISTU DASIS FOR CHRIST



✦ **The Charism of the Society of *Kristu Dasis* is 'Servanthood to Christ'. It is modelled after Christ who humbled himself, taking the form of a slave and was obedient unto death, a death on the cross. (Ph. 2:7-8). Reading the signs of times and discerning the will of God, the *Kristu Dasi* Society formulates its apostolate and style of functioning. They model themselves after Christ, who emptied himself on the cross, their guiding force.**

the Eparchy of Mananthavady, founded the Kristudasi Society on May 19, 1977. What makes SKD unique is its origin in the heart of the local Church, founded by a local hierarch, nurtured, and patronised by the same, extending its existence to meet the needs and requirements of the Church and the people of God.

The Charism of the Society of *Kristu Dasis* is 'Servanthood to Christ'. It is modelled after Christ who humbled himself, taking the form of a slave and was obedient unto death, a death on the cross. (Ph. 2:7-8). Reading the signs of times and discerning the will of God, the *Kristu Dasi* Society formulates its apostolate and style of functioning. They model themselves

after Christ, who emptied himself on the cross, their guiding force.

Holy Mary, the Mother of God is the inspiration of the congregation, and the slogan of every SKD member is "Behold the handmaid of the Lord". The 'Blessed Virgin Mary at the Annunciation' is the heavenly patroness of the Society of *Kristu Dasis*. Mary, who went in haste to meet her cousin Elizabeth, after the annunciation is the model of every SKD sister. The main areas of apostolate of Society of *Kristu Dasis* include family apostolate, social apostolate, healing ministry, educational ministry and preaching ministry. Through these apostolates, the SKD sisters spread the love of Christ in the world attracting

many to His divine life.

The good Lord was prodigious in showering His abundant blessings upon the Society of *Kristu Dasis*. Spreading its wings over the globe, SKD's witness the Gospel on different continents. Its members work inter-continently in Asia, Europe, Africa, and America. The motto of the founder, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19), exhorts members of the congregation to take up challenging apostolates for the greater glory of God and the good of brethren, responding humbly with Mother Mary "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word".

DELUSIONAL DISORDER: FACTS TO RECOGNIZE



Rev. Dr. Sijon Kuzhikkattumyali

Delusional Disorder, also known as paranoia, is a condition in which a person strongly believes something false to be true and continues to hold that belief even when presented with clear evidence to the contrary. These delusions must not be the result of physical causes or the influence of intoxicants. Though it is classified as a serious psychiatric illness, delusional disorder is generally less common than many other mental disorders.

Delusional beliefs may take various forms. For instance, a person may mistakenly believe that their spouse is being unfaithful to them, a condition categorized as the jealous type. Some may believe that others are harassing them, conspiring against them, or creating obstacles in their path, which is known as the persecutory type. Others may hold false beliefs about their physical health, referred to as the somatic type. Some individuals believe

they have a deep relationship with God or famous personalities, or that they possess exceptional talents or powers; this is known as the grandiose type. Another form is the erotomanic type, where a person falsely believes that someone of high status is in love with them and they persistently try to meet that person. There are also bizarre delusions, which are implausible, difficult to understand, and unrelated to daily life.

Symptoms of this disorder include one or more delusional beliefs that persist for a month or more. Even while living with these delusions, individuals may function normally in their daily lives without any noticeable impairments. However, some may show intense anger or aggressive behavior and are usually unwilling to accept any logical reasoning against their beliefs.

The causes of delusional disorder can be varied. Hereditary factors, increased levels of the chemical dopamine in the brain, and functional disruptions in areas such as the temporal lobe, limbic system, and basal ganglia are commonly observed in individuals with this disorder. Sigmund Freud proposed the theory that unexpressed psychological conflicts rooted in the unconscious mind can lead to such conditions. Additionally, unfavorable



✦ **Psychological education for family members plays a vital role here. Alongside medication, supportive psychotherapy can also be provided to help the individual cope with the distress caused by delusional beliefs.**

financial and educational backgrounds, substance abuse, and alcoholism may also contribute to the development of delusional disorder.

The most effective treatment involves the use of antipsychotic medications, which help regulate dopamine levels in the brain. If a person is mentally shattered due to suspicion and abuse from a partner, reassuring them that treatment can

help restore their former life can provide significant encouragement. Psychological education for family members plays a vital role here. Alongside medication, supportive psychotherapy can also be provided to help the individual cope with the distress caused by delusional beliefs. If treatment is initiated within six months of the onset of the disorder, there is a much higher likelihood of improvement and reduction of symptoms.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PROTOPRESBYTERS



CANON LAW

Rev. Dr. Joshy Kulathingal

When the size of eparchies and the number of parishes increased, the Church began to divide the eparchy into several provinces for pastoral convenience. In these divided provinces, some priests were appointed to supervise and properly administer pastoral affairs. In the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), such provinces are called protopresbyterates and the priest appointed as their authority is called protopresbyter. We usually call them Forane Vicars. Canons 276 to 278 of the Code of CCEO deal with Forane Vicars.

