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LENT A SEASON OF LISTENING OF CONVERSION

LENTEN MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE LEO XIV

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (*Ex 3:7*). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen *as he does*. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history,



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constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the

tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.” Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith

and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.” As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.”

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend

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EDITORIAL



LENT IN A TIME OF WAR: A CALL TO CONVERSION AND RESPONSIBILITY

We have entered once again into the sacred season of Lent, a time gifted by the Church for reflection, repentance, and renewal. This year, however, the Lenten journey unfolds under the shadow of war in the Gulf region. The disturbing images of destruction, displacement, and fear that reach our homes each day are not distant realities; they are wounds in the body of humanity. Lent, therefore, cannot remain a private spiritual exercise. It must become a deeply personal and profoundly social experience of conversion.

In his Lenten Message for this year, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, invites the faithful to walk together in hope, resisting the temptation to indifference and despair. He reminds us that conversion is not merely a change of habits, but a transformation of heart that restores relationships - with God, with one another, and with creation. In a world fractured by violence and competing interests, this call acquires an urgent relevance.

War is always a defeat for humanity. The ongoing Gulf conflict has already disrupted global stability, strained economies, and intensified anxieties among ordinary families. Migrant workers face uncertainty, supply chains are shaken, and vulnerable populations suffer silently. The socio-economic repercussions are felt far beyond the battlefield. Yet, beyond these measurable consequences lies a deeper spiritual crisis: the erosion of the sense of the other as brother or sister.

Lent teaches us another way. Through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the Church proposes concrete attitudes that counter the logic of war. Prayer cultivates interior silence, enabling us to listen to the voice of God rather than the noise of propaganda and prejudice. Fasting disciplines our desires, reminding us that not every demand must be satisfied, not every power asserted. Almsgiving opens our hands and hearts to those who bear the heaviest burdens of conflict. These practices are not symbolic gestures. They have a social dimension. A community that prays together nurtures peace. A society that learns restraint reduces aggression. A people who share their resources build solidarity.

The Cross stands at the centre of Lent. It is the supreme revelation that violence does not have the final word. From the wounded side of Christ flowed reconciliation, not revenge. If we allow the grace of this season to penetrate our hearts, we too can become instruments of reconciliation in our families, communities, and public life.

Knowingly or unknowingly, we too wage wars - within our families, in our workplaces, in the Church, and in society. These silent battles wound human dignity, drain precious time and energy, and destroy what could have been fruitful and life-giving. Many lose not only their peace, but the very dignity of their lives, becoming victims of conflicts rooted in ego and self-projection. These wars, fought for the protection and promotion of the self, must cease. Only then will Lent bear true fruit — not only in our souls, but in the healing of the world around us.

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A DAY TO REMEMBER

March 11: Mid-Lent Observance

March 18: Death Anniversary of Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil (2023)

March 19: Feast of St. Joseph

March 23: Death Anniversary of Major Archbishop Mar Antony Cardinal Padiyara (2000)

March 25: Episcopal Ordination of Mar Antony Chirayath (2006)

The Feast of the Annunciation

March 27: 40th Friday

March 28: Death Anniversary of Mar Januarius Palathuruthy CMI (1995)

March 29: Palm Sunday

March 30: In the Holy *Qurbana*, The Order of the first *Qudasa* (The *Qudasa* of Mar Addai and Mari) is used from the Monday after Palm Sunday until the end of the season of the Dedication of the Church.

▶ FESTAL GREETINGS ◀

March 19



Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany



Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam



Mar Joseph Pallikaparampil



Mar Joseph Kunnath CMI



Mar Joseph Kallarangatt



Mar Jose Porunnedom



Mar Joseph Pandarasseril



Mar Joseph Arumachadath MCBS



Mar Jose Chittooparambil CMI



Mar Joseph Kollamparampil CMI



Mar Joseph Kodakallil



Mar Jose Kalluvellil

March 23



Mar Jose Pulickal



Mar Joseph Srampickal



Mar Joseph Thachaparambath CMI



Mar Jose Puthenveetil



Mar Joseph Kollamparampil



Mar Vijay Anand Nedumpuram CMI

GREGORY OF NYSSA



PATHFINDERS

Rev. Dr. Alex Sebastian Kollamkalam

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian Fathers, was born into a deeply rooted Christian family. His mother, Emmelia, was the daughter of a martyr. His brothers, Basil the Great and Peter of Sebaste, were bishops; Basil of Cappadocia is revered among the Greek Fathers as “the Great.” His elder sister, Macrina the Younger, is venerated as a saint upon the altar. Gregory’s first teacher was his elder brother Basil, whom he affectionately called “my father and my master.”

Basil desired that Gregory, like himself, should be trained in theology and grow in Christian spirituality. Yet Gregory first pursued the art of rhetoric, began a teaching career, and married a young woman named Theosebia, entering family life.



In A.D. 371, when Basil became Bishop of Cappadocia, he appointed Gregory as Bishop of Nyssa, consecrating him by the laying on of hands. Later testimony from Gregory of Nazianzus affirms that Gregory lived with his wife thereafter in a manner akin to that of a brother and sister.

Upon assuming episcopal office, Gregory took a firm stand against the Arian heresy and emerged as a courageous defender of the true faith. Opposition from Arian circles

made peaceful governance of his diocese difficult. He travelled to Arabia and Palestine, where he continued to proclaim orthodox teaching against Arianism.

Though he did not possess the same administrative skill as his elder brother, Gregory was distinguished by the depth and clarity of his theological insight. In A.D. 376, he was deposed from his episcopal office by Emperor Valens, but was reinstated in 378 during the reign of Gratian.

At the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381, convened to oppose Macedonianism, which denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, Gregory was among the principal theologians. His discourse on the full divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit drew wide attention. He offered the Council theological clarity in affirming that the Holy Spirit proceeds “from the Father through the Son.” Historians also attest to his presence at a local synod held in Arabia in A.D. 394.



From the Heart of
the Father and Head

Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil



We are entering into the most vibrant season of the liturgical year of the Syro-Malabar Church — the

Great Lent. In our ecclesial tradition, Lent is not merely a period of certain external renunciations; rather, it is a spiritual pilgrimage in which we actively participate in the salvific mysteries of Christ, passing through His sufferings and entering into the glory of His Resurrection. That the Church sets apart nearly one hundred days in the liturgical year for fasting proclaims the undeniable importance of this sacred season in our spiritual life. This holy time is the arena of a spiritual struggle to regain the divine glory and likeness lost through original sin. Through repentance at the foot of the Cross and prayer in the desert, this Lent invites each one of us to be transformed into a new creation.

