



# SYRO-MALABAR VISION

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## KERALA RAVAGED BY DOG BITES!



**Because of limited public shelter facilities, the United States puts down about 2.7 million dogs and cats every year through mercy killing. In 2016 alone, 866,366 stray dogs were euthanized, according to records. The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights had also approached the Supreme Court demanding permission to capture and euthanize dangerous dogs.**

**Sijo Painadath**

We have lost to these dogs...! This expression may sound harsh. Yet, whether in towns or in villages, Malayalees nowadays utter this complaint at least in their hearts. There is even the grievance that people cannot step outside without fear of dogs. Though the menace of stray dogs has become so deadly, no preventive measures have yet been fully effective, leaving the public increasingly disappointed and under the shadow of fear. Stray dog menace has now become an issue of concern not only in Kerala but across different parts of the country, to the extent that even the Supreme Court of India is watching it with anxiety.

### Frightening statistics lie around us:

Almost everyone knows at least one person who has been bitten by stray dogs. From children to the elderly, many have suffered dog bites. Whether in rural cleanliness or in busy urban areas, the dog bites continue. A study in 2011 revealed that every year, 17.4 million people in India are bitten by dogs. The same

study reported that rabies causes about 25,000 deaths annually.

In Kerala, the situation is severe. Between 2016 and 2021, 809,629 stray dog attacks were reported in the state, resulting in 42 deaths from bites during that five-year period. These shocking figures come from Right to Information (RTI) documents. The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights submitted figures to the Supreme Court regarding stray dog attacks: in 2019 there were 5,794 cases, in 2020 there were 3,951, in 2021 the number rose to 7,927, and in 2022 it reached 11,776.

We must also consider the data provided in the Lok Sabha by the Union Minister for Animal Husbandry. He presented nationwide figures for dog bite incidents: in 2022, 2,189,909 people were bitten; in 2023, the number rose to 3,052,521; and in 2024, it climbed further to 3,715,713. The summary is clear: every year, both dog attacks and the number of victims are increasing.

How many people, how many dogs?

In Kerala, there are 83 dogs for every 10,000 people, according to the Nation-

al Livestock Census. The ratios in Goa (183), Karnataka (163), and Gujarat (132) are even more alarming. In Kerala, among every ten lakh people, 1,470 are bitten by dogs, according to official statistics.

### What happened to ABC?

The Animal Birth Control (Dog) programme, or ABC, was introduced by the Central Government to control stray dogs. The scheme was framed under Sections 38(1) and 38(2) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Its highlight is to catch stray dogs and sterilize them. Though the scheme has been in place for nearly three decades, apart from the huge public money spent, it has not produced any effective solution. In many places there are no ABC centres; where they exist, efficiency is lacking; shelter homes are inadequate; and sterilized dogs released back continue to attack. These are the common complaints against ABC.

The country already had state and municipal laws, along with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA-1960), to control stray dogs. In 2001,

these were amended, and the ABC rules and related programmes were implemented. But there are many practical hurdles in sterilization and vaccination. It is estimated that catching one dog, sterilizing it under a veterinary expert, giving it three days' post-operative care and vaccination, and then releasing it costs about ₹2,100.

### Humanity of animal lovers!

These are the same people who weep if animals suffer pain, but remain silent when those very animals maul or even kill human beings. Worse, they call that silence "compassion for fellow beings."

Animals indeed deserve protection and affection. But to argue that they must be protected with priority over human beings has nothing to do with humanity. Let the streams of animal love overflow among animal lovers, but at the same time they must also have eyes to see and ears to hear the problems faced by human beings. Recently, when the issue of stray dogs in Delhi was taken up, the Supreme Court gave some instructions in precisely this spirit. Only a few days ago, the Court directed that all stray dogs be removed from densely populated areas of Delhi and placed in proper shelters. This strong intervention came in the context of the rising nuisance of rabid dogs, their frequent attacks, and the deaths caused.

Justice Pardiwala of the Supreme Court, while issuing the order, remarked: "This order is not for us but for the welfare of society. The Court will not entertain any kind of sentiments in this matter. Immediate action must be taken to address the stray dog problem."

Because of limited public shelter facilities, the United States puts down about 2.7 million dogs and cats every year through mercy killing. In 2016 alone, 866,366 stray dogs were euthanized, according to records. The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights had also approached the Supreme Court demanding permission to capture and euthanize dangerous dogs.

True humanity lies not with the so-called animal lovers who, like Menaka and others, raise arguments about rats multiplying in Paris after stray dogs were culled centuries ago, merely to wear the crown of false animal compassion. Rather, humanity belongs to those who have the heart to feel the pain of little children who, on their way home from school, are mauled and left writhing in agony by dogs. ■

## EDITORIAL



## GOLDEN RAYS MARKING THE HISTORY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

A new chapter in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church is being inscribed in golden letters by the announcements made by His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, the Father and Head of the Church, on 28 August 2025. At the public meeting held just before the conclusion of the Second Session of the XXXIII Synod, in addition to appointing new Bishops for the Eparchies of Belthangady and Adilabad, the Major Archbishop made two historic proclamations in the presence of the Synod Fathers: first, that the Syro-Malabar Church will have four Ecclesiastical Provinces outside Kerala; and second, that the boundaries of eleven eparchies will be reorganized by redistributing the territories that currently fall within the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Shamshabad.

On 16 December 1992, Saint Pope John Paul II raised the Syro-Malabar hierarchy to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church *sui iuris*, thus giving full canonical structure to this apostolic Church. At that time, its territorial boundaries were confined to Kerala, within the limits of the then Archeparchies of Ernakulam and Changanacherry. This territorial arrangement was made excluding the Eparchies established outside Kerala since 1962. Decades later, on 9 October 2017, Pope Francis, through a special intervention, extended the jurisdiction of the Syro-Malabar Church to the entire territory of India. As a practical step, the Eparchy of Shamshabad and Hosur were erected, and the boundaries of the Eparchies of Ramanathapuram and Thuckalay were extended. Thus, proper territory (*territorium proprium*) of the Syro-Malabar Church was defined to embrace the whole of India.

Subsequently, efforts were undertaken to make pastoral and evangelization activities more effective by sharing the vast territory of the Eparchy of Shamshabad, which spread across in 23 states, four union territories, and two islands. Initiatives set in motion by Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Major Archbishop *Emeritus*, advanced significantly during his tenure. When, on 11 January 2024, Mar Raphael Thattil, the Bishop of Shamshabad, was elected to the leadership of the Church, the formation of new provinces and the reorganization of episcopal boundaries were identified as urgent priorities. Detailed discussions were held with the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, and comprehensive reports were submitted, demonstrating the necessity for a new ecclesiastical framework. The Apostolic See, recognizing the pastoral needs, granted its consent for the reorganization of boundaries of the 12 eparchies. Having obtained the approval of the Apostolic See to the Synod's decision to establish four new Provinces outside Kerala, the Major Archbishop issued the official decrees to that effect. This marked a decisive step in the strengthening and expansion of the administrative structures of the Church. In this, we can discern the pastoral solicitude of the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, and his invitation to encourage the pastoral and missionary vitality of the Syro-Malabar Church and calling us to harness it more fruitfully.

The history of the Syro-Malabar Church has never been one of ease and comfort. It is not merely written in golden letters, but rather carved through perseverance in the face of struggles, trials, and crises. Yet, even amidst the storm clouds of adversity, certain golden rays have always shone forth. The present time is a reminder that challenges and difficulties do not weaken the Syro-Malabar Church; rather, they urge us to confront them with courage and to labour all the more earnestly for the realization of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Father and the Universal Church look with hope to the Syro-Malabar Church; its traditions, its vitality, and its structures; as an instrument of evangelization. It now rests upon every member of the Syro-Malabar Church to broaden their vision and to act decisively. The golden rays that illumine the present are both a call and an inspiration for that mission.

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## A DAY TO REMEMBER

**September 1:** Beginning of the Eight-Day Fast  
**September 5:** St. Simeon Barsaba and Companion Martyrs; St. Teresa of Calcutta  
**September 6:** Death Anniversary of Mar Paul Chittilappilly (2020)  
**September 8:** Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Episcopal Ordination of Mar Sebastian Vadakel (1998)  
**September 10:** Death Anniversary of Metropolitan Mar Joseph Kariattil (1786)  
**September 11:** Episcopal Ordination of Mar Jose Chittooparampil (2010)  
**September 13:** St. John Chrysostom  
**September 14:** Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross  
**September 15:** Episcopal Ordination of Mar Joseph Kodakkal (2015);  
**September 16:** Death Anniversary of Mar Clement Thottungal (1991)  
**September 17:** Episcopal Ordination of Mar George Rajendran (2012)  
**September 19:** Episcopal Ordination of Mar Jose Kalluvelil (2015)  
**September 21:** Episcopal Ordination of Mar Jose Puthenveettil (2013);  
St. Matthew the Apostle  
**September 27:** Episcopal Ordination of Mar Joy Alappatt (2014);  
St. Vincent de Paul  
**September 29:** Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael  
**September 30:** St. Jerome

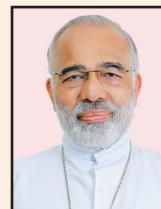
## ► FESTAL GREETINGS ◀

September 8



Mar Gregory Karotemprel

September 21



Mar Mathew Moolakkatt

September 21



Mar Mathew Vaniakizhakkel



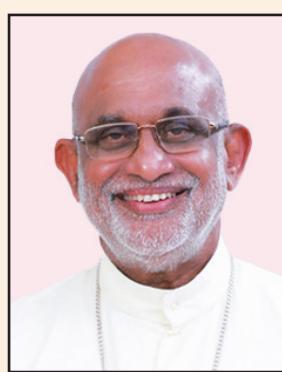
Mar Mathew Nellikkunnel

September 27



Mar Vincent Nellayiparambil

September 29



His Beatitude  
Mar Raphael Thattil

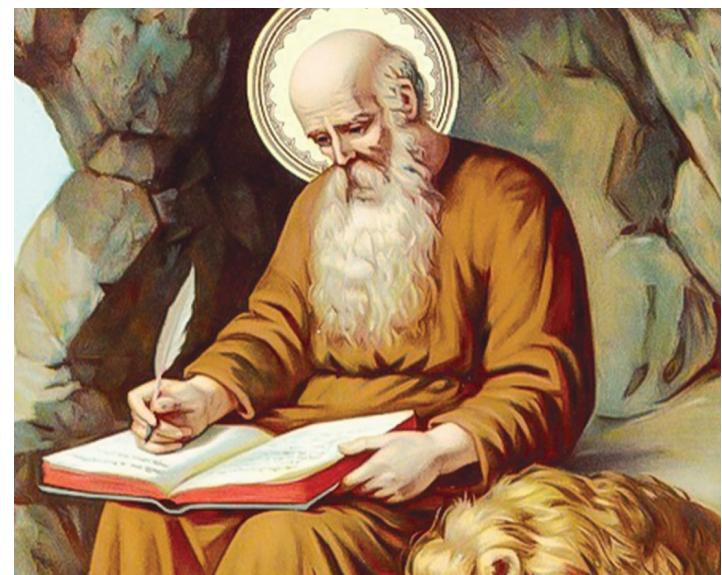


Rev. Dr. Alex Sebastian Kollamkalam

Among the four great Fathers of the Western tradition, St. Jerome is one. (The other three are St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great). The 135th chapter of his book "On Illustrious Men" (*De Viris Illustribus*), written in 135 chapters, is about Jerome himself. In that chapter, he testifies that his father's name was Eusebius and that he was born at Stridon (present-day Slovenia) (*De Viris Illustribus* 135,1). There he also gives a long list of his own works.