The protopresbyter is a presbyter who is placed over a district consisting of several parishes so that, in the name of the eparchial bishop and in the same district, he may fulfill the functions determined by law. The eparchial bishop, having heard, if he considers it opportune, the pastors and parochial vicars of the district in question, is to appoint a presbyter especially among the pastors, outstanding for his doctrine and apos-

✦ **The eparchial bishop, having heard, if he considers it opportune, the pastors and parochial vicars of the district in question, is to appoint a presbyter especially among the pastors, outstanding for his doctrine and apostolic fervor.**

tolitic fervor. As per the common law, the office of protopresbyter must not be joined in a stable manner to the office of pastor of a certain parish. However, a different law can be made in the particular law of each *sui iuris* Church. As per the particular law of our Church, the office of protopresbyter shall be joined in a stable manner to the office of the parish priest of a certain parish (art. 17, PLSMC). The Forane offices operate in conjunction with these churches. The term of office of a protopresbyter shall be as that of the parish priest of the eparchy. It belongs to the eparchial bishop, after consulting the presbyteral council, to establish, change and suppress this type of district (forane) according to the needs of pastoral action.

The obligations of the Forane Vicars is to participate to some extent in the responsibilities and duties of the eparchial bishop and to assist the bishop in fulfilling these responsibilities. The rights and duties of the Forane Vicars, as detailed in CCEO (can. 278), are as follows: to coordinate and promote common pastoral activity, see to it that clerics lead a life in harmony with their own state and that

they diligently fulfill their obligations, see to it that the Divine Liturgy and the divine praises are celebrated according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books, that the good appearance and condition of the churches and sacred furnishings are carefully maintained especially in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and custody of the Divine Eucharist, that ecclesiastical goods are carefully administered and, finally, that the parish house is properly cared for.

In the district entrusted to him the protopresbyter is to see that clerics attend meetings which the local hierarch judges appropriate for promoting the sacred sciences and pastoral affairs. He is to take care that clerics have ready access to spiritual helps, and be particularly concerned about those who are found in more difficult circumstances or are beset with problems. The protopresbyter is to take care that the pastors whom he knows to be seriously ill, do not lack spiritual and material assistance and that the funerals of those who have died are celebrated with dignity. He is also to provide that when they are sick or

have died the books, documents, sacred furnishings and other things which pertain to the Church are not lost or removed. The protopresbyter is bound by the obligation of visiting the parishes according to the determination made by the eparchial bishop.

In addition to these duties and responsibilities, there are many other references in CCEO to the duties of the Forane Vicar. The Forane Vicar may be consulted when appointing parish priests (can. 285 §3). As a member of the eparchial assembly, the Forane Vicar has the responsibility to participate in it (can. 238 §1n.5). In addition, the particular law of the Syro-Malabar Church also outlines certain rights of the Forane Vicars (art. 19, PLSMC). The Forane Vicar shall have the power of installing a newly appointed Parish Priest in his district, to give dispensation from two marriage banns, to permit publication of marriage banns before betrothal and to preside over the periodic meetings of the clergy of the forane. In addition, the eparchial bishop may add further rights and duties to the Forane Vicars in the particular law of each eparchy. ■

IS DIVORCE PERMISSIBLE?



EXPLORING BIBLE QUESTIONS:

Rev. Dr. Antony Vadakkekara VC

“But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery” (Matthew 5:32).

“Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9).

When the Pharisees asked Jesus about his opinion on divorce, he clarified that marriage is a divine institution and is indivisible. Therefore, divorce was not permitted, citing the Old Testament scriptures (Genesis 1:27; 2:24) as support (Matthew 19:3-6). The Pharisees then questioned him further: “Why then did Moses command that a certificate of divorce be given so that a wife could be dismissed?” (Matthew 19:7). In response, Jesus stated: “Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” While Jesus insists that divorce is never permissible,



he acknowledges sexual immorality as an exception. Does this create a contradiction in his statements?

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus has clearly stated that divorce is never permissible (Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18). When asked about Moses allowing divorce for the Israelites (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), Jesus provided a noteworthy response: “Moses permitted you to divorce

your wives because of the hardness of your hearts; but it was not so from the beginning” (Matthew 19:8). This was a permission, not a command. “The Lord, the God of Israel, hates divorce” (Malachi 2:16). The reason is that through marriage, man and woman become one, as per God’s will; humanity does not have the right to undo this divine union.

The only reason Jesus permits divorce is sexual immorality. The Greek word used for sexual immorality is ‘Porneia,’ which is a general term referring to various forms of sexual misconduct. For adultery, the Greek word ‘Moicheia’ is used. In Matthew 19:9 and 5:32, the term ‘Porneia’ is used, not ‘Moicheia.’ Given the divine law that marriage should never be dissolved for any reason, it cannot be concluded that Jesus allowed divorce on the grounds of adultery.

How should one interpret the term sexual immorality as mentioned in Matthew 19:9 and 5:32? St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (5:1-2) sheds light on this. “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not even occur among the Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 5:1a). The Ma-

layalam translation of sexual immorality comes from the Greek word ‘Porneia.’ Paul further clarifies the specific nature of this immoral relationship in the second part of the verse: “A man has his father’s wife!” (1 Corinthians 5:1b). By father’s wife, the reference is not to one’s mother but to one of the father’s wives. Such relationships were strictly forbidden and considered legally invalid among the Israelites. “Do not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife; it is your father’s nakedness” (Leviticus 18:8). The Book of Leviticus lists many such restricted relationships (18:6-23). The immorality mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1 refers to an unlawful and illegitimate relationship. Therefore, cohabitation between such individuals is not considered a valid marriage, nor can their separation be seen as a divorce in legal or spiritual terms.