Fasting calls us into the desert of solitude. The forty days of solitude observed by Christ in the wilderness is the model for our spiritual life. Solitude does not mean an escape from the world, but rather silencing the worldly noises that hinder us from hearing the voice of God. As the Scripture says, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her” (Hosea 2:14), it is in the desert of our hearts that we encounter the Lord.

The Eastern Fathers describe this state as “rest in silence.” Isaac of Nineveh teaches: “If you make yourself silent, your silence will become a chariot for you; it will carry you to God.” Likewise, Ephrem the Syrian describes the desert and solitude as the place where the soul, the bride, meets Christ, the Bridegroom. The solitude of this Lenten season is the space where our soul is purified in the fire of divine love.

Lenten Message of the Holy Father Continuation of page 1

themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines

THROUGH THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS TO THE RADIANCE OF RESURRECTION



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The forty days of Christ in the desert teach us that solitude is necessary to overcome the temptations of the evil one and to discern the will of the Father. During this Lent, we must learn to create a “desert” of the heart in our homes and workplaces. There, we are not alone, but in communion with the Lord of the universe.

In the tradition of our Church, fasting is purification through tears. Three Gospel figures guide us on this path of transformation: The Good Thief: Standing at the foot of the Cross, the Good Thief recognized the divinity of Christ. A single moment of sincere repentance opened for him the gates of Paradise. In the prayers of the Church, he is remembered as the one who received the “key of Paradise.” Through repentance, he teaches us to crucify the old self within us and to rise with Christ.

this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foun-

Mary Magdalene: She journeyed from the darkness of sin into the light of love. By weeping at the feet of the Lord, she shows us that what God desires is not sacrifices, but a broken and contrite heart. Nicodemus: Hesitant to confess Christ openly in the light of day, Nicodemus represents spiritual growth during Lent. From the secrecy of night, he gradually moved toward the light that is Christ. Like Nicodemus who came to the Crucified One bearing precious spices, our Lenten observance becomes meaningful when we share the fruits of our labor with the poor and the needy. Fasting awakens the hunger of the soul through the hunger of the body — and this hunger must lead us to our brother and sister.

This Great Lenten season must not remain confined to rituals and external practices. Rather, by identifying

ourselves with the Passion and Death of Christ, it becomes a process of divinization (*Theosis*), enabling us to share in His glorious Resurrection. Our fasting awakens the soul through the hunger of the body. Our prayer raises our hearts into heavenly silence. Our almsgiving teaches us to see Christ in the wounds of our brothers and sisters. Like Nicodemus, may we move from the nights of fear into the light of truth. Like the Good Thief, may we approach the Cross in repentance. Like Mary Magdalene, may we follow the Lord with the fragrant oil of love. When we empty ourselves in the solitude of the desert, the Risen Christ will be born within us as a New Creation. May the abundant grace of Christ guide each one of us on this pilgrimage — from the way of the Cross to the radiance of the Resurrection! ■

dation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one’s conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends

to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, 5 February 2026,
Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr ■

GREAT FAST: THE LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH



Rev. Dr. Aneesh Jacob Kizhakkevedu

Introduction

Great Fast is the most intense and spiritually profound season in the life of the *Mar Thoma Nazranis*. For seven weeks, the faithful prepare for the Feast of the Resurrection by meditating in their hearts upon the Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, immersing themselves in fasting, prayer, and works of charity.

Fasting is not merely a personal act of devotion; rather, it is a spiritual sacrifice undertaken by the entire Church — the Mystical Body of Christ — in unity. The question “Who is fasting?” finds its true answer in the affirmation: “The Church is fasting.” This response reveals the unity and collective responsibility of the ecclesial body. During this sacred season, when the whole Church engages in penance and acts of reparation, no living member of that Body can remain detached from the spirit of Fast. It is only when, transcending individual preferences, one stands united with the Church and participates in the sufferings of Christ for the expiation of the world’s sins that this season attains its fullness.

Great Fast: Name and Meaning

In the Syriac language, this holy season is called *Sawma Ramba*. “*Sawma*” means fast, and “*Ramba*” means great. Although the liturgical year includes several fasts — such as the Rogation of the Ninivates, the 15 days’ Fast, the Eight-Day Fast, *etc.*, — this season is called the “Great Fast” because of its length and, above all, because it leads us to the great mystery of Christ’s Resurrection (Easter).

Historical Background

In the early centuries of the Church, fasting was observed only for one or two days immediately before the Feast of the Resurrection. It was after the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 that the forty-day fast was officially recognized throughout the universal Church, modeled on Christ’s forty-day fast in the desert. In the early Church, this period also served as an intense preparation for catechumens who were to receive Baptism.



The Fifty-Day Observance

Unlike Western Churches, the *Mar Thoma Nazranis* traditionally observed the fast in its full spiritual intensity for fifty days, including Sundays and the *Triduum*, without diminishing its penitential spirit. Hence, it became widely known as the “Fifty-Day Fast.”

Imitation of Christ: A Transformation of Life

Fasting is not confined to external abstinence from food or bodily discipline. Rather, it is a spiritual journey toward complete identification with the life of Christ and total surrender to the will of God. Echoing the words of St. Paul, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1Cor 11:1), the faithful strive during this season to interiorize the attitudes and mind of Christ.

Just as on January 6, through the feast of *Denha* (Epiphany), we spiritually participate in the Baptism of Jesus, so too through the Hours of Prayer and sacred liturgical celebrations of Great Fast,

the Church invites us to become fellow pilgrims in Christ’s journey of suffering. By sacrificing personal desires, walking the way of the Cross, dying to sin and rising for righteousness, the faithful seek a true spiritual transformation, *metanoia*.

Liturgical Reflections

In the Holy Qurbana of the **Syro-Malabar Church**, each Sunday of Lent presents a distinct dimension of spiritual healing:

First Sunday: A call to restore the divine relationship lost through sin.

Second Sunday (The Leper): Christ who cleanses the heart from the disease of sin.

Third Sunday (The Paralytic): A call to overcome spiritual weakness and grow in holiness.

Fourth Sunday (The Canaanite Woman): Perseverance in prayer and unwavering faith.

Fifth Sunday (The Bent Woman): The Lord who straightens us, bent under the burden of sin.

Sixth Sunday (The Blind Man): Liberation from spiritual blindness and guidance toward the light of the Resurrection.