Born around A.D. 347 into a wealthy Christian family, St. Jerome died in Bethlehem in A.D. 420. After his primary education, at the age of twelve, he went to Rome for further studies, and it is believed that in A.D. 366 he received baptism from Pope Liberius. For about twenty years, until he settled permanently in Bethlehem in A.D. 384, he traveled to many places, stayed in different regions, experienced various ascetic lifestyles, and developed a strong desire to live as an ascetic himself.

## ST. JEROME



When he was ordained a priest in A.D. 378, his greatest concern was whether his ascetic way of life would be disturbed. For about two years he served as secretary to Pope Damasus I, during which time he encouraged the Pope to establish an ascetic lifestyle for the Church and the clergy. In A.D. 389, he fulfilled his life's aspiration by founding a monastery in Bethlehem.

One of his most renowned works is the *Vulgate*, the first translation of the Old Testament from its original Hebrew into

Latin. He carried out this monumental translation after long years of training in Hebrew and three years of Scripture studies under St. Gregory of Nazianzus. His commentary on the Book of Proverbs is noteworthy as the first Latin commentary based directly on the Hebrew Bible.

He also translated many important works from Greek into Latin, including writings of Origen and St. Eusebius. The Church recognizes his great service by counting him among the first to be proclaimed as a Doctor of the Church.

# THE LEGACY OF COEXISTENCE



From the Heart of  
the Father and Head

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



From the Sacred Scriptures, we can also read a message that human beings are not the owners of creation but only its caretakers. God appointed Adam and Eve not as the masters of the Garden of Eden, but as its keepers. In short, they had only the duty of stewardship. When a steward tries to act as if he is the master, the Owner will be compelled to take certain strict decisions against him, as we can read in the Book of Genesis. When man fails in his responsibilities to protect nature and misuses his role, his life is forced to pass through bitter experiences. It is in this background that the Church observes the *Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation* on September 1st. This observance continues until October 4th, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the Troubadour of Love.

The theme of this year's observance is "Seeds of Peace and Hope." It was Pope Francis who proclaimed this celebration in the Church. Its aim, as Pope Francis and now Pope Leo XIV affirm, is that everyone should have the commitment to praise God, to safeguard the common home, and to preserve the divine gifts without destroying them. Human stewardship consists in preserving all living beings created by God without losing even one,



**Human stewardship consists in preserving all living beings created by God without losing even one, and in maintaining the harmony of the universe. It is the divine spirit and intelligence inherent in man that makes him distinct and superior to other creatures. Thus man becomes the crown of creation.**

and in maintaining the harmony of the universe. It is the divine spirit and intelligence inherent in man that makes him distinct and superior to other creatures.

Thus man becomes the crown of creation. Man is considered noble. By *human dignity* we mean that human life possesses a sovereign immunity among all creatures.

The meaning is that human life must be valued and protected. Man is not one who should live in fear of the attack of animals; rather, all other creatures must remain subject to human control. As the crown of creation, man must have adequate security to protect the created universe. But today we see laws, government policies, and multinational business interests that destroy human dignity and cast shadows over it. As a result, man is compelled to live in fear of wild animals in forest-bordering regions, while in towns and cities people are forced to live in fear of stray dogs.

The plight of modern man, living in fear of wild animals and stray dogs, must be understood as the intrusion of selfish minds and commercial interests. The inability to live without fear of wild animals and stray dogs is a serious evil against human dignity. The real solution to such problems is to make democratic systems effective so that citizens may enjoy the freedom to work, to live, and to move about with a sense of security. Democratic governments must also have the duty and courage to amend laws that favor multinational business conglomerates and their agents, and to correct exaggerated forms of environmentalism that, in one way, reach the edge of extremism.

When other creatures are protected while man is forgotten, the supreme purpose of creation fails. Just as it is serious when man neglects nature and creation, so too it is equally dangerous when human beings are disregarded and other creatures are given undue importance. What must arise here is a profound interdependence between nature, living beings, and humankind.

## MESSAGE OF THE CURIA BISHOP

Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurakal



The Synod held from August 18 to 29, 2025, at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad—the Major Archiepiscopal Curia of the Syro-Malabar Church—was of historic significance in the life of our Church, which was founded and nurtured through the apostolic mission of St. Thomas the Apostle.

The Syro-Malabar Church, an Apostolic Church spread across the world, presently comprises 35 eparchies and one Apostolic Visitation. Until now, the Church had five Metropolitan Provinces, all of them based in Kerala, though some eparchies in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were attached to them. However, the Eparchy of Hosur in Tamil Nadu was not part of any province. Hence, by the decision of this Synod, the Eparchy of Hosur was incorporated into the Metropolitan Province of Thrissur.

For years, the Synod has been reflecting on the pastoral need to bring the eparchies outside Kerala under Metro-

## THE MISSION TO BE CONTINUED

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politan Provinces in order to coordinate pastoral ministry more effectively and to strengthen missionary activity. The Synod of 2025 has now reached a definitive decision on this matter.

The existing archeparchies in Kerala are Ernakulam-Angamaly, Changannacherry, Thrissur, Thalassery, and Kottayam. Outside Kerala, the archeparchies are Faridabad, Ujjain, Kalyan, and Shamshabad. The unanimous decision of the Synod to restructure the ecclesiastical provinces was granted immediate approval by the Holy See.

The formal inauguration of the new Metropolitan Provinces and the enthronement of the Metropolitans will take place in October and November. Another significant decision of this Syn-

od was the redefinition of the boundaries of twelve eparchies outside Kerala.

When the Eparchy of Shamshabad was established in 2017, its jurisdiction extended across 24 states and four union territories of India. With the establishment of Shamshabad and Hosur, the Syro-Malabar Church was entrusted with the authority to carry out pastoral ministry and to undertake missionary initiatives independently throughout India. This universal jurisdiction, once held by the St. Thomas Christian Church of India, had been lost in the sixteenth century. It was restored by the Holy Father through the apostolic letter issued on October 9, 2017, establishing the Eparchy of Shamshabad.

The establishment of the new Met-

opolitan Provinces and the redefinition of boundaries is the fruit of the prudent and unified exercise of this restored authority by the Syro-Malabar Church. Christ has given us both the command and the privilege to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt. 28:19–20).

Let us continue to pray that our Church, inflamed with apostolic zeal, may be granted the grace to fulfill this mission ever more fruitfully. May the Lord of all goodness bless us abundantly. ■

# POST-SYNODAL CIRCULAR



**The lack of unity in liturgy deeply pains us all. True unity cannot be achieved by wounding one another; rather, we must strive to become those who heal and strengthen, not those who cause division. The first step in resolving the existing differences regarding the uniform liturgical practice is to listen to the Holy Spirit, to submit to the Church, and to foster reconciliation between individuals and communities.**

**M**ar Raphael Thattil the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church to the Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Men and Women and Lay Faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church. May the grace of the Lord be with you all!

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

The II Session of the XXXIII Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church was held from 18 to 29 August 2025, at the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, Mount St. Thomas, Kakkad. The Synod commenced by respectfully commemorating the passing away of His Holiness Pope Francis, who deeply loved the Syro-Malabar Church and opened new horizons for the Church's growth, and also recalled with reverence the enthronement of Pope Leo XIV, who upholds a clear vision regarding the mission of the Eastern Churches. The Synod Fathers engaged in prayer and deliberations realizing that the Church remains committed to toil tirelessly, despite many crises and challenges, for the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to us by our Lord.

#### Religious Freedom: An Integral Element of Indian Culture

Founded on the principle of "unity in diversity," Indian culture has always granted freedom to all, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. The Constitution of India safeguards the right of every individual to believe, live, and proclaim the faith of one's choice, provided it does not compromise the integrity of the nation. It is indeed most unfortunate that the invaluable contributions made by Christians for the upliftment of the marginalized through missionary service in health, education, and social sectors over centuries are disregarded and reduced merely to a matter of religion by sectarian agendas. Equally distressing are the acts of discrimination and hate campaigns

against Christians, as well as the denial of even the basic freedom of movement to our priests, religious, and lay missionaries in several places, which constitutes a violation of fundamental rights. The Syro-Malabar Church proudly remembers all missionaries who, in response to the love of Christ, dedicate their lives to the service of the Church and society. May the Word of God, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom. 8: 35-37) strengthen us.

#### Safeguarding Unity is Our Obligation

"In Christ we are all one" (*In Illo Uno Unum*) is the motto of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. To remain one in the same Church is the greatest proclamation of the Gospel. Although eparchies were erected in different parts of the world and provisions were made for the pastoral care, the differences in the mode of celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* adversely affected our sense of unity. It was to remedy this situation that the Church desired to implement the uniform mode of celebration of the Holy *Qurbana*, which was decided by the Synod and approved by the Apostolic See. In this regard, the Church gratefully remembers the eparchies and parishes where the uniform mode has been fully implemented. The uniform mode of celebration of the Holy *Qurbana*, on which the Holy Father has definitively decided, must henceforth remain unchanged throughout the Syro-Malabar Church. The circular dated 26 June 2025, addressed exclusively to the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly, is in continuity with this decision. The Synod gratefully remembers the priests of that Archepar-

chy who have begun celebrating one Holy *Qurbana* on Sundays and on other days of obligation in the uniform mode, in accordance with this circular. The Synod has entrusted the Major Archbishop and the Vicar of the Major Archbishop for the Archeparchy with the responsibility of implementing the uniform mode gradually, fostering unity.

The lack of unity in liturgy deeply pains us all. True unity cannot be achieved by wounding one another; rather, we must strive to become those who heal and strengthen, not those who cause division. The first step in resolving the existing differences regarding the uniform liturgical practice is to listen to the Holy Spirit, to submit to the Church, and to foster reconciliation between individuals and communities. Let us recall the words of St. Paul the Apostle: "He is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." (Eph. 2:14). Therefore, the entire Church is firmly committed to eliminating divisions and thereby leading all towards reconciliation. As the Holy Father Pope Francis reminded us in his message to our Church: "Preserving unity is not merely good advice; it is an obligation." Let us recognize that the duty of preserving unity rests upon every believer.