In light of 1 Corinthians 5:1, Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 refers to cohabitation with individuals in restricted relationships. The Book of Leviticus lists various categories of individuals who fall under such restrictions (18:6-23). Since relationships with such individuals are legally invalid, they cannot be considered marriages, nor can their separation be regarded as divorce. Therefore, Jesus’ command “that marriage should never be dissolved” does not contradict his statement in Matthew 19:9 and 5:32. ■

ADIEU, POPE F

Pope Francis, the father and head of the Catholic Church, will now live on in history and memory. Having lived as an embodiment of simplicity for twelve years, one month, and eight days on the high seat of the great fisherman, bearing the name of St. Francis of Assisi and following his example, Pope Francis entered eternal rest on Easter Monday, April 21, 2025, at 7.35 am Italian time.

Since the beginning of February, the Pope had been experiencing difficulties due to respiratory issues. On February 14, he was admitted to the Gemelli Hospital in Rome. Following a diagnosis of bilateral pneumonia, he received expert medical care. However, at one point, his condition became extremely critical, leading the world to immerse in prayers for his recovery. As a result of these prayers, he was discharged on March 23.

Although slowly, he was returning to normal life. At the end of the Palm Sunday liturgy, he appeared in a wheelchair, greeted the faithful, and wished them a blessed Holy Week. Although he did not participate in the foot-washing ceremony of Holy Thursday, he did not forget to visit and meet inmates in prison, as was his custom. On Easter day, he imparted the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing to the city of Rome and the entire world. However, the very next day, due to a stroke and cardiac arrest, the Pope unexpectedly bade farewell to the world. The Camerlengo, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, officially announced the Pope's death to the world.

From April 23 to 25, Pope Francis' body was placed for public viewing at St. Peter's Basilica. His mortal remains were brought in



His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, the Major Archbishop, pays homage to the Holy Father in St. Peter's Basilica



Cardinal Mar George Alencherry near the mortal remains of Pope Francis in the Basilica.



Kerala Presence in the Funeral Ceremonies

At the funeral rites of Pope Francis, Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, Syro-Malankara Major Archbishop Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis, Cardinal Mar George Jacob Koovakad, and Major Archbishop *Emeritus* Cardinal Mar George Alencherry were present. Union Minister of State Sri. George Kurian, State of Kerala Minister for Water Resources, Sri. Roshy Augustine, and Sri. Chandy Oommen MLA were also present to pay their final respects to the Pope. Among those chosen to accompany the final journey of Pope Francis with the floral tribute up to the burial site was Nia, a fourth-grade student and a member of the Santa Anastasia Basilica parish in the Vatican, which is entrusted to the Syro-Malabar Church.



RANCIS!



procession from the chapel on the lower floor of Santa Marta, his official residence. Over five lakh people paid their last respects to the deceased Pope until the coffin was closed for the funeral rites. Many waited for over five hours in the long queue. Public viewing continued until 7 pm on Friday. Cardinal Kevin Farrell closed the coffin at 8 pm on Friday night.

On Saturday morning at 10 am (1:30 pm Indian time), the funeral rites began in the courtyard of St. Peter's Basilica, presided over by Cardinal Dean Giovanni Battista Re. Cardinal Re said that everyone should pray for Pope Francis' soul as God welcomes him into everlasting joy. He recalled that it was Pope Francis' conviction that the Church is a home with always-open doors for everyone, and that this belief inspired the Pope to describe the Church as a "field hospital of action."

Following the Holy Mass and prayers, the mortal remains were transferred to the Pope mobile at Santa Marta Square and then taken in a funeral procession to the Church of Our Lady, located six kilometers away. According to the Pope's wish, the burial was carried out in the simplest manner, with all decorations removed at the designated spot.

Indian President Droupadi Murmu, U.S. President Donald Trump and his wife Melania, French President Emmanuel Macron, Argentine President Javier Milei, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and others participated in the funeral ceremonies. More than six hundred thousand people from different parts of the world attended the Pope's funeral rites.



Mary Major Basilica and Pope Francis

The mortal of Popes are usually interred in St. Peter's Basilica. However, Pope Francis, diverging from this tradition, had expressed in his will as early as 2022 his wish to be buried in the Mary Major Basilica, where he regularly went to pray. Accordingly, arrangements have been made for his final resting place in the Basilica dedicated to the Mother of God. Notably, Pope Francis would not be the first to be buried there. Seven Popes have been laid to rest in this church before him: Pope Honorius III, Pope Nicholas IV, Saint Pius V, Pope Sixtus V, Pope Clement VIII, Pope Paul V, and Pope Clement IX.

WE BELIEVE IN ONE, HOLY, APOSTOLIC, AND CATHOLIC CHURCH



Rev. Dr. Thomas Melvettath

The Church: A Plan Born in the Heart of the Father

The Eternal Father, out of His perfect wisdom, goodness, and entirely free and mysterious will, created the whole universe. He willed to raise humanity into divine life and, for this, calls all people through His Son. God the Father determined to call those who believe in Christ into the Holy Church. Gradually, a family of God was formed (CCC 759). This community, foreordained from the beginning of the world, is the Church. The world itself was created for the sake of the Church; God's purpose is the salvation of humanity, which is carried out through the Church. Creation is willed by God and is called the "world." Likewise, His purpose is salvation, and that is called the "Church" (CCC 760).

The Church Prepared in the Old Covenant (CCC 761)

Among all nations, anyone who fears God and acts righteously is acceptable to Him. As explained in CCC 762, God called Abraham to prepare for the unification of His people and promised that he would become the father of a great nation. The prophets reminded the people of their covenantal responsibilities.