Special Days and Observances

1. Pethurtha Sunday

This is the first Sunday marking entry into Great Fast. The word “Pethurtha” signifies “turning back” or “concluding.” It indicates the end of days of feasting and celebration and the beginning of a spiritual struggle. It is also traditionally understood as a day of simple, non-delicious food. This day is also called Sunday of non-delicious food.

2. Ash Monday: History and Tradition

In the East Syriac tradition, to which the Syro-Malabar Church belongs, the official beginning of penitence and expiation in Great Fast is on the Ash Monday.

Clean Monday: In Eastern Churches (Syriac and Greek traditions), this day is called “Clean Monday.” It signifies purification of body, soul, and home upon entering the Lenten season. In

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TIME TO LOOK INTO THE MIRROR



Vinayak Nirmal

Lent is the time to look into the mirror. It is a season to discover and recognize who we truly are. It is an opportunity to lay aside our garments and ornaments and step into the bathing pool with transparency and simplicity. Fasting, prayer, almsgiving... we have often summarized Lenten observances in such ways. There is nothing wrong with that. Yet something more must be added alongside these: discovering oneself — one's own failures, limitations, and also one's possibilities.

Even though Lent is necessarily and undeniably a time to restore our broken relationships with God and with fellow human beings — as an act of repentance for having distanced ourselves from them in various ways — it is not a question we can ignore: how far are we able, in each Lenten season, to truly discover and correct ourselves?

Tradition holds that Christ fasted for forty days and forty nights. We must understand that Christ had no rupture in relationship — neither with God nor with humanity. Rather, he viewed the forty-day fast as an opportunity to be strengthened in spirit.

What took place there was the renewal of Christ's spirit. Certain withdrawals are part of life's victories. To begin a new advance, self-knowledge is profoundly important. Solitude and meditation — and at times even rejection, humiliation, and isolation — can become opportunities to discover our inner possibilities. They can become moments to recognize our failures and, if we are willing, to correct them.



If you cannot forgive yourself, who will forgive you? If you cannot forgive yourself, whom will you be able to forgive? Only when I recognize that I erred because of my weakness can I forgive you for the wrong you did to me out of your weakness.

As is often said about eagles: for new feathers to grow, they must painfully pluck out the old ones and let them scatter in the wind. To regain a renewed youthfulness, one may need to remain alone on the mountaintops for a time. That is precisely what Lent calls for. Yet often this inner meaning of Lent is forgotten and reduced to certain external practices. That is why Scripture reminds us: "Rend your hearts, not your garments." Tearing garments is easy. For that very reason, abstaining from certain foods is not all that difficult. But Lenten observances must go far beyond that.

Perhaps we may be able to forgive the wrong done to us by another. But more difficult still is admitting our own fault. For years we have been practicing self-justification. There may indeed be times when we are right; nor do we necessarily wish to assume every blame unnecessarily and wear the garb of martyrdom. Even so, this is a world where it is rare to find

people open enough to acknowledge their own mistakes honestly.

Each one of us is a person who has stumbled at various points in life. Perhaps it is only by God's immeasurable mercy that these have not been exposed. That does not make us faultless. Yet we conceal all that and keep blaming others for our failures.

He was the reason...
She was the reason...
They were the cause...

Our fingers are always pointed at others. We have tasted deeply the comfort and satisfaction of self-justification. We build for ourselves a tent of holiness. Within it, I had many to condemn; I wrote my verdict that they were the cause of my failures and downfall. But sooner or later we must realize: my consent and my own desire were also behind each of my falls. I am responsible for my fall. Not one of my failures — whether in word, deed, or neglect — happened without my

knowledge. When I point one finger at another, more fingers are pointed back at me. It is in such discovery that my fault gains its true strength; it becomes most sincere. My fault... my fault... my grievous fault.

Lent must become an opportunity to discover our own failures. Let us step aside from everything for a while. It is like a return journey into the soul — like subjecting our inner organs to a scan; a pilgrimage along the paths we have already traveled in life. We must at least now be willing to undertake it. How many years have we lived on this earth! In that span, what have been my mistakes? My weaknesses? The desires that still pursue me like a hunting dog? The tears others have shed because of me; the ways my words have misled others; the joy I could have given had I spoken a little more gently; the light I could have kindled in another's life with just a small word; the good that might have reached him had I only lifted a little finger...

How many such opportunities have each of us wasted! When I denied him what was his due, I was in fact stealing his wealth. When I engaged in intimacy without love, it was nothing less than adultery. Such realizations too must dawn upon us.

And finally, one more thing: though we may be able to forgive the wrong another has done to us, often we are unable to forgive ourselves. The first healing must be given to ourselves. How many people around us live burdened with self-condemnation over mistakes that happened long ago! If you cannot forgive yourself, who will forgive you? If you cannot forgive yourself, whom will you be able to forgive? Only when I recognize that I erred because of my weakness can I forgive you for the wrong you did to me out of your weakness.

Take the mirror of Lent and step aside for a little while. In your solitude and meditation, look into that mirror. Pray for the grace to see yourself as you truly are. May your tears make the image in that mirror shine all the more clearly!

SAINT GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS ON THE CHURCH IN INDIA



LITURGICAL
RESEARCH
CENTRE STUDY
SERIES

Rev. Dr. James Puliurumpil

Saint Gregory, born in A.D. 329, was ordained a priest in 361. Soon afterward, his close friend Saint Basil consecrated Gregory as a bishop. However, for several years he did not actively administer his episcopal office but lived in solitude. After the death of his parents, and at the insistence of the people of Constantinople, he began serving as their

bishop in 379. Later, he became Bishop of Nazianzus. The Greek Church recognizes Saint Gregory of Nazianzus as "the Theologian."

In a sermon he delivered at Constantinople in 380, he spoke against the Arian heretics. On that occasion, he referred to the lands evangelized by each of the Apostles. He clearly stated that it was Apostle Thomas who proclaimed the Gospel in India. His words were as follows:

The lands in which the Apostles labored were not foreign to them. Every-

where they spread the light of the Gospel. Those who dwelt in the shadow of death received light. Peter preached in Judea; Paul among the Gentiles; Luke in Achaia; Andrew in Epirus; John in Ephesus; Thomas in India; and Mark in Italy.

The Apostles never considered the lands in which they worked as their own. They were governed by the conviction that they were appointed by God. God had said to the Israelites: "Whatever be the kingdom, you do not belong to the kingdom."

What Sacred Scripture teaches, Greek

philosophy also affirms: no human being belongs to this earth; no one has ownership over it. All are strangers here; the true homeland is heaven. Therefore, do not conform to this world; beware of being ensnared by its attractions.