#### Grow in Love for the Holy *Qurbana*

The Holy *Qurbana* is the source and summit of Christian life. In the Holy *Qurbana*, we experience those precious moments of our Lord coming to us, though we are sinners and unworthy. The Holy *Qurbana* must therefore be approached with utmost reverence and devotion. It has been a cause of deep pain and scandal to the Church that certain incidents of disrespect towards the Holy *Qurbana* have occurred, disturbing and troubling many.

While human remedies are inadequate, to grow in devotion to the Holy *Qurbana* and to make reparation for the offences committed against it, I call upon the entire Syro-Malabar Church to hold one hour of Eucharistic Adoration on Friday, 12 September 2025.

#### The Synodality of the Church

The Synod of Bishops on Synodality, held in Rome during the years 2023 and 2024, marked a significant step in redefining the life of the Church in tune with the demands of our times. Affirming the conviction that in the Church we are all fellow pilgrims, the Synod sought ways to reshape ecclesial structures into genuine spaces of listening and dialogue. Through wide-ranging discussions at different levels, the Synod took efforts to hear the voices of as many as possible and entrusted the eparchies with the responsibility of discerning, formulating, and implementing suitable pastoral plans.

#### Year of Community Empowerment 2026

The Major Archiepiscopal Assembly held in the Eparchy of Palai expressed the realization that, as a community, we have fallen behind in several areas of social life where once we had the upper hand. Our declining numbers, together with the migration of the younger generation to foreign lands, now pose serious challenges to our very survival. To address these concerns and to foster a stronger sense of community among us, the Syro-Malabar Church is observing 2026 as the Year of Community Empowerment. This year invites all to initiate awareness programmes and to formulate and implement concrete plans that would facilitate the march of our community to the mainstream, under the initiative of every eparchy.

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# THE BRONZE SERPENT AS THE SYMBOL OF THE CROSS

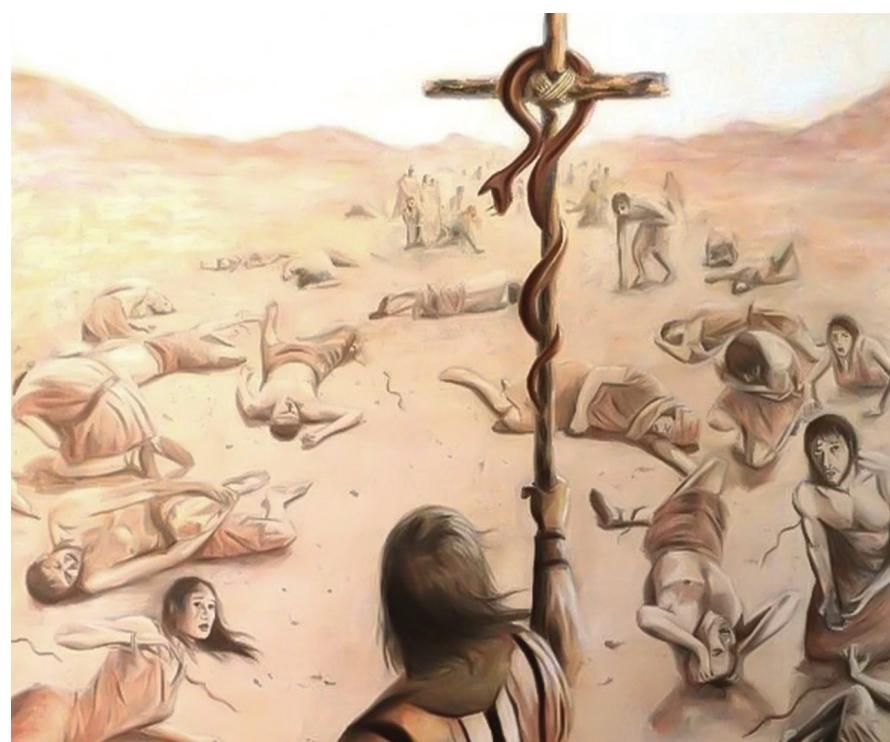


EXPLORING BIBLE QUESTIONS

Rev. Dr. Tom Olikkatt

**A**s Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever looks at him may have life." (Jn. 3:14)

In the Book of Numbers 21:8–9, we read the account of the bronze serpent (Nehushtan) being lifted up, and how the Israelites who had been bitten by serpents overcame death by looking at it. As punishment for the people's disbelief and murmuring (their impatience, grumbling against God and Moses), God sent fiery serpents among them. The lesson this event conveys is that disbelief and hardness of heart can be as deadly as death itself. To reflect on the way of overcoming serpent-bite: God commanded those bitten to look at the bronze serpent that had been lifted up. The serpent-bite itself was the punishment for sin, and the means to overcome that punishment was to look at the image of the serpent. It is noteworthy that not merely the act of Moses lifting up the bronze serpent, but the people's willingness to look at it, was what enabled them to overcome death. "Was it to make us die in the wilderness that you brought us out of Egypt?"—this was the murmuring of the Israelites. For the people who disbelieved in the divine promise of the land, the way to life was to believe in another divine promise: "Whoever looks at the bronze serpent will live." Even at the moment of serpent-bite, remembering the divine promise and acting in faith by looking at the bronze serpent became the way of salvation from the punishment that was the result of disbelief.



The Aramaic Targum, the ancient Aramaic translation of the Old Testament, interprets "looking at the bronze serpent" as "turning one's heart toward God." In the biblical list of sins deserving punishment, hardness of heart has its place. Hardness of heart means failing to recognize God's mercy and providence. Every complaint, every murmur of disbelief, is a sign of the hardening of the heart.

In Jewish context, the word "to look" also carries the meaning of "to believe." Thus, the meaning of Jesus' words, "Whoever looks at the Son of Man lifted up will have life," is to believe in the crucified Messiah as the sacrificial offering for the remission of sins. In the words, "Whoever looks at him will have life," both the manner of Jesus' death and its purpose are revealed. John describes three occasions where Jesus explains how he is to "die" (Jn. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32). In all three instances, John uses the word *hypsothēnai* ("to be lifted up"). Biblical commentators

point out that this Greek word reflects the double meaning in John's theology of the cross. For at the time of crucifixion, Jesus was physically lifted up from the earth, while at the same time he was glorified by heaven. Secondly, through the word *hypsothēnai*, John presents the manner of Jesus' death: the Romans crucified by lifting the cross approximately six feet above the ground. Therefore, John uses *hypsothēnai* to foreshadow the death of Jesus by being lifted up on the cross.

In the words "Whoever looks at him will have life," the purpose of Jesus' death is revealed. The lifting up of Jesus is to become the source of immortality for those who believe in him. Eternal life, in John's divine vision, is the ultimate goal of the messianic events that began with the Incarnation and were completed in the glorification of Jesus. The similarity between the lifted-up Son of Man and the lifted-up bronze serpent lies in both being "lifted up" and in "those who looked at it

**Eternal life, in John's divine vision, is the ultimate goal of the messianic events that began with the Incarnation and were completed in the glorification of Jesus. The similarity between the lifted-up Son of Man and the lifted-up bronze serpent lies in both being "lifted up" and in "those who looked at it received life."**

Finally, in the event of the bronze serpent, there was a historical error on the part of the Israelites: they failed to grasp the inner meaning of God's command "to look at the bronze serpent," which truly meant turning wholeheartedly toward God and believing in Him. Instead, they misunderstood and believed that the bronze serpent itself was the source of healing, attributing to the image of the serpent some mysterious power. For nearly a thousand years, they preserved it as though it were an idol and offered incense to it. The bronze serpent, called *Nehushtan*, was finally destroyed during the religious reforms of Hezekiah. This event teaches us yet another spiritual lesson: many things that begin with noble intentions, if practiced later without understanding their true meaning, can turn into mere customs, eventually replacing God and becoming idolatrous.

## Continuation of page 4

### New Metropolitan Provinces

Writing a new chapter in the history of the growth of the Syro-Malabar Church, we could erect four new Metropolitan Provinces outside Kerala and reorganise the vast territories of the Eparchy of Shamshabad, with the approval of the Apostolic See, by joining certain regions with other eparchies for better pastoral care and by redefining their boundaries. This is a significant step towards restoring the ancient ecclesial structure of the St. Thomas Christians, who once exercised pastoral jurisdiction across the whole of India. The Synod extends prayerful good wishes to the Eparchies of Faridabad, Ujjain, Kalyan, and Shamshabad, which are elevated to Metropolitan Provinces, and to their Metropolitans: Mar Kuria-kose Bharanikulangara, Mar Sebastian Vadakel, Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, and Mar Prince Antony Panengadan, respectively.

### New Bishops for the Church

His Excellency Mar Sebastian Vani-

yapurackal, who for the past eight years has rendered commendable service to the Syro-Malabar Church as Curia Bishop, is appointed the third Bishop of the Eparchy of Kalyan and its first Metropolitan. I invoke God's abundant blessings upon him whose deep spirituality, fraternal spirit, and pastoral zeal will be at his advantage in his new mission. I would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to Mar Thomas Elavanal MCBS, who, for the past twenty-nine years, shepherded the Eparchy of Kalyan and made significant contributions to the development of the liturgical texts of the Syro-Malabar Church. I am happy to felicitate Rev. Msgr. James Patteril, a member of the Claretian Congregation (CMF), has been appointed the second Bishop of the Eparchy of Belthangady. May his missionary fervour and pastoral competence lead the eparchy to greater heights! With gratitude, the Synod recalls the service of Mar Lawrence Mukkuzhy, who shepherded the Eparchy of Belthangady for the past twenty-six years and guided it through the period of infancy to growth and maturity. I also congratu-

late Rev. Msgr. Joseph Thachaparambath CMI, who has been appointed the new Bishop of the Eparchy of Adilabad. I am sure that his deep faith and rich pastoral experience will empower him to provide able leadership to the eparchy. I want to place on record the service of Mar Prince Antony Panengadan, who, with great missionary zeal, led the Eparchy of Adilabad for the past ten years and now continues his service in Shamshabad.

### Dearly Beloved,

We must grow in the awareness that the Syro-Malabar Church is a fully Eastern Church, and it is by safeguarding its ancient traditions that she is called to fulfil her mission in the Universal Church. As Pope Leo XIV, in his address at the Jubilee celebrations of the Eastern Churches, reminded us: "The contributions that the Eastern Churches can offer to the Universal Church are indeed immense. It is an urgent need of our times to recover the sense of divine mystery that remains vividly alive in your liturgical traditions. These traditions celebrate the beauty of

salvation that embraces the human person in his wholeness; they proclaim the glory of God in a way that awakens awe at how divine majesty stoops to embrace human weakness. The liturgical heritage of the Orient must be preserved and revitalized, not lost in the name of practicality or convenience." It is certain that our collective efforts will bear fruit when we are prepared to study deeply and cherish the Eastern identity and uniqueness of our liturgical patrimony. The history of our Church is one that has shone brightly with strength amidst many challenges. As a community called to proclaim the Gospel to the very ends of the earth, we have to labour tirelessly for the kingdom. Drawing strength from the Word of God and the sacraments, may we grow together in communion and thus strengthen the mission of the Church.