The Church Established in Christ (CCC 763)

Proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God, the Lord Messiah initiated His Church. This Kingdom is revealed



✦ The Church "will only attain its perfection in the heavenly glory" with the glorious return of Christ. Until that day, the Church journeys as a pilgrim through the tribulations of this world and the consolations offered by God.

through Christ's words, actions, and presence (CCC 764). Until the fullness of the Kingdom is realized, Jesus instituted a structure to remain, forming a community. He chose twelve apostles, appointing Peter as their head (CCC 765). The Church was born primarily from the complete self-giving of Christ, first through the institution of the Holy Eucharist for our salvation, and ultimately on the cross. The "blood and water" that flowed from the side of the crucified Jesus symbolizes the Church's origin and growth (CCC 766).

The Church Made Manifest by the Holy Spirit (CCC 767)

When the mission entrusted to the Son by the Father was completed, the Holy Spirit was sent on Pentecost to sanctify the Church. To enable the Church to fulfill its mission, the Holy Spirit guides it through diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts (CCC 768).

The Church Perfected in Glory (CCC 769)

The Church "will only attain its perfection in the heavenly glory" with the glorious return of Christ. Until that day, the Church journeys as a pilgrim through the tribulations of this world and the consolations offered by God.

The People of God (CCC 782)

This people is distinct from all others in religious, racial, ethical, and cultural aspects. It is the People of God. Membership in this people is not by birth but through rebirth from above—through water and the Spirit. Christ (the Messiah) is its head; it is a messianic people. They share in the dignity and freedom of the children of God. Its law is the new commandment to love one another as Christ has loved us. The mission of this people is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Its destiny is the Kingdom of God, which has begun on earth through God's

initiative and will reach its fulfillment at the end of time.

The Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

These four attributes of the Church are inseparably connected and interrelated. It is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes His Church possess these qualities. The Church is called to manifest each of these characteristics (CCC 811). Only through faith can we understand that the Church receives these attributes from its divine source (CCC 812).

The Communion of Saints (CCC 946–962)

The Apostles' Creed includes "the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints." In essence, what is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints? The communion of saints is the Church. Since all believers form one body, the good of each is shared with the others. This communion has two meanings: the communion in "holy things" (*sancta*) and the communion among "holy persons" (*sancti*).

The Sharing of Spiritual Goods

1. **Communion in Faith (CCC 949)**
2. **Communion in the Sacraments (CCC 950)**
3. **Communion in Charisms or Spiritual Gifts (CCC 951)**
4. **Communion in Love (CCC 952)**

The Union Between the Heavenly and Earthly Church

There are three states of the Church: When the Lord comes in glory with all His angels, death will be destroyed, and everything will be subjected to Him (CCC 954).

1. We are those on earth, journeying as pilgrims.
2. This communion is strengthened by sharing in spiritual goods.
3. Some are undergoing purification.
4. Others already glorify the Triune God by seeing Him clearly.



Rev. Dr. James Puliurumbil

St Ephrem in many of his poems refers to the Indian mission of St Thomas. In his many hymns we find St Ephrem praising the Apostle Thomas and this testifies the fact India is the field of his evangelization, death and burial. In particular, he articulates the contemporary living tradition in Edessa on the relics of the Apostle and on his mission in India. Ephrem's concentration is on the theme of translation of Thomas' relics to Edessa, which was a very great event in the history of the Edessan Church. That is the reason why Ephrem devotes a lot of time and energy for the description of this event in his various writings.

In the *Carmina Nisibena* 42 Ephrem sings of the transfer of the relics of the apostle from India to Edessa. This hymn

is composed of 10 stanzas which is a complaint on the part of the devil about his defeat in the face of the work of redemption realized by Jesus and continued by his apostles. The first four stanzas deal with Thomas and the rest with the other apostles. In three more hymns we find Ephrem praising St Thomas and India. These hymns are not given special titles. Therefore, they are treated as *Madrasha* (Hymn) I, *Madrasha* II and *Madrasha* III. *Madrasha* I or Hymn I of St Ephrem is full with notes regarding Thomas and India. They are testimonies to the Indian mission of St Thomas. *Madrasha* II is another collection of hymns of St Ephrem, which are related to the Indian Church history. *Madrasha* II consists of eight stanzas, except the IV and V, where also

we read about St Thomas. *Madrasha* III of St Ephrem is another source to study the ancient history of the Indian Church. This hymn has all together six stanzas. In this hymn in three stanzas we find references to St Thomas and India.

There is still another collection of hymns called *Hymni Dispersi* V, VI and VII. These hymns too contain some references to St Thomas. The *Memre for New Sunday*, another set of hymns, also gives references to Thomas. It is a very beautiful, poetical and impressive text exalting the memory of Thomas. According to this text his behaviour was a kind of love for Jesus, which expresses itself by touching. Thomas is sad because the Lord appeared to the others and bestowed on them the joy to see Him and

receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus responds to this love.

We find Ephrem extolling Edessa for having obtained the relics of the apostle Thomas from India, 'a country celebrated for its pearls'. According to him Edessa has now acquired this pearl. The facts relating to the apostle with his mission and death in India are not attested by the one individual St Ephrem, but by the whole church of Edessa. Ephrem was not merely presenting his personal views on the subject, but putting forward through the hymns the knowledge and the beliefs of the people of a nation. Since most of these hymns were incorporated in the Liturgy of the Syrian Church, and were sung frequently in the churches, they give emphatic support to the facts of the Indian mission of St Thomas.