Gregory clearly states that just as Judea was the missionary field of Peter, so India was the missionary field of Apostle Thomas. Gregory, who had studied at Athens — the renowned center of learning — had considerable knowledge about India. That is why Saint Gregory presents clearly and precisely that the apostolic field of Thomas was India.

PERMISSION TO PUBLISH MARRIAGE BANNS PRIOR TO BETROTHAL

MODE OF ENTERING A CIVILLY REGISTERED MARRIAGE IN THE REGISTER



CANON LAW

Rev. Dr. Abraham Kavilpurayidathil

Two decisions of the Synod of Bishops had been communicated earlier regarding the blessing of marriages of members of the Syro-Malabar Church. It is understood that confusion arose in many places due to a lack of coordination in implementing these decisions. In this context, the uniform procedure proposed by the Synod for implementation in this matter is given below.

1. Procedure for Granting Permission to Publish Marriage Banns Prior to Betrothal

It is to be made clear that permission is granted to commence the publishing of the marriage banns before the betrothal and to complete it three times before the celebration of marriage. The procedure to be followed to obtain such permission is as follows:

1. The application for the permission is to be submitted by the parties in the form prescribed for this purpose. It will be available in all parishes.
2. The party that requires this permission (the first party) must initiate the process. The form for this purpose must be duly filled and submitted to his/her parish priest (first vicar), with the signatures of both parties and their parents or guardians.



Parish priests issue marriage certificates, only the date of the marriage solemnized in the church shall be recorded on the certificate, and no certificate shall include the date of civil registration. Furthermore, the details of marriages solemnized in this manner need not be reported to the concerned local self-government body, as this may lead to various kinds of confusion.

3. In situations where a person required to sign the application form is not present, or there is a shortage of time, the application form may be scanned and sent to them for their signature. After obtaining the signature, the first party shall submit the scanned application to the first vicar.

4. Upon receiving the application, the first vicar shall verify the form, ensure that all the information provided is complete, and, after consulting the applicants, decide on the dates for the publishing of the banns of the marriage. He shall then sign the form, affix the church seal, and forward it to the parish

priest (second vicar) of the second party through the first party.

5. Upon receiving the application form signed by the first vicar, the second vicar shall record his consent on the application form by signing it and affixing the seal of the parish. Thus, he completes the permission process. The second vicar shall retain a copy of this permission for his parish records, and return the original to the first vicar through the second party.

6. Once these procedures are completed, the publication of the marriage banns shall commence in both parishes on the dates specified in the permission.

2. Norms for Recording in the Parish Register a Marriage Already Registered Civilly

At the request from various corners, permission was granted by the Major Archbishop, as per the decision of the Synod, through his Decree (Prot. No. 1007/2023, dated 21 September 2023), to conduct civil registration of a marriage before its sacramental solemnization a church, solely for the purpose of obtaining a family visa, with the prior permission of the competent eparchial authority.

Clarification has been sought regarding which date should be recorded in the parish marriage register (the date of civil registration or the date of the church marriage) when marriages that were first civilly registered are subsequently solemnized in a church. The Synod of Bishops has clarified that, in all such cases, only the date of the sacramental marriage solemnized in the church shall be recorded as the date of marriage in the parish register. The date of the prior civil registration shall be entered only in the remarks column of the register.

It has also been specifically clarified that when parish priests issue marriage certificates, only the date of the marriage solemnized in the church shall be recorded on the certificate, and no certificate shall include the date of civil registration. Furthermore, the details of marriages solemnized in this manner need not be reported to the concerned local self-government body, as this may lead to various kinds of confusion. ■

ANTI-SOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER



Rev. Dr. Sijon Kuzhikkattumyalil

Anti-Social Personality Disorder is observed more commonly in men. When antisocial behavioral tendencies in children, often manifested as Conduct Disorder, are not corrected at an early stage, they frequently develop into anti-social patterns of behavior after the age of eighteen.

Such individuals often behave cruelly without regard for the feelings of others. They disregard the laws and norms of society. They struggle to maintain long-term personal relationships. They fre-



quently exhibit uncontrolled anger and aggression. Life experiences rarely bring about meaningful change in them. They tend to blame others for their own life problems. They may deceive others and even derive satisfaction from seeing others suffer. Anti-Social Personality Disorder is a personality disorder characterized by persistent disturbances in patterns of thinking, emotional response, and behavior.

Causes

Adverse childhood experiences often contribute to the development of this disorder. A family background in which adequate moral guidance and love were lacking can lead to personality disturbances. Parental conflict and alcoholism can severely and destructively affect children. Likewise, childhood behavioral disorders that go unrecognized and untreated may progress into such per-

sonality disorders during adolescence. Biological factors and variations related to impulse control in the brain can also contribute to the development of this disorder.

Treatment Approaches

Psychotherapy is the primary mode of treatment. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) helps individuals identify and modify distorted thought patterns and maladaptive behaviors. It assists in anger management and in learning to observe social norms appropriately. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is also beneficial in improving emotional regulation and reducing aggressive tendencies.

If there are comorbid conditions such as severe anger, violent impulses, depression, or excessive anxiety, psychiatric treatment under the supervision of a mental health professional may also be necessary. ■

THE LEGACY OF COMPASSION

The religious congregation Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate (ASMI) was founded by the Servant of God, Monsignor Joseph Kandathil, who came to be known as the 'Kerala Damien.'

While serving as Assistant Vicar at Muttom Forane Church in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Monsignor Joseph Kandathil visited Cherthala and its neighboring villages. The sights he encountered there deeply moved his heart: poverty everywhere; leprosy patients ostracized from society; people who had lost hope; the unemployed; families and individuals living in darkness.

After prayerful reflection on how he might bring light into these lives, he arrived at a decision. Thus, in 1942, he founded a hospital for leprosy patients, and in 1949, he established the religious congregation Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate (ASMI). Through these foundations, Monsignor Joseph Kandathil became a living witness of the Gospel, radiating Christian love to his surroundings. Like Damien of Molokai, he lived among and served leprosy patients, striving to restore their dignity and hope. Before long, the people gave him a title: "Kerala Damien." Even today, years later, he continues to be known by that name.

Monsignor Joseph Kandathil was born on October 27, 1904, at Vaikom, in Chempu, into the Kandathil family, as the son of Varghese Thomas and Clara.



In 1933, he was ordained a priest through the laying on of hands by Augustine Kandathil.

Today, the Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate (ASMI) carry forward the vision of their founder through Gospel-centered service among the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the abandoned in India and in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Italy, and Germany. The congregation runs schools for the deaf and mute, schools for the blind, special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, upper primary schools for poor and marginalized children, dispensaries, counseling centers, general hospitals, homes for the aged, and numerous other charitable institutions.