May the intercession and blessings of Holy Mary our Mother, St. Joseph, St. Thomas the Apostle, all the Saints, and the Blessed be with us and all our endeavours!

# NAZARETH SISTERS - A CONGREGATION MODELLED AFTER THE HOLY FAMILY

Congregation founded by Mar Sebastian Valloppilly celebrates golden jubilee this year



Founded in 1975 by the late His Excellency Mar Sebastian Valloppilly, the first Bishop of the Archeparchy of Thalassery, the Congregation of Nazareth Sisters is a religious community of Catholic nuns deeply rooted in the spirit and lifestyle of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Functioning under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Thalassery and not divided into provinces, the congregation is currently led by the Superior General, Sr. Jaseentha Vadakkel.

Inspired by the words of Jesus, "Whatever you did for one of these least ones, you did for me," the Nazareth Sisters strive to reflect the humility and obedience of Mother Mary, living the call: "Here is the handmaid of the Lord." Their mission is to embody the values of family life, faith, and service as seen in the Holy Family, while working tirelessly for the salvation of souls and their own sanctification.

The Congregation's apostolate spans a wide array of ministries, including catechism, home missions, youth and family formation, parish ministry, evangelization, education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and vocational training. With a special focus on the upliftment of migrant farmers, the founder emphasized the importance of family sanctity and security, recognizing them as the backbone of a just and holy society. Currently, 149 Nazareth Sisters serve in various dioceses across Kerala-Thalassery, Thamarassery, Palai, and Idukki-ministering to people across castes and religions with love, service, and compassion.

Extending their service beyond Kerala, the Sisters lead education and social outreach programs in mission territories such as Jammu-Srinagar, Shamshabad, and Ujjain. Their focus is on holistic de-

velopment, especially among the poor and marginalized, aiming to build an inclusive and civilized society through education and spiritual nourishment.

One of the unique aspects of the Nazareth Sisters' ministry is their emphasis on natural living and Ayurvedic healthcare. Their healthcare apostolate is not just about curing ailments but about promoting a healthy and harmonious lifestyle rooted in Indian traditions and the healing compassion of Christ. Their international presence also extends to Germany, where the Sisters serve in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, offering spiritual support and pastoral care, furthering their founder's vision of taking the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

The Nazareth Sisters are deeply enriched by the virtues of their founder,

particularly the simplicity of life, hard work, punctuality, complete reliance on Divine Providence, and devotion to St. Joseph and St. Alphonsa. These virtues form the backbone of their religious life and apostolic zeal, strengthening them in their mission.

As the congregation celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2025, it is a time of thanksgiving and renewal. With grateful hearts, the sisters look back at fifty years of divine guidance and grace-walking the hills of Malabar and the mission frontiers with the spirit of Mary and the heart of Jesus, bringing peace, healing, and the gospel message to those in need. In obedience to the great commission, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," the Nazareth Sisters continue their journey, joyfully carrying the crosses of daily life, sanctifying the world through love, sacrifice, and faith.



Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil

St. John Chrysostom, one of the foremost among the Fathers of the Church, had good knowledge about India. In speaking about the missionary activities of the Apostles, he also refers to India. In one of his homilies delivered between A.D. 387–397, he states: "He who presides over the Church of Rome knows that the Christians in India are also his members" (*qui Romae sedet, Indos scit membrum suum esse*). From this declaration of St. John Chrysostom, it becomes clear that in the fourth century there existed a Christian Church in India, just as in Rome (PL LIX 361). This also shows that the Church in India was known and recognized at that time.

He adds that the Apostle who preached the Gospel there was one capable of dealing with different languages and of speaking in foreign tongues. His contemporaries, St. Ephrem and St. Jerome, also

## ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON THE CHURCH IN INDIA

*"The tombs of Aaron, Daniel, and Jeremiah from the Old Testament we do not know; but those of Peter, John, and Thomas we know" (PL LXIII 237). He was certain that they were the founders of the Churches in those lands. Therefore, according to him, St. Thomas preached the Gospel in India, died in India, and was buried in India. Just as the tombs of Peter and Paul are famous in Rome, so too the tomb of St. Thomas is renowned in India.*

clearly and precisely mention in several of their writings the missionary activities of St. Thomas the Apostle in India. St. John Chrysostom further strengthens this by affirming that the tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle is indeed in India.

He also states that during the apostolic age, the Scythians and many other foreign peoples accepted the preaching of the Gospel. His words are as follows: "In the lands of the Romans, the Persians, and the Indians, the Gospel has been proclaimed and altars have been set up." This means that Christian communities were formed in all these places and liturgical services had already begun. Again he says that through the preaching of the

Gospel among non-believers, the Scythians, Thracians, Moors, Indians, and Persians-who were non-Greeks-became Christians.

St. John makes a distinction between Parthia and India. By the fourth century, Parthia included Persia and the northwestern parts of India bordering Persia, whereas "India" referred to South India, that is, Tamilakam. That is why he says, "among the Parthians, the Medes, the Elamites, and the Indians." This was not said casually in a sermon. Being a learned man and a famous orator, he spoke in the light of the views of other authoritative writers. Thus, when he says that St. Thomas preached among the Parthians, it refers

to the Parthian Empire, which included northwestern India, while "India" in his words points to South India.

He also speaks about the tomb of St. Thomas in India: "The tombs of Aaron, Daniel, and Jeremiah from the Old Testament we do not know; but those of Peter, John, and Thomas we know" (PL LXIII 237). He was certain that they were the founders of the Churches in those lands. Therefore, according to him, St. Thomas preached the Gospel in India, died in India, and was buried in India. Just as the tombs of Peter and Paul are famous in Rome, so too the tomb of St. Thomas is renowned in India.

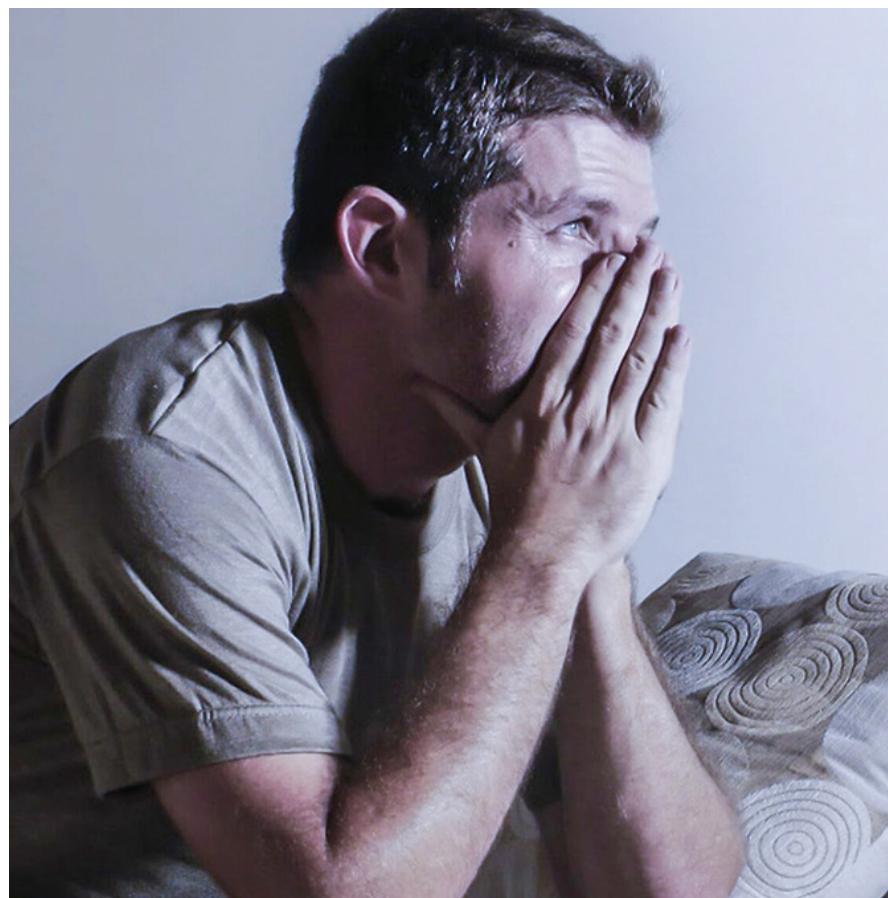
# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)



Rev. Dr. Sijon Kuzhikattumyalil

When a person experiences an extremely intense stress situation, psychological problems may arise in two ways. In some cases, it is caused by a single, sudden, unusual event of short duration. In others, it develops through repeated, long-term traumatic experiences. The immediate psychological reactions that appear within a short time after a stress event are known as *Acute Stress Reaction*. This condition is often seen in individuals who have gone through vehicle accidents, abuse, or physical assault. It results from an unusually severe psychological stress and can last from two days up to four weeks.

When symptoms occur within six months after a traumatic experience, it is termed *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*. Research shows that around 13%



of men and 30% of women who have faced trauma may develop this condition. The symptoms include recurring unpleas-

ant memories of the stressful situation, repeated flashbacks that push the mind into the same emotional state as before,

frightening nightmares connected with the trauma, and reliving the past traumatic experiences. People with PTSD often feel severe stress when they encounter news, images, or reminders of their past trauma, leading them to consciously avoid such triggers. They may also struggle to recall details of the traumatic event and may prefer to withdraw and distance themselves from others.

The root causes of PTSD are related to brain functioning. The *amygdala*, which identifies emotionally significant memories, becomes overactive, while the *medial prefrontal cortex*, which should regulate it, functions inadequately. In addition, dysfunction of the *hippocampus*, the part of the brain responsible for processing memories, also plays a role.

There are several treatment approaches. *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)* helps the patient by providing awareness about the illness, training to reduce anxiety, managing anger, and correcting faulty thought patterns. *Psychodynamic Therapy* focuses on understanding the meanings that the patient has attached to inner conflicts and resolving unconscious struggles. In cases where PTSD is accompanied by depression or severe anxiety (comorbidity), psychiatric treatment and appropriate medication under the supervision of a mental health professional may also be necessary.

## PHYSICAL PERSONS AND JURIDIC PERSONS



Rev. Dr. Joseph Mattathil

Can you explain the physical persons (*personae physicae*) and juridic persons (*personae iuridicae*) mentioned in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches?

Canons 909 to 935 of Title XIX of the CCEO explain who are considered as members of the Catholic Church through baptism, to which category they belong, how their rights and obligations are exercised in the Church, and the juridical validity of their acts. The Eastern Code classifies persons in the Church into two categories: 1. physical persons, and 2. juridic persons.

### 1. Physical Persons (*personae physicae*)

CCEO c. 909 distinguishes physical persons into three categories. A person who has completed the eighteenth year of age is called an *adult* or *major*. A person who has not yet completed the eighteenth year is a *minor*, while one who has not yet completed the seventh year is an *infant*. The reason for this threefold distinction is that the juridical validity of the acts performed by a person according

to ecclesiastical law, the responsibility to observe the laws of the Church, and the exercise of rights as a member of the Church must be evaluated in relation to the person's age.