ST EPHREM ON THE INDIAN CHURCH

✦ We find Ephrem extolling Edessa for having obtained the relics of the apostle Thomas from India, 'a country celebrated for its pearls'. According to him Edessa has now acquired this pearl. The facts relating to the apostle with his mission and death in India are not attested by the one individual St Ephrem, but by the whole church of Edessa.

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third scrutineers. The third scrutineer reads the name aloud for all to hear.

After reading, the ballot papers are threaded together with a needle through the word Eligo (“I elect”).

Within the first four days, up to four votes (two in the morning, two in the afternoon) can take place each day. If no Pope is elected within four days, there is

a pause for a day of prayer, reflection, and informal discussion. After this break, voting resumes for another seven rounds. If a deadlock persists, only the two candidates with the most votes will remain on the ballot, and the one who receives a simple majority will be elected.

6. The Smoke Signals

The only clue to outsiders about the

voting is the smoke from the Sistine Chapel chimney, after each session. If black smoke appears, it means no decision has been made. If white smoke appears, it means a new Pope has been elected. The color is achieved by mixing chemicals with the burned ballots.

7. Habemus Papam (We have a Pope)

Once a Pope is elected, the Dean of

the College of Cardinals, or the most senior Cardinal, approaches the elected candidate to ask whether he accepts the election and what Papal name he chooses. The new Pope then goes into the Room of Tears, a small room near the Sistine Chapel, where he dons the traditional papal vestments — prepared in three sizes to fit any elected individual.

After donning the vestments, he returns to the Cardinals. A portion of the Gospel is read aloud, a prayer is said, and the Cardinals express their love and respect for the new Pope.

Meanwhile, the Protodeacon Cardinal appears on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica and announces in Latin: “*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum; Habemus Papam!*” (“I announce to you a great joy; We have a Pope!”)

8. To the City and to the World

Soon after, the new Pope steps onto the balcony framed by red drapes and delivers his first Apostolic Blessing, known as the *Urbi et Orbi* (“to the City and to the World”).

Thus ends the intricate process of the Conclave. In the following days, the new Pope participates in the inauguration Mass held at St. Peter’s Basilica and formally assumes the responsibilities as the head of the Catholic Church.

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MASSIVE CHRISTIAN RALLY FOR COMMUNITY RIGHTS DEMONSTRATES UNITY



Kozhikode: A massive Christian Community Rights Proclamation Rally, organized by the Catholic Congress Thamarassery Eparchial Committee with support from various eparchial organizations, made a powerful impact in the city. Tens of thousands participated from different parishes. The rally, which began at the Christian College Grounds, spanned several kilometers, forming a human sea. The public meeting held at Muthalakkulam Ground, named Mon. Antony Kozhuvanal Nagar, was packed, symbolizing Christian unity.

Leaders at the event strongly asserted that the Christian community will collectively resist favoritism in politics, government

neglect, and injustice. Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany of Tellicherry Archdiocese, who inaugurated the meeting, declared that the Christian community is not a “fixed deposit” for any political party and will act with discernment. He emphasized that the Church sees the Waqf issue as a matter of social justice and demands protection of the rights of all citizens. He urged the Kerala government to release the J.B. Koshy Report and warned of forming a wildlife defense force to resist forest officials unlawfully entering homes.

Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil demanded the resignation of the Forest Minister, citing the minister’s blindness to farmers’ concerns and criti-

cizing ineffective laws that fail to protect the farming community from wild animals. He insisted the authorities must amend the ASEAN agreement that harms farmers and questioned why the J.B. Koshy Commission report remains unpublished.

Catholic Congress Diocesan Director Fr. Sabin Thoomullil announced a 19-point declaration of rights, handed over to Catholic Congress Global Secretary Mr. Rajeev Kochuparambil, Mon. Abraham Vayalil, Prof. Chacko Kalamparambil, Dr. Prakash Thomas, Mr. George Koikkal, Mr. Benny Lukose, Alphonse Mathew, Dr. Josukutty Ozhukayil, and Shaji Kandathil also addressed the gathering.

EUCHARISTIC PROCESSION IN THE EPARCHY OF KOTHAMANGALAM AS REPARATION FOR OFFENSES AGAINST HOLY QURBANA

Kothamangalam: For the first time in the history of the Kothamangalam Eparchy, a Divine Eucharistic Procession was organized as a remedy for offenses committed against the Holy *Qurbana*, as well as a powerful spiritual defense against the influences of evil. This procession was conducted throughout the eparchy in all 14 parishes. The procession began on March 27 at the St. Alphonsa Church in Uppukun, Karimannoor, with the Holy *Qurbana* as its central focus. His Excellency Mar George Mathathikandathil, the eparchial bishop, presided over the Holy *Qurbana* and offered the main liturgical leadership. The Divine Eucharistic Procession, which took place over 14 days, concluded on April 11 at the Kothamangalam Cathedral Church. The procession followed a format where the Holy *Qurbana* was celebrated in one parish



each day, ensuring that all 110 parishes in the eparchy were visited. Every evening, the procession reached the parish church, where it was warmly welcomed by the local community, led by the respective priests.

The procession was a collective effort involving the participation of all the clergy, religious, and laypeople in the eparchy. It also

saw the active cooperation of all devotional organizations and religious houses in the eparchy, contributing to the success of this spiritual journey. This initiative stands as a significant act of devotion, seeking to restore reverence for the Holy *Qurbana* and counteract negative spiritual influences through prayer and community engagement.



DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

MARCH 26 TO APRIL 26

March

- **30, Sunday:** Participated in the concluding part of the liturgical service at the Patriarchal Centre at Puthencruz, as part of the enthronement of His Eminence Mor Baselios Joseph as the Catholicos of the Jacobite Syriac Church and extended greetings.

April

- **05, Saturday:** Received the office bearers of the *L'Oeuvre d'Orient* organization from Paris—Msgr. Pascal Gollnisch and other representatives—at Mount St. Thomas, held discussions with them, and hosted a dinner in their honor.
- **06, Sunday:** Participated in the pilgrimage held at Palayur in the Archeparchy of Thrissur and inaugurated the concluding session.
- **10, Thursday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at Mount St. Thomas on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Episcopal ordination.
- **11, Friday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* and gave the message at the Major Archeparchial Church in Kudamaloor in connection with the 40th Friday observance.
- **13, Sunday:** Conducted the Palm Sunday liturgical celebrations and celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at the Thoppil Queen Mary parish in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam–Angamaly.
- **17, Thursday:** Celebrated the Holy Thursday liturgical services and Holy *Qurbana* at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Kakkanaad, in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam–Angamaly.
- **18, Friday:** Presided over the Good Friday liturgical services at Mary Queen’s Church, Kolencherry, in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam–Angamaly.
- **19, Saturday:** Conducted the Holy Saturday liturgical services and celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at the Mount St. Thomas chapel.
- **20, Sunday:** Celebrated the Easter liturgical services and Holy *Qurbana* solemnly at St. George Parish Church at Thiruvankulam, in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam–Angamaly.
- **21, Monday:** His Holiness Pope Francis passed away. Offered special prayers at the chapel of Mount St. Thomas for the Holy Father.
- **22, Tuesday:** Presided over concelebrated Holy *Qurbana* held at Mount St. Thomas chapel for the departed soul of Pope Francis and offered prayers for the deceased.
- **23, Wednesday:** Left for Rome to participate in the funeral services of Pope Francis.
- **24, Thursday:** Paid homage to the mortal remains of Pope Francis, lying in state at St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican.
- **26, Saturday:** Concelebrated in the funeral services and the requiem Mass for Pope Francis held in front of St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. Participated in the special prayers of the Byzantine Rite together with the Heads of the Eastern Churches.

INTERVENTION NEEDED TO REINSTALL THOMMANKUTH ST. THOMAS CHURCH CROSS

- SYRO-MALABAR PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Kakkanad: The Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission demanded immediate intervention for reinstalling the cross from Thommankuth St. Thomas Church, which forest officials illegally dismantled. The Commission stated that the action violates religious freedom and Christian sentiments.

The cross was located on occupied land where local people have lived for decades. Despite

existing constructions under schemes like the EMS Housing Project, the Forest Department demolished the cross, claiming it was within 750 meters of a forest demarcation. The Commission highlighted that, under the Forest Conservation Amendment Act 2023, effective from August 4, 2023, such occupied lands are excluded from forest definitions. It called for expedited joint verification and issuing of legal titles.

EPARCHY OF SHAMSHABAD - ETAWAH REGION CELEBRATES GOLDEN JUBILEE



The Etawah Mission, which has rendered commendable service in the missionary field of North India, concluded its Golden Jubilee celebrations with grandeur. The Holy *Qurbana* offered in conjunction with the Jubilee finale was led by Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry.

The concelebrants included Archbishop *Emeritus* of Changanacherry Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop *Emeritus* of Agra Most Rev. Dr. Albert D'Souza, Bishop Mar Prince Panengadan of the Eparchy of Shamshabad, Auxiliary Bishop Mar Thomas Padiyath of Shamshabad, Bishop Mar Mathew Nellikunnel CST of Gorakhpur, Bishop Mar Joseph Kollampampil CMI of Jagdalpur, Bishop Mar Sebastian Vadakel MST of Ujjain, Bishop Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara of Faridabad, Bishop Right Rev. Dr. Joseph Kallarackal of Jaipur, Bishop Right Rev. Dr. Bhaskar Jesuraj of Meerut, Bishop Right Rev. Dr. Gerald John

Mathias of Lucknow, and Bishop Right Rev. Dr. Wilfred Moras of Jhansi. More than a hundred priests were co-celebrants.

Most Rev. Dr. Raphy Manjaly, Archbishop of Agra, delivered the homily. During the celebration, 13 children of the mission received their First Holy Communion. A special Office Prayer was held for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis, led by Bishop Mar Joseph Kollampampil.

Auxiliary Bishop of Shamshabad and person in charge of the Etawah-Rajasthan Region, Mar Thomas Padiyath, extended a warm welcome to the Jubilee concluding meeting, which was presided over by Bishop Mar Prince Panengadan of Shamshabad. Archbishop *Emeritus* Mar Joseph Perumthottam inaugurated the meeting. Lighting of the ceremonial lamp was carried out by Mar Thomas Tharayil, Most Rev. Dr. Raphy Manjaly, Most Rev. Dr. Albert D'Souza, Mar Sebastian Vadakel, Mar Prince Panengadan, Mar Thomas Padiyath, Brahmanand Kateria PCS (SDM), Sr. Pavithra CMC, Sr. Regis CMC, Lauili, and Roman.