These institutions function in fidelity to the Servant of God's vision, listening to the suffering of the sick, opening doors



of hope for children denied education, and creating opportunities for those facing physical and mental challenges to live with dignity and self-respect.

In 1969, the Vatican conferred on him the title of Monsignor in recognition of his services. On December 12, 1991, Monsignor Joseph Kandathil entered into eternal rest. His mortal remains are interred at the Sacred Heart Church,

Greengardens, Cherthala. Today, that place has become a center of prayer, consolation, and hope for many.

On October 24, 2019, the Church elevated him to the title of Servant of God. The faithful hold a firm hope in their hearts that the holy life he dedicated entirely to the poor and the suffering will one day be raised to the honors of sainthood. ■

Lent in the Syro Malabar Church Continuation of page 4

earlier times, the *Nazranis* would wash and clean their utensils and homes before the fast, marking a spiritually renewed beginning.

Liturgical Beginning: While the Latin Church begins Lent on Ash Wednesday, the Eastern Traditions commence their Lenten preparation on the First Sunday (*Pethurtha*). However, strict fasting and abstinence begin on the following Monday, making it the true gateway to the fast.

Imposition of Ashes: Originally, the East Syriac Tradition did not have the ritual of imposing ashes. Following contact with the Latin Church, particularly after the Synod of Diamper (16th century), the practice of imposing ashes on Monday similar to Ash Wednesday came into usage within the Syro-Malabar Church. Ashes, a symbol of repentance in the Old Testament, remind us of the profound truth: "Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you shall return."

3. Friday of Lazarus and Kozhukatta (Lazarus) Saturday

The Friday before Palm Sunday commemorates the raising of Lazarus. The following Saturday, known as "Kozhukatta Saturday," recalls the meal offered

to Jesus at Bethany and the fragrant ointment poured upon His feet by Mary. In homes, a traditional rice dumpling (*kozhukatta*) marked with the sign of the Cross is prepared and shared — a beautiful domestic expression of faith.

4. Passion Week (*Hasha*)

The Syriac word "Hasha" denotes suffering or Passion. This week, commemorating the sufferings and death of Christ, is the holiest period in the Church's liturgical life.

Palm Sunday: This day commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The procession with palm branches signifies receiving Christ as King. His riding on a donkey is interpreted in East Syriac theology as *Kenlanuso* — divine condescension — a manifestation of God's humility in saving the world. In the East Syriac Tradition, the Cross (*Sleeba*) is carried along with palm branches during the procession, proclaiming that Christ's kingship is fulfilled through the sacrifice of the Cross and that His entry into Jerusalem is truly a journey toward the altar of sacrifice.

Pesaha Thursday: On this day, the Church solemnly celebrates the institution of the Holy Qurbana and the priesthood. The washing of feet is performed in churches.

Domestic Tradition: Nazrani families prepare *Pesaha Appam* and milk. The unleavened bread, marked with a Cross made from palm leaves, is cut and shared, signifying Christ giving His Body.

Passion Friday: This day expresses the believer's heartfelt union with Christ's self-offering. In the East Syriac understanding, Passion Friday is not merely a day of mourning but a proclamation of the Victory of the Cross. The Fathers of the East Syriac tradition viewed the Cross (*Sleeba*) as the new Tree of Life, replacing the tree of Paradise. Thus, we venerate the Cross not as an instrument of death but as the life-giving Tree. While many traditions focus on death, East Syriac theology emphasizes Christ's descent into Sheol to liberate Adam and Eve — death is not the end, but the beginning of victory.

In the liturgy of this day, the celebrant carries the Cross (*Sleeba*) and makes a procession to the four sides of the church, symbolizing Jesus' passion and death. It also proclaims that Jesus is the High Priest who made a Sacrifice by offering His own life.

Bitter Drink: In remembrance of Christ's sufferings on the Cross, the faithful in Kerala traditionally drink a bitter mixture in churches, prepared from dry

ginger, bitter gourd, and vinegar — a sign of participation in His Passion.

Passion Saturday:

At present, in the Syro-Malabar Church, there is the blessing of the 'new fire' and 'new water'. However, according to the tradition, there were no particular ceremonies for the Passion Saturday. It was on the Eve of Easter Sunday, the ceremonies for the Easter Sunday started. In this ceremony, there was the administration of baptism, for those who were preparing. It is from this baptism ceremony, there emerged the blessing of the 'new fire' and 'new water'. Now, we have detached it from the baptism ceremony of the Easter Sunday and made a particular ceremony of Saturday. This day urges us to think about our baptism and to meditate that we participated in the Paschal Mysteries of Jesus when we received baptism.

Conclusion: The Spirit of Repentance

Great Fast is not merely an external observance but a transformation of the heart. It teaches us to repent of our sins and to implore God's mercy. The Church that prays in tears is sanctified by Christ's compassion. Through fasting, prayer and almsgiving, this sacred season offers us the grace to put off the old self and to rise as a new person with the Risen Lord. ■

VILANGAD: FROM DISASTER TO RESTORATION

The landslide that struck the Vilangad region on July 30, 2024, shattered within moments the dreams and life savings of an entire community. One person lost his life in the disaster; 18 houses were completely destroyed and around 80 houses were partially damaged. With roads, bridges, and electricity connections disrupted, hundreds of families were cut off and forced to seek refuge in

those staying in relief camps, were provided with WASH kits in collaboration with Caritas India, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon. In addition, each beneficiary family was given direct financial assistance of ₹7,000 to help meet urgent needs.

Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal, Chairman of the KCBC Justice,



relief camps. As part of the effort to wipe away these painful memories, a new chapter of renewal was opened on the soil of Vilangad under the leadership of the Catholic Church.

The responsibility for the rehabilitation of Vilangad was entrusted to the Kerala Catholic Social Service Forum (KCSSF). The Forum coordinated the rehabilitation activities through C.O.D. (Centre for Overall Development), the Social Service Society of the Eparchy of Thamarassery. To provide immediate relief to the affected families, 100 families, including those who lost their homes and

Peace and Development Commission; Fr. Antony Fernandez, Director of Caritas India; and representatives of KCSSF visited the area to assess the situation. Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church and Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil also directly visited and reviewed the rehabilitation efforts.