A person below the completion of the seventh year is called an *infant* (*infans*) and is considered incapable of personal responsibility. At the completion of the seventh year, such a person is considered a *minor* (*minor*) and is presumed to have the use of reason (*usus rationis*) (CCEO c. 990 §2). However, those who have permanently lost the use of reason are considered incapable of personal responsibility and are to be treated as *infants* (CCEO c. 990 §3). Such persons are not bound by ecclesiastical laws, nor are they capable of valid juridic acts in the Church. They are also completely exempted from ecclesiastical penalties. Such persons may appear in ecclesiastical tribunals only through parents or legal guardians.

A baptized person who has attained majority, that is, eighteen years of age, is capable of fully exercising his or her rights in the Church (CCEO c. 910). A *minor* who has completed the seventh year of age also enjoys rights proper to the *Christian faithful*, but their exercise is subject to the authority of parents or legal guardians (*tutores*). In some matters, however, canon law prescribes an age limit at which the faithful can act inde-

pendently. For example, a person who has completed the fourteenth year of age, when receiving baptism, may freely choose to enroll himself or herself in any *Church sui iuris* without the permission of parents or guardians (CCEO c. 30). Before the fourteenth year, however, the conditions laid down in CCEO c. 29 must be observed. Likewise, in the exercise of certain specific rights and the assumption of particular obligations, members of the Eastern Churches are bound to observe the different age requirements prescribed in the CCEO. For example: marriage (CCEO c. 800), the diaconate and the presbyterate (CCEO c. 759 §1).

### 2. Juridic Persons (*personae iuridicae*)

Besides physical persons, there also exist in the Church certain communities and institutions endowed with a distinct canonical personality. Such aggregates of persons or of things (*universitas personarum vel rerum*) are called juridic persons (CCEO c. 920). Canons 920–935 of the CCEO deal with juridic persons in detail. Juridic persons, too, have their own rights and obligations. Their purpose is to fulfill the mission entrusted to the Church.

Juridic persons are established in two ways. First, there are juridic persons explicitly erected by common law. For example: Churches *sui iuris*, ecclesi-

astical provinces, eparchies, parishes, seminaries, and similar entities belong to this category. Secondly, juridic persons may also be established by decree of the competent ecclesiastical authority. For example, associations of the Christian faithful may be erected by competent authority as juridic persons (CCEO c. 921 §1). According to CCEO c. 920 §3, juridic persons are not to be established unless it is evident that they pursue a purpose truly useful to the mission of the Church and that they have sufficient means to achieve this purpose.

Every juridic person must have statutes approved by the competent authority. Only after such approval can a juridic person be validly constituted. The statutes must clearly set forth the purpose, nature, governance, mode of operation, the person who represents the juridic person both in civil and ecclesiastical matters, and the norms concerning the administration and alienation of temporal goods (CCEO c. 922 §2).

If a juridic person is constituted as an aggregate of persons, at least three members are required (CCEO c. 923). Canons 924–930 of the CCEO deal with the acts of collegial juridic persons and the norms to be observed in decision-making. Canons 931–935 treat of juridic acts in general, setting forth the requirements for validity and liceity in juridic acts undertaken within the Church.

# TEACHER APPOINTMENTS: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN AIDED SECTOR MUST END - MAJOR ARCHBISHOP MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL WRITES TO THE CHIEF MINISTER

The Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil has written to Kerala Chief Minister Sri. Pinarayi Vijayan, requesting an end to the discrimination shown towards the Christian aided sector in the matter of teacher appointments related to disability reservation. In his letter, the Major Archbishop raised the demand that a favorable decision must be taken by the government concerning the appointments of more than sixteen thousand teachers who have already been appointed in aided schools under Catholic management. The letter stated that if vacancies for candidates belonging to the disabled category

have been lawfully set apart in the aided schools, then approval must be granted for other appointments as well, and those appointments must be regularized. The Honorable Supreme Court, in a verdict related to appointments under the NSS management, had directed that if such reservations have been provided, the other appointments must be approved. Following this, the Honorable Government of Kerala had also issued a favorable order. The judgment of the Supreme Court in the NSS case clearly stated that the same order could be extended to other societies of a similar nature.

On this matter, the Consortium of

Catholic Managements, on behalf of the KCBC Commission for Education, approached the Honorable High Court, and obtained a favorable judgment that the applications of Catholic managements will also be considered in the light of the NSS judgment and the subsequent government order. However, in the government order implementing this judgment, it was stated that the Supreme Court order applies only to the NSS, and that if other managements seek implementation, they must secure separate court orders. Since the Honorable Supreme Court itself had clarified that the favorable verdict given to NSS is equally applicable to other commu-

nities in similar circumstances, the order issued by the government in the case of Catholic managements is discriminatory and a violation of equal justice, the Major Archbishop informed the Chief Minister in his letter. He further noted that the government's stance not only brings financial hardship to thousands of staff who have already been appointed, but also creates personal, family, and community-level distress, in some cases even driving teachers and families to the verge of suicide. Therefore, Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil earnestly requested the Honorable Chief Minister to intervene immediately in this matter and to ensure justice for the afflicted teachers.

# DISCRIMINATION IN TEACHER APPOINTMENTS: KOTTAYAM AND THRISSUR WITNESS MASSIVE PROTESTS



The protest declaration conference, organized under the auspices of the Catholic Teachers Guild and the Archdiocese of Thrissur, was inaugurated by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Thrissur, Mar Andrews Thazhath, who symbolically handed over the protest flame.

The event was led by the Auxiliary Bishop of Thrissur, Mar Tony Neelankavil, along with Jalips Paul, Sebi K.J., Austin Paul, Linson Puthur, Sini George, and others.



**Bishop Justin Madathiparambil, Auxiliary Bishop of the Vijayapuram Diocese, flagged off the protest meeting held in Kottayam under the joint auspices of the Catholic Teachers Guild and the Eparchies of Changanassery, Pala, Kanjirappally, Kottayam, and Vijayapuram. The meeting was inaugurated by Thomas Mar Coorilos, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Thiruvalla.**

# THE SYRO-MALABAR BISHOPS' SYNOD FELICITATED HIS BEATITUDE BASELIOS JOSEPH CATHOLICOS



Kakkanad: Catholicos Mor Baselios Joseph, the Head of the Jacobite Church, visited Mount St. Thomas, the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The visit of Mor Baselios Joseph Thirumeni took place during the session of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church. At the Church headquarters, Major

Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil and Synod Secretary Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany, together, received Mor Baselios Joseph Thirumeni. He then held

conversations with the Synod Fathers and other members of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia. Mor Baselios Joseph Thirumeni highlighted the importance of

fostering mutual cooperation between the Churches, especially between the Syro-Malabar Church and the Jacobite Church, and emphasized the Christian witness that must be offered to the world through such unity. He also expressed the hope that the challenges of the present age can be faced together in solidarity. Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil assured that the Syro-Malabar Church is always ready to extend the hand of fraternity to the Jacobite Church whenever needed. He added that both Churches must make collective efforts to preserve their common heritage and traditions of faith. Bishop Mar Sebastian Adayanthurath offered the words of welcome, and Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt conveyed greetings.

## COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS MARKS OUR IDENTITY: MAJOR ARCHBISHOP



"Community consciousness is an expression of identity, and true strength emerges only when a community stands united," observed Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. He was delivering the concluding message at the

seminar presenting the plans of the Syro-Malabar Church's Year of Community Empowerment 2026. He urged that talents must be nurtured from within, the traditional agricultural vocation of the Syriac Christians revived,

and communal challenges faced with solidarity.

The event was attended by Mar Andrews Thazhath, Chairman of the Syro-Malabar Public Affairs Commission; Mar Thomas Tharayil, Convener; Fr.

Michael Vettikkatt, Managing Director of Deepika; Rajeev Kochuparambil, President of the Catholic Congress; Dr. Josukutty Ozhukayil, General Secretary; representatives from various Eparchies; and leaders of organ-

izations. Fr. James Kokkavayalil, Secretary of the Public Affairs Commission, presented the detailed outline of the 2026 Community Empowerment Action Plan, followed by responses and discussions.

## SPANDAN AWARD DISTRIBUTED



"The true churches are those that journey with social workers-embracing the suffering, supporting the weak, and of-

ferring timely assistance," said Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. He was inaugurating the Social Ministry Award Cer-

emony, instituted by Spandan, the social outreach movement of the Syro-Malabar Church, at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad,

the Church headquarters.

The award, sponsored by the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Chicago, consisted

of a cash prize of ₹75,000 and a plaque. Recipients were: Fr. Thomas Kizhakkel from the Eparchy of Pala (Clergy category); Mrs. Thresiamma Mathew, Founding Director of Archana Women's Centre, Ettumanoor, Changanassery Archeparchy (Religious category); and Mr. Sebastian N. M., President of Sneha Jwala Trust, Kottakkad, Palakkad Eparchy (Laity category).

The awardees expressed that this recognition would inspire them to serve the economically weakest more earnestly. The programme was presided over by Bishop Jose Chittooparambil, Chairman of the Commission. Fr. Jacob Mavunkal, Chief Coordinator of Spandan, and Sajo Joy also spoke.

# CARLO ACUTIS AND PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI DECLARED SAINTS



Vatican City: Blessed Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati are raised to sainthood. On September 7, at the Vatican, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV,

canonized both of them. This is the first canonization during the pontificate of Pope Leo XIV.

Saint Carlo is known by the title "the

first millennial saint." Born in 1991 and passing away in 2006 due to leukemia, Carlo Acutis was a young man who integrated faith with digital expertise. He created an extensive online exhibition on Eucharistic miracles, which earned him the name "the Cyber Apostle of the Eucharist."

The miracles attributed to him and approved for his canonization include the healing of a Brazilian boy suffering from a pancreatic disorder in 2020 and the recovery of a Costa Rican college student from a severe cycling accident in 2022. The canonization was originally scheduled for April 27 in connection with the Jubilee of Adolescents, but following the death of Pope Francis, it was postponed to September 7.

Pier Giorgio Frassati, born in Turin in 1901, died in 1925 at the age of 24 from illness. A member of the Dominican Third Order, he became renowned for his passion for mountaineering, fervent daily Christian fellowship, and active charitable works. Through the St. Vincent de Paul Society and Catholic Action, he assisted the poor, the sick, and soldiers on the battlefield. His motto, *Verso l'Alto* ("To the Heights"), continues to inspire Catholic youth today to strive for spiritual excellence.

His canonization was initially scheduled for August 3, during the Jubilee of Youth, but was rescheduled for September 7 to coincide with the canonization of Carlo Acutis.