Major Archbishop Mar Raph-

ael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church addressed the gathering via video conference. Felicitations were also offered by Most Rev. Dr. Albert D'Souza, Mar Sebastian Vadakel MST, Brahmanand Kateria PCS (SDM), and Sr. Pavithra CMC.

Missionaries celebrating the Silver Jubilee of their priestly ordination—Fr. Jiju Kulathingal, Fr. Jijo Chekathadathil, and Fr. Binoy Paraykal—were honored. Also felicitated were religious sisters celebrating 25 years of consecrated life—Sr. Jessy Varghese SJSM, Sr. Navya Thoppilan SJSM, Sr. Ancin SH, Sr. Liss SH, and Sr. Jinsey CMC—as well as couples who have completed 25 years of married life. All were presented with mementos.

A visual presentation of the history of the mission by the members of the Fatehgarh parish, dance performances by Etawah parishioners, and a musical evening under the leadership of Fr. Francis Meenatheri added warmth and color to the celebrations. Mission Superior Fr. Thomas Ezhikad delivered the vote of thanks.

“FAMILIES WITH MANY CHILDREN ARE WITNESSES AND SPOKESPERSONS OF LIFE” -BISHOP MAR REMIGIOSE INCHANANIYIL



Thiruvambady: Speaking at the “Jeevotsav 2K25” Pro-Life Day celebrations organized by the Thamarassery Eparchial Marian Pro-Life Committee, Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil said that large families are true witnesses and advocates of life. He emphasized that God provides the

strength and resources needed to lead such families.

About 700 families in the diocese now have four or more children due to the committee's decade-long efforts. The bishop also launched the “Kunje Ninakkai” (Dear Child, For You) initiative, marking the diocese's

ruby jubilee. The event honored speakers including Dr. Thomas V. Mekkat, Dr. Philomina Mathew, Dr. Beena CMC, and Ambili Mathew. Families with priestly and religious vocations were also recognized, along with young parents with more than four children.

HOLY WEEK LITURGY

From the Holy Week Liturgy Presided over by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly



Palm Sunday: Mary Queen Church, Thoppil



Holy Thursday: St. Francis Assisi Church, Kakkanad



Good Friday: Queen Mary Parish, Kolencherry



Holy Saturday: Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad



Easter: St. George Church, Thiruvankulam



Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil offered Holy *Qurbana* and office of the dead for His Holiness Pope Francis at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad



The Eparchy of Kanjirappally

"Salt of the Earth and Light of the World"

Bishops of the Eparchy



Mar Joseph Powathil
(1977-1986)



Mar Mathew Vattakuzhi
(1986-2001)



Mar Mathew Arackal
(2001-2020)



Mar Jose Pulickal
(2020-)

The Eparchy of Kanjirappally was established in 1977 by dividing the eastern region of the Archeparchy of Changanassery. It spans across the districts of Kottayam, Idukki, and Pathanamthitta, covering a total area of 1,980 square kilometers.



Rev. Fr. Joseph Vellamattom
(Proto Synce llus)

is entrusted with the responsibility for the parishes, priests, and seminarians within the diocese.



Rev. Fr. Bobby Mannamplackal
(Synce llus)

oversees the various eparchial departments, as well as the educational and social service institutions under the diocese.



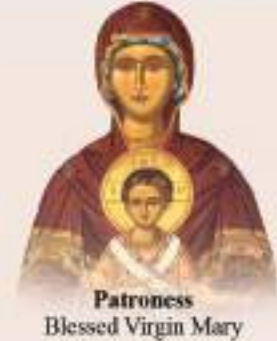
Rev. Fr. Mathew Souriamkuzhi
(Chancellor)

Charitable Works and Outreach Initiatives of the Eparchy of Kanjirappally

	No.
• Hostels and Orphanages for destitute children	20
• Homes for the Mentally challenged	6
• Homes for the elderly	11
• Homes for the physically challenged	4
• Psycho social rehabilitation centres	12
• Palliative care centres	3
• Special Schools	6
• Nursery schools	131
• Day Care	3
• Hospitals	13
• Dispensaries	6

Eparchy of Kanjirappally at a Glance

• Priests	310
• Laity	175438
• Families	38415
• Foranes	13
• Parishes	148
• Small Christian Communities	2187
• Religious Priests	118
• Religious Sisters	1687



Charitable Institutions

We Care Centre serves as a central hub, integrating the services and support systems of various institutions dedicated to the care of the mentally ill, physically disabled, destitute, and chronically ill. Institutions such as **Bethlehem Ashram** in Kanjirappally play a significant role in rehabilitating individuals suffering from mental illness.



Fighting Substance Abuse

Under the diocese's initiative, **Penuvel Immanuel Ashram** actively works to raise awareness and lead campaigns against drug and alcohol abuse, which threaten social harmony. The ashram also offers medical support and rehabilitation for individuals struggling with addiction, along with counseling services for a wide range of personal and psychological issues.



Jeevan Tithe

Inspired by the early Christian spirit of sharing (Acts 2: 44-45), the parishes of the diocese implement this spirit through the Jeevan initiative. Each year, funds collected through this program are allocated to a selected parish for charitable purposes. For over a decade, the Jeevan Tithe Program has successfully supported areas such as education, medical treatment, and other essential needs. The **Samruthi Help Program**, which focuses on educational support, is also actively functioning.



Darsakan

Published monthly, **Darsakan** is the official magazine of the Diocese of Kanjirappally. It addresses a variety of social and faith-based topics relevant to contemporary society.