Moving beyond immediate relief measures, the "Vilangad Rehabilitation Project" was launched with the mission of providing safe homes to those who had lost their houses. The project was inaugurated with the laying of the foundation

stone by Cardinal Mar Basilio Cleemis, President of the KCBC. Bishop Dr. Varghese Chakkalackal of the Eparchy of Kozhikode presided over the function.

The project is being implemented with the cooperation of the KCBC, Caritas India, various eparchies, religious congregations, and individuals. A total of 70 houses are envisaged under the project. The estimated construction cost for each house is approximately ₹15 lakh. Of this, ₹10 lakh each for 41 houses is being directly contributed by the KCBC. The remaining amount is being mobilized by C.O.D. from various Church institutions and individual benefactors.

The Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly and the Eparchies of Irinjalakuda, Bhadravathi, Faridabad, Kozhikode, Chicago, and Mississauga; organizations such as CNEWA; and religious congregations including the CMI, Apostolic Carm-

el, Holy Cross, Bethany Sisters, MCBS, and KCMS; along with the Dubai Syro-Malabar Community and INFAM, have partnered in this noble initiative.

So far, the blessing and key-handover ceremonies of 60 houses have been completed. The construction of the remaining houses will be completed by March 2026. By engaging local laborers and services for the construction work, new income opportunities were created for the local population. Furthermore, by purchasing construction materials locally, C.O.D. ensured that economic stability within the disaster-affected region was sustained.

At the local level, the activities are being coordinated by Fr. Wilson Muttathukunnel, Parish Vicar of Vilangad; Fr. Bobby Poo-

vathingal, Vicar of Manjakunnu; Fr. Sai Parankulangara, Director of C.O.D.; Albin Zacharias; and Siddharth S. Nath.

Cardinal Mar Basilio Cleemis, Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany, Bishop Mar Stephen Chirappanath, Bishop Mar Jose Kalluvellil, Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil, Dr. Hussein Madavoor, along with priests and religious from various eparchies and local public representatives, participated in the house-blessing ceremonies.

The Vilangad rehabilitation initiative, which has opened a new chapter of hope from the very soil of disaster, stands as a powerful testimony that when compassion and collective solidarity come together, even calamities can be transformed into new life.



Union Minister Shri. Kiren Rijju visits Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil at Mount St. Thomas, Kakknad.



Union Minister of State Shri. George Kurian visits Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil.

37TH GENERAL BODY OF THE CBCI ELECTS NEW OFFICE BEARERS

The 37th General Body Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), held from 4 to 10 February 2026 in Bengaluru, concluded at St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences. The Assembly began with the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio to India, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, with the participation of 210 Bishops representing 174 Catholic Eparchies of the Latin, Syro-Malabar, and Syro-Malankara Churches in India. The inaugural session was

formally opened by Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, and the CBCI President, Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, presided. The message of Pope Leo XIV was read by CBCI Vice President Archbishop Rt. Rev. George Antony Swamy. Messages from Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, were also conveyed.

Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church, Cardinal Baselios Cleemis of the Syro-Malankara Church, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Cardinal George Jacob Koovakad, and Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, CBCI Secretary General Archbishop Most Rev. Anil Couto, Vice President Bishop Joseph Mar Thomas, former Supreme Court Judge Justice K.M. Joseph, and Prof. D. Dominic were among those



Cardinal Dr. Anthony Poola
President



Archbishop Thomas Mar Koorilos
1st Vice President



Archbishop Mar Mathew Moolakkatt
2nd Vice President



Archbishop Dr. Anil Couto
Secretary General



Rev. Dr. Mathew Koickal
Deputy Secretary

who addressed various sessions. The theme of the Assembly was "United in Witness." The gathering reaffirmed the Church's commitment to fostering unity among diverse communities in India and promoting justice and peace. Concerns regarding increasing attacks against Christians in different parts of the country and challenges to constitutional values were discussed. Sixteen eminent personalities who have contributed to Christian witness in various fields were honoured during the Assembly.

With the completion of the

term of the outgoing leadership under Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, new office bearers were elected and assumed charge on 10 February. Cardinal Dr. Anthony Poola, Archbishop of Hyderabad, was elected President; Archbishop Thomas Mar Koorilos of Thiruvalla as First Vice President; and Archbishop Mar Mathew Moolakkatt of Kottayam as Second Vice President. Archbishop Dr. Anil Couto of Delhi continues as Secretary General, and Rev. Dr. Mathew Koickal as Deputy Secretary General. Archbishop Dr. Thomas Netto of Thi-

ruvananthapuram Latin was elected Chairman of the Health Care Commission; Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt of Pala as Chairman of the Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism; and Bishop Vincent Mar Paulos of Marthandam as Chairman for Labour and Migrants. Archbishop Rt. Rev. Rafi Manjaly of Agra was appointed Chairman of the Doctrine Commission. Other commissions were also constituted with their respective chairmen in the areas of clergy, education, tribal affairs, social communications, environment, justice and peace, and Caritas India.



Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt
Chairman, Dialogue & Desk for Ecumenism

CATHOLIC CONGRESS MIDDLE EAST LEADERS' MEET



Bahrain: The times call for a world of compassion, and for

such a world to be created, caring leaders must arise, said Ma-

major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, Head of the Syro-Mal-

abar Church. He was speaking while inaugurating the Catholic

Congress Middle East Leaders' Meet (MELCON) of the Global Catholic Congress, the official organization of the Syro-Malabar Church, held in Bahrain.

The meeting, presided over by Middle East President Davis Edakkalathur, was addressed by Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil, Bishop Legate and Bishop of the Eparchy of Thamarassery; Apostolic Visitor Fr. Jolly Vadakkan; Global Catholic Congress Global President Rajeev Kochuparambil; Global Director Fr. Philip Kaviyil; Fr. Geo Kadavi; Varghese Karakkal; Benny Puliylakkara; Jiby Alex; Jeevan Chacko; Charles Alukka; and Poly Vithayathil.

INAUGURATION OF THE CHAIR OF PESHITTA BIBLE STUDIES



The Major Archbishop, Raphael Thattil, inaugurated the newly established chair of the *Peshitta* Bible Studies institut-

ed by the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary,

Vadavathoor. This is the first time that a dedicated Chair has been established exclusively for *Peshitta* Bible studies. The Major Archbishop described it as a significant new step and expressed hope that the initiative would grow further and expand its academic possibilities.

He also laid the foundation stone for the new building of the Institute. Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt of Pala presided over the function. Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam

delivered the benedictory address, and Bishop Dr. Samuel Mar Irenios offered felicitations. Malpan Rev. Dr. Mathew Velanickal Seminary Rector Rev. Dr. Dominic Vechoor, Dr. Sr. Sophie Rose CMC, and Luke Thomas Mattathiparambil also addressed the gathering.