## THEOLOGIANS SHOULD HIGHLIGHT THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH: MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL



The conference of bishops and theologians, organized by KCBC Theological Commission, was held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkad. The event was

inaugurated by His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. The Theological Colloquium was organ-

ised by KCBC doctrinal commission. In his inaugural address, Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil emphasized that theologians must recognize and respond

to the growing, organized efforts aimed at rendering God and spiritual matters irrelevant in modern society. He warned that such movements are leading humanity into a deep spiritual crisis and despair by attempting to erase the transformative influence of religion and spirituality on the development of human civilization. He urged theologians to courageously engage with the challenges and questions that arise along the journey of faith, and to be committed to affirming the contemporary relevance of the concept of God and the spiritual life. The Major Archbishop also highlighted the rich tradition within Catholic theology of harmonizing faith and reason, guided by the motto "I believe that I may understand." He affirmed that Christian theology, rooted in this tradition, is well-equipped to provide logical and coherent responses to the pressing questions in the realm of faith today.

## EWS RESERVATION: REALITIES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Fr. Sabin Thoomullil

Immediately after the publication of the first allotment list for medical and dental admissions in Kerala, Mr. V. T. Balram made a statement against the EWS (Economically Weaker Sections) reservation, which was misleading and far from the truth. His allegation that 'forward' Christians secured MBBS seats in Government Medical Colleges undeservedly through the EWS quota was taken up and widely propagated by vested interest groups.

A close analysis of the first allotment data for MBBS and BDS admissions in Kerala reveals that the accusation that EWS candidates obtained undue advantage is baseless. In Government Medical Colleges, the last rank admitted under the State Merit list was 697, whereas in self-financing medical colleges, it extended up to rank 8745. In Government Dental Colleges, admission under State Merit was up to rank 3473, and in self-financing dental colleges, it went up to rank 25032.

A scrutiny of the MBBS admission rank list, especially the last ranks admitted in each category to Government Medical Colleges, shows the following: State Merit: Rank 697 Reservation Categories: Muslim - 916, Ezhava - 1627, Other Backward Hindu - 1902, Vishwakarma - 2556, Backward Christian - 2674, EWS - 2842, Latin Catholic/Anglo-Indian - 3296, Dhevara - 6514, Kusava - 9811, Kudumbi - 20214, Scheduled Caste - 14160, Scheduled Tribe - 25188.

From the rank list and allotment details, the facts emerge as follows:

1. The highest advantage in top ranks goes unmistakably to the Muslim category, followed by the Ezhava category.
2. The achievement of the Muslim candidates is indeed noteworthy: out of the 697 candidates admitted under State Merit, 279 were Muslims, whereas only 32 EWS candidates could find a place within the same range.
3. Through the 10% EWS reserva-

tion, eligibility for Government Medical College admissions extended only up to rank 2842, and the total number of EWS admissions was merely 163. In contrast, under the Muslim category (all sections professing Islam), within the last allotted rank of 916, as many as 387 candidates secured admission. This shows clearly that those belonging to the economically weaker sections under the EWS quota are still far behind the stronger OBC categories.

In his Facebook post, Mr. Balram alleged that the Muslim community deserved a higher share of seats and that the EWS reservation deprived them of this advantage. He also highlighted the division of Christians into forward and backward sections. A comparison of reservation benefits available to Muslims and Christians, the two major minorities in Kerala, reveals a stark contrast. While the majority of Christians remain outside the framework of caste-based reservations, all Muslims are entitled to OBC benefits.

It was only with the introduction of the 10% EWS quota that a significant section of Kerala Christians began to receive any kind of reservation benefit.

To portray even this as a matter of animosity is a dangerous and unconstitutional trend that society must recognize.

In Kerala, the purpose of caste reservation itself has been distorted. Political parties must honestly reflect whether the true aim of reservation is to eliminate socio-economic backwardness, or merely to reap political benefits on religious and caste lines. Society at large must unite against attempts to promote vote-bank politics in the name of reservation. Reservation should not serve religion, caste, or electoral gains; it must remain limited to the genuinely deserving and the truly backward. It is imperative to maintain legal vigilance against the agendas of political forces trying to smuggle in religious or caste supremacy under the guise of population-based proportional reservation.

# GOOD SHEPHERD MAJOR SEMINARY CONCLUDE



Kunnoth Good Shepherd Major Seminary, one of the four major seminaries directly under the Syro-Malabar Synod, concluded its year-long Silver Jubilee celebrations. The Jubilee Year, inaugurated on 5 September 2024, came to an end on 12 August 2025. The day began with an alumni gathering attended by over 200 priests trained at

the seminary, along with former rectors and professors, sharing experiences.

The Thanksgiving Qurbana was presided over by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, who also delivered the homily. The closing meeting was presided over by the Major Archbishop and inaugurated by Kerala Water Resources Minister

Roshy Augustine. Mar Joseph Pamplany, Chairman of the Seminary Commission, welcomed the gathering. Archbishop Mar George Valiamattam delivered a blessing address, while Mar George Njaralakatt distributed the Jubilee Endowment. Mar Joseph Kallarangatt inaugurated the solar plant established during the Jubilee year.

Former Rector Fr. Joseph Kuzhinjalil released the Jubilee Souvenir. A theological book published by Good Shepherd Books was released by handing over a copy from Mar Thomas Padiyath to Mar Joseph Srampickal. Bishop Mar Joseph Thomas of Thalassery and Bishop Dr. Alex Vadakumthala of Kannur extended felicitations.

The gathering was addressed by Seminary Commission members Mar Joseph Pandarasseril and Mar Peter Kochupurackal, MLA and KPCC President Sunny Joseph, former Rector Fr. Emmanuel Attel, alumnus Fr. Sebastian Idayadiel, and Sr. Jacinta Sebastian, Superior General of the Nazareth Sisters. The current Rector, Fr. Mathew Pattam, also spoke.

## SOLIDARITY FOR KUTTANAD



Moncombu: The Archeparchy of Changanassery, under the leadership of Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, staged a

Solidarity Dharna for Kuttanad on Farmers' Day, August 17, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Moncombu Thekkekkara,

protesting the discrimination of the Central and State Governments towards the flood- and agriculture-stricken people of

Kuttanad. Organized by the Catholic Congress, the Dharna witnessed participation from all organizations, movements,

parishes of the Archeparchy, and the general public.

The key demands included: mechanized dewatering to maintain water levels during the monsoon, removal of excessive weeds in canals and streams, strengthening of paddy bunds, ensuring profitable paddy cultivation without middlemen, urgent measures to resolve drinking water shortages, and support for paddy, coconut, duck, and fish farmers. The demand was also raised to open the A.C. Canal up to Pallathuruthy as originally envisaged.

Clergy, religious, pastoral council members, vigilance committee, eparchial, forane, and unit leaders, along with farmers and farm workers, participated. Delegates from various paddy fields of Kuttanad also joined in.

## INAUGURATION OF BTC AND DISTRIBUTION OF HDC CERTIFICATES



Kanjirappally: Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal, Eparch of Kanjurappally, inaugurated the **Basic Training Course (BTC)**, a three-day camp organized by the Eparchial Faith Formation Centre at the Podimattom Nirmala Renewal Centre. Distribution of

HDC certificates for the academic year 2024–25 was carried out by Eparchial Proto-Syncellus Fr. Joseph Vellamattam.

The sessions were led by a resource team of priests, religious, and laity under the leadership of Fr. Thomas Valanmanal, Direc-

tor of the Kanjurappally Eparchial Faith Formation Centre. Vicar General Fr. Bobby Alex Mannamplackal, Chancellor Fr. Mathew Shauryamkuzhiyil, and Procurator Fr. Philip Thadathil interacted with the teachers.

## NEW OFFICE-BEARERS FOR THE ORIENTAL CANON LAW SOCIETY OF INDIA

The Oriental Canon Law Society of India elected its new office-bearers for the next three years: Rev. Dr. George Thekkakara as President, Dr. Sr. Delna MSMI as Vice President, Rev. Dr. Sebastian Payyappilly CMI as Secretary, Fr. Varghese Chamakkalayil as Treasurer, and Alex Velacheril, Fr. James Pampara CMI, and Sr. Rosmin SH as committee members.

The election took place at the 35th Annual Conference held at Amal Jyothi College, Kanjurappally, under the chairmanship of Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, Curia Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. At the General Body meeting presided over by

Rev. Dr. George Thekkakara, Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal was proposed and accepted as Patron of the Society in his capacity as Curia Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church.

The conference was inaugurated by Rev. Dr. Samuel Mar Irenios, Bishop of Pathanamthitta Eparchy. Mar Jose Pulickal, Bishop of Kanjurappally Eparchy, presided. Various papers were presented by Rev. Dr. Francis Eluvathingal, Rev. Dr. Alex Velacheril, Rev. Dr. James Pampara CMI, Rev. Dr. George Thekkakara, Rev. Dr. Roy Joseph Kaduppil, and Rev. Dr. Sebastian Payyappilly.



# DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

## JULY 26 TO AUGUST 18

### July

- **26 July:** Delivered a message and conveyed greetings during the Holy Qurbana celebrated at the Cathedral Church of the Archeparchy of Kottayam on the occasion of the beatification of Servant of God Mar Mathew Makil. Inaugurated the public meeting held in connection with the conclusion of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of the Eparchy of Palai. Addressed the conference organized under the leadership of the Saudi Syro-Malabar Catholic Youth Association (SMCYM) at Mount St. Thomas.
- **28 July:** Celebrated the solemn Holy Qurbana at the Curia on the occasion of the feast of St. Alphonsa. Addressed the conference of the Public Affairs Commission convened at Mount St. Thomas to reflect on the Year of Community Empowerment.
- **29 July:** Celebrated Holy Qurbana and delivered a message at the Generalate of the St. Martha's Sisters in Palai. Addressed the gathering of the PROs of the Syro-Malabar Church at Mount St. Thomas.

### August

- **02 August:** Celebrated Holy Qurbana at St. Francis Assisi Church, Elanji, in the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda, on the anniversary of the Porziuncola Plenary Indulgence.
- **03 August:** Celebrated the solemn Community Holy Qurbana and delivered the homily at Assumption Church, Palakkunnu, in the Archeparchy of Thrissur, as part of the Post-Centennial Silver Jubilee celebrations.
- **04 August:** On the feast day of St. John Mary Vianney, heavenly patron of parish priests, celebrated the Community Holy Qurbana at the Curia chapel.
- **05 August:** Inaugurated the colloquium of bishops and theologians organized under the auspices of the KCBC Theological Commission at Mount St. Thomas. Participated in the meeting of priests of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly held at the Renewal Centre, Kaloor, on the occasion of Vianney Day, and felicitated the jubilarians celebrating 25 and 50 years of priesthood.

Took part in the annual retreat for bishops organized by KCBC, held at Mount St. Thomas from August 5 to 9.