School Corporate Management

The School Corporate Management plays a pivotal role in fulfilling the Church’s mission of providing education for all. It unifies and oversees the functioning of all schools under its care, promotes educational initiatives at the diocesan level, ensures the maintenance of school facilities, supports teachers awaiting government salary approvals, and offers scholarships to academically outstanding students.



Educational Institutions

In addition to institutions managed by individual parishes, the diocese oversees several renowned educational establishments, including:

- Marian College, Kuttikkanam
- Amal Jyothi College of Engineering, Koovapally
- Citadel Residential School, Ranni
- Holy Family School, Elangoi



PDS – Peermade Development Society

PDS focuses on agricultural development and empowering non-unionized communities. It supports approximately 28,810 families across various religious backgrounds through 660 self-help groups, 35 farmer producer organisations and 5 organic farming groups.



MDS – Malanadu Development Society

MDS promotes societal progress by empowering farmers and marginalized communities, helping them become self-reliant and economically secure. It collects milk from around 21,000 dairy farmers daily and distributes approximately half lakh litres. It also helps the farming community by processing and marketing honey, coconuts, coffee beans and various other agricultural products collected from farmers. MDS also provides welfare assistance such as medical aid, housing, and other essential services.



Amala Press

Operating under the Diocese, Amala Press plays a key role in the field of printing and publication.

Amala Communication

Amala Communication organizes professional theatrical productions, biblical dramas, musical concerts, cultural and literary training programs, and competitions, thereby guiding society with a sense of direction since 1983. The Amala Recording Studio and C30 productions stand as a testament to the diocese’s strong commitment to the field of media and communication.



Vimala Books

Vimala Books is dedicated to publishing literature of quality and spiritual value. These publications are available at the Vimala Book Stall, while devotional articles and other religious materials can be found at the Vimala Book House.

CONCLAVE

» The election of the Pope, the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and the head of the Catholic Church, takes place through a highly secretive gathering. This gathering of the Cardinals is known as the Conclave. The word Conclave comes from Latin, meaning “with the key.”



Rev. Fr. Noble Thomas Parackal

The election of the Pope, the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and the head of the Catholic Church, takes place through a highly secretive gathering. This gathering of the Cardinals is known as the Conclave. The word Conclave comes from Latin, meaning “with the key.” After the death of the Pope, when the Conclave begins, the Sistine Chapel is locked from the outside, and the Cardinals remain inside until a new Pope is elected. The Cardinals responsible for electing the next Pope follow procedures and regulations that have been in place since the Middle Ages, although some changes and additions have been made over time.

Most of the current regulations followed in the election are outlined in the Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis*, promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1996. Later, Pope Benedict XVI also introduced certain modifications. Once the date for the Conclave is set, the Cardinal-electors gather at the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. They stay there until someone is elected with a two-thirds majority. Let's take a look at the process:

1. The Arrival of the Cardinals

Technically, any Catholic male could be elected Pope. However, the elected person must be consecrated a bishop before he is declared Pope. Since 1379, only Cardinals have been elected as Pope. Although there are more than 250 Cardinals worldwide, only those who are under 80 years of age on the day the Apostolic See becomes vacant are eligible to vote. This time, there are 135 eligible Cardinal-electors: 53 from Europe, 23 from Asia, 23 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 18 from Africa, 14 from North America, and 4 from Oceania.

While many Cardinals live and work in the Vatican, the rest are engaged in ministries across the globe. Unless prevented by illness or another serious reason, all eligible Cardinals must travel to Rome.

2. The Procession to the Sistine Chapel

On the first day of the Conclave, in the morning, the Cardinals celebrate a special Mass at St. Peter's Basilica. In the afternoon, they gather in the Pauline Chapel, sing the hymn to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Creator*), and process to the Sistine

Chapel. Following the Pope's death, the most powerful person in the Vatican is the Camerlengo. Although the Camerlengo oversees all Conclave arrangements, he does not enter during the voting process. Supervision inside the Chapel is the responsibility of the Dean of the College of Cardinals, or in his absence, the most senior Cardinal.

3. The Oath

Before voting, all Cardinals take an oath to maintain the secrecy of the election:

“I, (first name) Cardinal (last name), do promise, pledge, and swear. So help me God and these Holy Gospels which I touch with my hand.” The oath is administered in order of seniority. After the oath, the Master of Papal Ceremonies announces *Extra omnes* (“Everyone out!”), and only Cardinals remain inside the Chapel. Until a new Pope is elected, no one else will see them. To ensure secrecy, no mobile phones, emails, or internet connectivity are allowed inside the Sistine Chapel. Since 2013, signal blockers have also been installed.

4. The Voting

Voting sessions take place twice a day: morning and afternoon. In each session, nine Cardinals are selected for specific duties: three scrutineers (vote counters), three to collect votes from sick Cardinals, and three revisers.

Each Cardinal receives a ballot paper with the phrase *Eligio in Summum Pontificem* (“I elect as Supreme Pontiff”) printed on it, where they secretly write the name of the candidate they wish to elect. Approaching the altar, they declare: “I call as my witness Christ the Lord who will be my judge, that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected.” They then place their folded ballot into the designated urn. If a Cardinal is ill, he can vote from his room using a secured box.

5. The Counting of Votes

After all votes are cast, the scrutineers count and record the number of ballots. If the number doesn't match the number of voters, the ballots are burned without opening, and a new round of voting occurs. If the number is correct, the first scrutineer opens each ballot, records the name, and passes it to the second and

Continued on page 11