The President of the Institute, Rev. Dr. Pauly Maniyattu, delivered the welcome address, and the Director of the *Peshitta* Bible Studies Chair, Rev. Dr. Cyriac Valiakunnumpurath,

proposed the vote of thanks. The decree appointing Rev. Dr. Cyriac Valiakunnumpurath as the first Director was read by the Dean, Rev. Dr. Dominic Muriankavunkal, and submitted to the Major Archbishop, who also serves as Chancellor of the Institute. The Major Archbishop formally handed over the decree to the Director. Established with the approval of the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See, the Centre aims to promote the Syriac tradition and advance biblical research.

ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH POWATHIL FOUNDATION INAUGURATED



Changanacherry: The 'Archbishop Joseph Powathil Foundation' (AJPF), formed in memory of Mar Joseph Powathil, former Metropolitan of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, who exercised decisive influence in the religious, social, cultural, and educational spheres of Kerala and made precise interventions in the visions of the universal Church, was inaugurated at a function held at Media Village, Kurisummoodu, Auditorium by Cardinal Dr. Oswald Gracias, former Archbishop of Mumbai. Major Arch-

bishop Mar Raphael Thattil, Father and Head of the Syro-Malabar Church, presided. He said that the name of Mar Joseph Powathil, who made invaluable contributions through tireless activities, will remain forever in the Church and society. The official website of the Foundation was also launched by the Major Archbishop. Cardinal Dr. Oswald Gracias recalled that Mar Joseph Powathil was a Church leader who possessed clear vision and perspectives about the Church and society and worked for the common good. The main

objective of the Foundation is to promote research, study, and publication regarding the works and ideas of Bishop Powathil. The principal programmes of the Foundation also include honouring those who make notable contributions in the field of protection of educational minority rights, providing scholarships to civil service aspirants, supporting those who work for the differently abled, and ensuring educational and employment promotion for Dalit students. Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, Metro-

politan of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, delivered the benedictory address and said that every thought of Bishop Powathil was for the sustenance of the Church and society. Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt of the Eparchy of Palai delivered the memorial address. Archbishop *Emeritus* Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop *Emeritus* Mar George Valiamattam, first Trustee Bishop Mar Thomas Padiyath, Managing Trustee Dr. Cyriac Thomas, Dr. Jancy James, Prof. Murali Vallabhan, and Dr. P.J. Thom-

as spoke. Archeparchial Vicars General Mons. Antony Ethackattu, Mons. Mathew Changanakary, Mons. Scaria Kanniyakonil, Mons. John Thekkekara, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Palai Mons. Joseph Thadathil, Vicar General of the Archeparchy of Kottayam Fr. Michael Vettikkatt, Vicar General of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally Fr. Bobby Alex Mannamplackal, Justice Antony Dominic, Job Michael MLA, Municipal Chairman Jomy Joseph and many other prominent persons participated.

THE COMMUNITY IS READY TO TAKE A FIRM STAND: MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL



Kakkanad: Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church said that the Christian community is prepared to take a clear stand on social issues. He was inaugurating the Catholic Congress Polit-

ical Affairs Leadership Meeting held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkannad. He stated that political parties have not been ready to take necessary steps regarding wild animal attacks and that the National Wildlife Act should

be amended. He also demanded solutions to the problems of rubber and paddy farmers. He said that the concealment surrounding the J.B. Koshy Commission Report is an insult to the community. A reso-

lution adopted at the meeting demanded that political parties ensure due representation to members of the community in the forthcoming elections. The resolution also emphasized the need for earnest efforts to pre-

serve religious harmony and fraternity and to ensure justice for all sections of society. Catholic Congress President Rajeev Kochuparambil presided. Church Chancellor Fr. Abraham Kavilpurayidom, PRO Fr. Tom Olikkarott, Director Fr. Philip Kaviyil, Dr. Josekutty Ozhukayil, Prof. K.M. Francis, Adv. Tony Panchakkunnel, Rajesh John, and Benny Antony and Treesa Liz Sebastian spoke.

DEVELOPED THRISSUR IS CRUCIAL FOR THE STATE: MAR ANDREWS THAZHATH

Thrissur: Mar Andrews Thazhath called upon the Corporation Councillors to work unitedly for the comprehensive development of Thrissur, a major city in the Kochi-Kozhikode corridor. He was speaking at a reception given to the elected Councillors of Thrissur Corporation at the Archeparchy Centre. He discussed with the Councillors matters such

as essential ring roads for the city, flyovers at East Fort and West Fort which are gateways to Swaraj Round, infrastructure required for a women-friendly city, intensified efforts to further develop Thrissur as a health, educational, commercial, and cultural capital and present it before the world, and the establishment of international standard higher educa-

tion institutions. The Thrissur Archeparchy, which consistently upholds the common good of society, extended its support to all worthy initiatives of the

Corporation Council. Auxiliary Bishop Mar Tony Neelankavil, Mayor Dr. Niji Justin, Deputy Mayor A. Prasad, Councillors Hiran T.R., Raghunath C. Me-

non, and M.L. Rosi, Pastoral Council Secretary Joshy Vadakkan, and Catholic Congress President Dr. Joby Kakassery addressed the gathering.

VELLARIKKUNDU ABHISHEKAGNI BIBLE CONVENTION CONCLUDES



Vellarikkundu: The five-day 'Abhishekagni' Bible Convention held at Bethel Nagar, Vellarikkundu, concluded. The convention, held from January

30 to February 3, 2026, witnessed the participation of tens of thousands of faithful from Kasaragod and Kannur districts. Fr. Xavier Khan Vattayil,

Director of the Sehion Retreat Team, Attappady, led the convention. Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Joseph Pamplany of the Archeparchy of Thalassery

inaugurated the convention. The convention was organized as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and community empowerment initiatives of the Archeparchy. Former Archbishops Mar George Valiamattam and Mar George Njaralakatt, and Vicar General Mons. Antony Muthukunnel and others served as principal celebrants for the Holy Qurbana on subsequent days. Eucharistic Adora-

tion, laying on of hands prayer, and proclamation of the Word conducted with the concelebration of about thirty-five priests imparted spiritual renewal to the faithful. The convention, organized under the special leadership of Vellarikkundu Parish and Forane, saw active participation of faithful and religious from neighbouring Foranes such as Malom, Thomapuram, Panathady, Kanhangad, and Kasaragod.