- **10 August:** Inaugurated the concluding session of the Bicentennial Celebrations of St. Dominic's Cathedral Church of the Eparchy of Kanjirappally.
- **12 August:** Presided over the Holy Qurbana and the concluding function of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Good Shepherd Major Seminary, Kunnoth.
- **14 August:** Delivered the homily during the Holy Qurbana on the occasion of the priestly Golden Jubilee celebrations of Archbishop George Kocherry, Apostolic Nuncio, at the Cathedral Church, Changanassery.
- **15 August:** On the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, celebrated Holy Qurbana at the famous pilgrimage centre of St. Mary's Church, Koratty, in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly. On the 78th Independence Day of India, hoisted the national flag at Mount St. Thomas.
- **18 August:** Inaugurated the Second Session of the XXXIII Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, held at Mount St. Thomas.

## PILGRIMAGE TO WALSHINGHAM IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH



The Walsingham Pilgrimage was conducted under the leadership of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain. Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal was the chief celebrant for both the pilgrimage and the feast-day *Qurbana*. In his festal message, Bishop Srampickal reminded the faithful that the life of faith must be holy and perfect. In spite of adverse weather warnings, thousands of faithful

participated in the pilgrimage, setting aside all difficulties. Pilgrims who came from various parts of the Eparchy joined the procession, walking behind mission banners. The procession was accompanied by decorated umbrellas and flag arches, with the faithful offering the rosary, singing hymns of veneration to the Blessed Mother, and chanting *Ave Maria* songs, making it a

profound moment of faith-proclamation for the Syro-Malabar Church. At the rear of the procession, the Syro-Malabar community of the Cambridge region carried the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, followed by priests led by Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal. Under the leadership of Fr. Joseph Mukkatt, the SMYM Ministry's 'Samayam Band' conducted a melodious worship service, while Rev. Dr. Robert Billing, Proto-Syncellus Dr. Antony Chundelikkatt, Fr. Joseph Mukkatt, and Fr. Jinu Mundunadakkal delivered inspiring messages during the pilgrimage.

## MSGR. JOHN THEKKEKARA APPOINTED AS LIAISON OFFICER



Vicar of Lourdes Forane Church, Thiruvananthapuram, as the Liaison Officer of the Syro-Malabar Church to handle matters related to the Government of Kerala.

Msgr. Thekkekara, born in 1970, is the son of Thekkekara Varghese and Thresiamma of Ithithanam, Changanacherry. He was ordained a priest in 1997 by Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil. He holds a doctorate in Hospital Administration and has served as Assistant Director of St. John's Medical College, Bangalore.

## RELIGION SHOULD NOT BE TURNED INTO A WEAPON OF WAR: CARDINAL MAR GEORGE KOOVAKAD

Kuala Lumpur: "Religion should never be turned into a weapon of war," stated Cardinal Mar George Jacob Koovakad, Prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican, and a native of Kerala.

He was delivering the Vatican's message at the Second International Summit of Religious Leaders held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. According to Cardinal Koovakad, religious leaders have a duty to raise their voices against violence and unjust discrimination, and to courageously ad-

dress the root causes of conflicts.

"Too often, some exploit religion as a convenient tool to promote division or to justify aggression. It cannot be denied that certain religious leaders, either directly or indirectly, have ignited or fueled conflicts," he remarked.

The conference, on the theme "The Role of Religious Leaders in Conflict Resolution," was organized in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Muslim World League.

## BISHOP MAR VALLOPPILLY MEMORIAL MIGRATION MUSEUM INAUGURATED IN CHEMBANTHOTTI



Chembanthotti: Minister Ramachandran Kadannappally inaugurated the Bishop Mar Valloppilly Memorial Migration Museum in Chembanthotti. The first phase of the museum, which highlights the history and impact of Malabar Migration, is now open to the public. The museum features galleries that explore the crucial role Migration has played in shaping modern Malabar and contributing to Kerala's overall development. Speaking at the event, the

minister noted that this marks the beginning of a larger project. The current facility will serve as the introductory gallery, with more expansive developments planned for the second phase. The inauguration ceremony was presided over by MLA Sajeev Joseph. As part of the event, copper and brass items collected by the Thalassery Archdiocese were officially handed over for the construction of a statue of Bishop Valloppilly, which will be an integral part of the muse-

um. The museum has been built on one acre of land leased for 99 years by the Chembanthotti Forane Church under the Thalassery Archdiocese. The construction was funded through the State Archaeological Department's project allocation. District Panchayat President K.K. Ratna Kumari was the chief guest at the function. Former Minister K.C. Joseph and Thalassery Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplani were also present as special guests.

## MISSIONARY SOCIETY FOR THE MARGINALIZED (MSM)



In the Archeparchy of Thalassery, a new Apostolic Life Society under the name *Missionary Society for the Marginalized* has been established. We are all familiar with the movement *Aakashaparavakal* (Sky Birds), founded by the late Rev. Fr. George Kuttickal, a member of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). Fr. George Kuttickal continues to live in the hearts of the people as the face of the Merciful Jesus in the Eucharist. *Aakashaparavakal* became a community that embraced and served those whom society neglected—people suffering from mental illness, the sick, and beggars.

Thirty-two years ago, on August 6, 1993, Rev. Fr. George Kuttickal began the work of *Aakashaparavakal*. Later, two distinct communities were also founded: *Daughters of the Covenant of the Eucharistic Lord* for women (December 25, 1997) and *Sons of the Covenant of the*

*Eucharistic Lord* for men (May 2, 1998). Both these communities originated in the Archeparchy of Thalassery. Over time, the mission of *Aakashaparavakal* spread throughout India.

In the year 2000, Cardinal James Francis Stafford, then Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity in Rome, advised Fr. Kuttickal to approach Archbishop Vincent Concessao of Delhi and request that *Aakashaparavakal* be recognized as a pious association. Following this, the Archbishop of Delhi declared *Aakashaparavakal* a pious association, and until 2016 the community continued as such under the recognition of the Archdiocese of Delhi.

In 2016, Fr. Kuttickal submitted a petition to the Major Archbishop, seeking recognition of *Aakashaparavakal* as a pious association of the Syro-Malabar Church. On January 29, 2024, the members of *Aakashaparavakal* once again approached

His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, with this request. Since the origin of *Aakashaparavakal* was in the Archeparchy of Thalassery, the Major Archbishop directed that it was the Archeparchy of Thalassery that should grant recognition to the community as a pious association.

The demise of Fr. Kuttickal, who was the lifeline of *Aakashaparavakal*, left its members in great weakness. The members of this community also experienced many struggles in living as a dedicated society without any special canonical status within the Church. Upon studying deeply the charism and mode of life of the community, the possibility of raising it as an Apostolic Life Society came into consideration.

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Manappathupurampil, a priest of the Archeparchy of Thalassery, has since 2006 been carrying out unique and dedicated ministry for the

protection of street people and orphaned children. Since his apostolic works bore much resemblance to the charism and way of life of *Aakashaparavakal*, I discussed with him the possibility of carrying out these ministries in communion with *Aakashaparavakal*. Fr. Sebastian readily agreed to take up this mission, and therefore, the members of *Aakashaparavakal* were declared as an Apostolic Life Society according to Canon 572 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. The statutes of the newly formed society were approved by the Permanent Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, and the necessary consent of the Major Archbishop was also obtained.

The official proclamation of the new society and the first profession of vows of its members took place on July 30, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. in the Chempéri Lourdes Matha Basilica. Rev. Fr. Sebastian Manappathupurampil was appointed as the first Servant General of this society. It is our duty to extend the merciful touch of Jesus to the marginalized in society. This is the first Apostolic Life Society established in the Archeparchy of Thalassery. Let us all pray for the growth of this community. Twelve members made their profession and received the religious habit, while thirteen members were received as Associate Members and vested with the habit.

## THE ACTS OF THE FIFTH MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL ASSEMBLY PUBLISHED



Kakkanad: The Fifth Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Syro-Malabar Church was held at Alphonsian Pastoral Institute, Palai, from August 22 to 25, 2024. The central theme of the assembly was "The Mission and Life of the

Syro-Malabar Church in Response to the Needs of the Times." The key areas studied included the renewal of faith formation, empowering the laity for evangelization, and the strengthening of the Syro-Malabar community.

The Major Archiepiscopal Assembly Committee compiled all the study topics, discussions, reports, and action plans of the assembly into the Acts of the Fifth Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Syro-Malabar Church. The Acts were

formally published during the Synod session held on Wednesday, August 27, 2025. His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, released the Acts by handing over the first copy to Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, Bishop of Palai.

Present on the occasion were Mar Poly Kannoakadan, Convener of the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly Committee; committee members Mar Thomas Tharayil, Mar Sebastian Edayantrath, Mar George Rajendran, and Mar Prince Antony Panengadan; Curia Bishop Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal; Syro-Malabar Church Chancellor Very Rev. Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil; Vice Chancellor Rev. Fr. Prakash Mattathil; and Rev. Fr. Jobin Kanjirathinkal, Secretary of the Assembly Committee.

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT YEAR 2026: LOGO AND HANDBOOK RELEASED



Kakkanad: In connection with the Syro-Malabar Community Empowerment Year, the logo and the handbook prepared by the Commission containing guidelines and orientations for awareness and action were released during the Synod session. His Beatitude

Mar Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, released them by handing over the first copy to Mar Jacob Angadiath, the former Bishop of the Eparchy of Chicago.

Rev. Fr. James Kokkavayalil, Secretary of the Commission, presented the

action plan for community empowerment. The program will be carried out in two phases: awareness activities during the period from September to December 2025, followed by practical action initiatives in 2026. This was announced by the Commission Chairman, Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath. A circular from

the Major Archbishop, detailing the arrangements for the observance of the year, will be issued shortly.

The Public Affairs Commission is coordinating the program, with Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil serving as Convener, and Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany, Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil, and Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal as members. Very Rev. Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil, Chancellor of the Church, serves as an ex officio member of the Commission.

The Synod of January 2025 had declared 2026 as the Syro-Malabar Community Empowerment Year and entrusted the Public Affairs Commission with the responsibility of preparing and implementing the action plan.



**Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt**  
(Bishop of Palai)

**Bishop Sebastian Vayalil**  
(First Bishop of Palai)

**Bishop Joseph Pallickaparampil**  
(Bishop Emeritus)

**Bishop Jacob Muricken**  
(Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus)

The Diocese of Palai, spread over 1,166 sq. km in Central Kerala, includes Meenachil Taluk along with a few villages from the districts of Kottayam, Idukki, and Ernakulam. The Christian community here traces its roots to the early followers of St. Thomas the Apostle. Although the Diocese of Palai was established only seventy-five years ago, the region itself has a rich and ancient history, having long been home to vibrant Christian communities and historic churches.

Pope Pius XII, through the Apostolic Constitution Quo Ecclesiarum, established the Diocese of Palai on July 25, 1950, by separating the five foranes of Palai, Muttuchira, Kuravilangad, Anakkal (Bharananganam), and Ramapuram from the Diocese of Changanacherry, and making it a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam. This papal bull was officially proclaimed on January 4, 1951, at St. Thomas Cathedral, Palai, by His Excellency Dr. Leo Kierkels, the Apostolic Nuncio to India. On this historic occasion, Mar Sebastian Vayalil was enthroned as the first Bishop of Palai. Later, when the Holy See, through the Apostolic Constitution Regnum Coelorum, elevated the Diocese of Changanacherry to the status of an Archdiocese and created the new Ecclesiastical Province of Changanacherry, the Diocese of Palai became one of its suffragan dioceses.



Very Rev. Dr. Joseph Thadathil  
(Protosyncellus)



Very Rev. Dr. Joseph Maleparampil  
(Syncellus)



Very Rev. Dr. Sebastian Vethanath  
(Syncellus)



Very Rev. Dr. Joseph Kaniyodickal  
(Syncellus)



St. Alphonsa



Sr. Mary Collet  
Servant of  
God



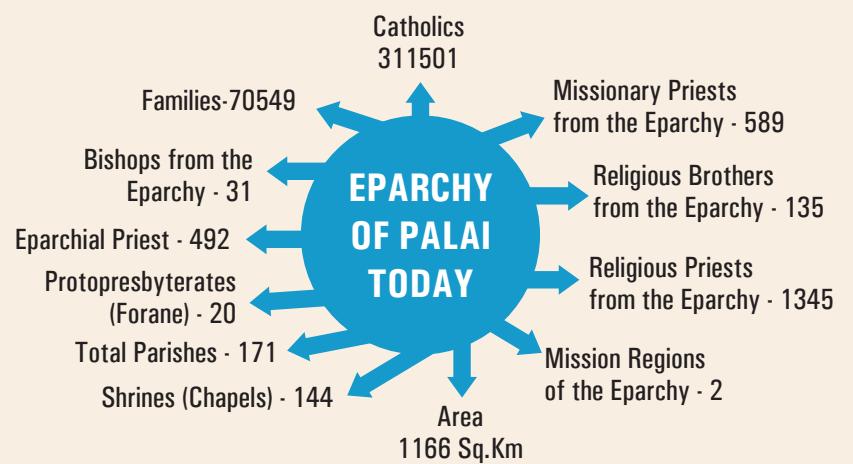
Bl. Kunjachan



Venerable  
Kadhalikattil Mathaiachan



Fr. Bruno Kaniyarakath  
Servant of God



### EPARCHY OF PALAI SOCIAL SECTOR

Hospitals .....	12
Colleges.....	13
Schools.....	175
Nursery Schools.....	113
Teacher Training School.....	3
Charitable Institutions.....	92
Care Homes.....	1
Hostels & Boardings.....	10



## ST. THOMAS CATHEDRAL, PALA

**LITURGY :** Remaining faithful to the tradition and synodal directions of the Church, the Diocese gives great importance to the proper administration of the sacraments in its parishes. It ensures the availability of pastoral services throughout its territory. By faithfully celebrating the liturgy, the Diocese is committed to safeguarding the heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church while nurturing the spiritual life of the faithful through its rich spiritual and cultural traditions.

**CATECHISM :** Faith formation in the Diocese helps children and youth grow in Christ, strengthens families in faith, nurtures love for Church traditions, and shapes individuals committed to both the Church and society.

**BIBLE APOSTOLATE:** Through its year-round programs, the Bible Apostolate brings the Gospel into daily life by nurturing the faithful in the Word of God and working to transform society with the light of Scripture.

### CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS:

Charismatic movements play a vital role in the spiritual renewal of believers, guiding them into a deeper experience of God. They emphasize a life rooted in the Word of God, fostering the spiritual revival of individuals and families, and promoting values of love, service, and compassion.

**HOSPITALS:** Guided by the Gospel call to "See Christ in the sick," the Diocese carries forward its mission of service in the health sector. Its greatest contribution in this field is Mar Sleeva Medicity, Palai, a tertiary care hospital that offers advanced medical facilities to all, while upholding the medical ethics, moral values, and principles of the Catholic Church.

### HOME PALA PROJECT:

The Diocese launched the Home Pala Project to provide secure housing for poor families without proper shelter. To date, over 1,500 families have benefitted from this initiative.

### P.S.W.S. (Pala Social Welfare Society):

PSWS carries out numerous projects at both the parish and diocesan levels, ensuring the effective implementation of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. It extends care and support to the poor, the marginalized, and the socially disadvantaged.

### A.K.C.C. (All Kerala Catholic Congress):

The AKCC consistently plays a significant role in addressing the social challenges of the community. It shapes Church members into responsible citizens, safeguards their rights and fosters a spirit of justice and love for the Church.

### D.C.M.S. (Dalit Christian Movement Society):

With an unwavering commitment to social justice and equality, DCMS works for the spiritual and social uplift of Dalit Christians in the Diocese. It organizes parish-level programmes and training sessions to empower and support its members.

**EDUCATIONS:** The Diocese has established a wide range of institutions, including schools, arts and science colleges, engineering and nursing colleges, and teacher education colleges. Through these institutions, it continually strives to enhance the quality of education and social life, playing a vital role in its commitment to nation-building.

**HOME MISSION:** The Home Mission works to ensure the renewal of every family in the parishes. Trained nuns in family counselling visit households throughout the Diocese, offering guidance, support, and spiritual renewal.

**FAMILY UNITS:** Families, which serve as the domestic Church and the first school of faith, are strengthened through the formation of family units at the parish level, each comprising a specific number of families. These units conduct monthly prayers, gatherings, and discussions that nurture both spiritual and social growth.

### PRE-MARRIAGE COURSES:

Pre-marriage courses serve as spiritual formation programmes for couples preparing for married life. They strengthen participants in faith, nurture love and foster mutual respect, helping them build a strong foundation for family life.

**PITHRUVEDI, MATHRUVEDI, AND PRO-LIFE** movements of the Diocese of Pala function as the "confluence of three rivers of the Church" that nurtures families in faith and service. With the recognition that the family itself is the foundation of the Church, the activities of these organizations deeply enrich both the spiritual and social life of the diocese.

# DON'T BE DISCOURAGED IN THE FACE OF CRISES: MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL



Kakkanad: Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church Mar Raphael Thattil said that we should not be discouraged in the face of crises. He was speaking at the inauguration of the second session of the 33rd Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archepiscopal Church on August 18, 2025 at Mount St Thomas the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church. These are days when we need to think deeply

about the changes and reforms that need to be adopted in the pastoral style and arrangements of the Church, said the Major Archbishop. He also expressed the hope that this Synod session will be useful in considering the urgent steps to be taken to embody the missionary zeal of the Church in all its meanings in the life and activities of the Church. An open and generous approach should be ensured in the areas of our mission and

ministry, the Major Archbishop said.

In the context of India's 79th Independence Day celebrations, Mar Raphael Thattil recalled the progress made by modern India, including the persecution of religious minorities, especially Christians, in independent India, including the injustice faced by nuns in the Chhattisgarh region, and condemned the increasing attacks by communal forces on

Christians across the country. The Major Archbishop assured that the church communities and individuals being persecuted in various parts of India are not alone and that the Church will always be with them. We must never retreat from the evangelizing mission in the face of increasing crises. The Synod Fathers must be able to overcome all the shortcomings in the Church's evangelizing mission and move forward; Mar Raphael Thattil added.

The Synod Session began with a recollection talk given by Mar Alex Taramangalam, Auxiliary Bishop of Mananthavady. Then, the Synod Fathers celebrated Holy Qurbana, Major Archbishop being the celebrant. 52 Bishops, serving in India and abroad and those who had retired from pastoral ministry, participated in the session. The Synod concluded on August 29.

## FOUR NEW PROVINCES IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH



Kakkanad: Four new Archeparchies have been erected in the Syro-Malabar Church. The Eparchies of Faridabad, Ujjain, Kalyan, and Shamshabad have been elevated to the status of Archeparchies. This new declaration was made by

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil in connection with the second session of the 33rd Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archepiscopal Church. Accordingly, Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara, Mar Sebastian Vadakel, Mar

Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, and Mar Prince Antony Panengadan have been appointed as Metropolitan Archbishops.

The Eparchies of Bijnor and Gorakhpur will be suffragan eparchies of the

Ecclesiastical Province of Faridabad. The Eparchies of Sagar, Satna, and Jagdalpur have been designated as suffragan eparchies of the Archeparchy of Ujjain. The Ecclesiastical Province of Kalyan will include the Eparchies of Chanda and Rajkot. The suffragan eparchy of the Archeparchy of Shamshabad will be Adilabad. The Major Archbishop has also decreed that the Eparchy of Hosur in Tamil Nadu will be a suffragan of the Archeparchy of Thrissur.

Since Mar Thomas Elavanal, Bishop of Kalyan, submitted his resignation upon completing 75 years of age, Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, who is at present the Curia Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, has been appointed as the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Kalyan.

## NEW BISHOPS FOR ADILABAD AND BELTHANGADY



Kakkanad: New bishops have been appointed for the Eparchies of Adilabad

and Belthangady. Rev. Dr. James Patteril, a member of the Claretian religious

congregation, has been appointed as the Bishop of Belthangady, while Rev. Dr. Joseph Thachaparambath CMI has been appointed as the Bishop of Adilabad. This announcement was made by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil in connection with the second session of the 33rd Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archepiscopal Church. The Major Archbishop vested the newly appointed bishops with the episcopal insignia.

Rev. Dr. Joseph Thachaparambath, who has been appointed as Bishop of Adilabad, belongs to the Eparchy of Idukki. He was born on 24 February 1969 and ordained priest on 1 January 1997.

He served as the Finance Officer of the Eparchy of Adilabad from 2005 to 2008 and from 2017 to 2023. Since 2023, he has been serving as the Provincial Superior of the Chanda Mar Thoma Province. He holds B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees and is pursuing doctoral research at Sunrise University, Rajasthan.

Rev. Dr. James Patteril, who has been appointed as Bishop of Belthangady, belongs to the same Eparchy. He was born on 27 July 1962 and ordained priest on 26 April 1990. He was serving as the Provincial Procurator of the Würzburg Province of the Claretian congregation in Germany.

## REORGANIZATION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF TWELVE EPARCHIES

Kakkanad: The Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil has modified the territorial boundaries of twelve eparchies of the Syro-Malabar Church situated outside Kerala.

With the establishment of the Eparchy of Shamshabad on 9 October 2017, the

Syro-Malabar Church received all-India jurisdiction. The new eparchy was erected by Pope Francis by including all regions that had not yet been incorporated into the existing eparchies. Spread across 23 states, four union territories, and two islands, the Shamshabad Eparchy's vast territory

necessitated effective pastoral care. After deliberations in various assemblies, it was decided to reorganize certain regions of Shamshabad by joining them with eleven other eparchies. This decision received the approval of the Vatican. According-

ly, by his decree, the Major Archbishop modified the territorial boundaries of the following twelve eparchies: Adilabad, Bhadravathi, Bijnor, Chanda, Jagdalpur, Gorakhpur, Kalyan, Rajkot, Sagar, Satna, Shamshabad, and Ujjain.