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF JEEVA MILK



The Silver Jubilee celebrations of Jeeva Milk, initiated by the Eparchy of Kothamangalam for the upliftment of rural dairy farmers in the high-range and low-range regions of Idukki and Ernakulam districts, were inaugurated by Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church. Jeeva Milk and other Jeeva products are distributed in six districts: Idukki, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, and Thrissur. Jeeva functions under the High range Development

Centre, a charitable society with Bishop Mar George Madathikandathil as Patron. Monsignor Dr. Pius Malekandathil serves as President and Fr. Jose Moorkattil as Executive Director. On May 10, 1988, Mar George Punnakottil laid and blessed the foundation stone of the plant office building, marking the beginning of the plant construction. Special incentives and assistance schemes for dairy farmers have been announced in connection with the Jubilee.

CATHOLIC TEACHERS' GUILD STATE CONFERENCE CONCLUDES



Changanacherry: The annual State Conference of the Kerala Catholic Teachers' Guild, the official movement comprising teachers from 32 Eparchies in Kerala and the largest teachers' organization in the State by membership, concluded with the participation of thousands of teachers. The conference proceedings began with a portrait procession starting from the tomb of Mar Joseph Powathil on Friday evening, February 13. The Representative Conference and Educational Seminar commenced with the hoisting of the flag by State President Tom Mathew at Kunnathanam Zion Retreat Centre. Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, Head

of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, inaugurated the conference. Dr. Aju K. Narayanan led the seminar. On the second day, Saturday, February 14, a massive rights protection rally with thousands of teachers began from the Changanacherry Archbishop's House. Mavelikkara MP Kodikunnil Suresh flagged off the rally. The public meeting held at SB College Kavukattu Hall was inaugurated by Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan. In the meeting presided over by State President Tom Mathew, Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil delivered the introductory address. KCBC Education Commission Chairman Bishop Rt. Rev. Paul Antony Mullassery delivered the keynote address and Vice Chairman Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt gave the benedictory address. Prominent persons including Job Michael MLA addressed the conference. Awards for outstanding teachers and schools were distributed.

RAJAPATHA PROTEST: KOTHAMANGALAM WITNESSED A TIDE OF PEOPLE



Kothamangalam: A protest march organized by the Action Council along with Kothamangalam Municipality and the Panchayats of Keerampara, Kuttampuzha, and Mankulam demanding the reopening of the Aluva-Munnar Rajapatha turned Kothamangalam into a sea of people. The protest march from Cheriyaapally Junction to the PWD Office was inaugurated by Fr. Dr. Thomas J. Parayidam. Ignoring the morning drizzle, people including women participated in the march. People's representatives from Kothamangalam Municipality and the Panchayats of Keerampara, Kuttampuzha, and Mankulam, Action Council office bearers, priests, and leaders of various political parties led from the front under the banner. Members from tribal settlements also took part in the leadership and front ranks, presenting their traditional tribal dance steps and percussion ensembles. Women from Kothamangalam, Keerampara, Kuttampuzha, and Mankulam regions and tribal leaders including Oorumoopans and Kanikkarans from Kuttampuzha and Mankulam settlements participated in

the protest march. The protesters unanimously declared that the Rajapatha does not belong to the Forest Department but to the people. The protest dharna held before the PWD Office was inaugurated by Bishop Mar George Madathikandathil, Head of the Eparchy of Kothamangalam. Bishop Mar George Madathikandathil demanded that the State Government should, with political will, reopen the old Aluva-Munnar Rajapatha. Making the road motorable would be beneficial to the State as a whole and would open immense tourism possibilities. The road would greatly benefit thousands of people, farmers, and those living in various tribal settlements in different Panchayats, and hence immediate steps must be taken to reopen it, he urged. Former MLA A.K. Mani delivered the keynote address. Fr. Jose Charaparambil, Fr. George Kollamparambil, Kothamangalam Municipal Chairperson Bhanumathi Raju, Block Panchayat President Jessy Saju, Legal Advisor A.C. Devasya, Shaji Payyanickal, Shibu Thekkumpuram, K.K. Sivan, Aji Narayanan, Kuttan Gopalan, Joshy Pottakkal, Saju Jose, former Keerampara Panchayat President Mamachan Joseph and others spoke. Fr. Adv. Robin Padinjarekkuttu, Adarsh Panicker, P.X. Paul, Jomy Thekketara, Ranikutty George, people's representatives, and priests gave leadership.

MAR MATHEW ARACKAL EPISCOPAL SILVER JUBILEE: THE EPARCHY OF KANJIRAPALLY EXTENDS FELICITATIONS



Kanjirapally: Loving tributes of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally to Mar Mathew Arackal, who rendered noble episcopal ministry as the third shepherd of the Eparchy. On the occasion of the Jubilee, representatives from various levels gathered at the Cathedral Maha Jubilee Hall for a representative meeting. In the felicitation meeting presided over by Mar Jose Pulickal, Metropolitan Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt of the Eparchy of Palai, Sr. Vinaya Grace, Provincial Superior of the Amala Carmel Congregation of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally, Chev. Adv. V.C.

Sebastian, Secretary of the Laity Council of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, and others offered felicitations. Mar Jose Pulickal said that they gratefully and respectfully remember the ministry of Mar Mathew Arackal, who exercised his episcopal service rooted in deep spirituality, with an open mind and lofty vision. Mar Thomas Tharayil recalled with gratitude the services of Bishop Mar Mathew Arackal, who worked united with the Church for the Church, the community, and society, and Mar Joseph Kallarangatt stated that Bishop Arackal went before as a vigilant and courageous shepherd to ensure that the flock would not be scattered. Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church and K.C. Venugopal MP had earlier conveyed their felicitations at the INFAM gathering. Former Bishop of the Eparchy of Kothamangalam, Mar George Punnakottil, also came to extend greetings.

JUSTICE J.B. KOSHY COMMISSION REPORT: SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH WELCOMES GOVERNMENT ACTION



Thiruvananthapuram: The report of the Justice J.B. Koshy Commission, appointed by the Government to study the various issues faced by the Christian communities, has been officially published. The Syro-Malabar Church welcomed the Government's decision to release the Justice J.B. Koshy Commission Report and stated that a detailed response would

be given after a thorough study of the report. Following the long-standing demand of the Christian community, the State Government decided in October 2020 to appoint this study commission. Subsequently, in February 2021, the Commission began its work under the chairmanship of retired High Court Chief Justice J.B. Koshy, with retired DGP Jacob Punnoose and

retired IAS officer Dr. Christy Fernandez as members. After more than two years of detailed studies and evidence collection, the Commission submitted its final report to the Government in May 2023. On February 28, 2026, at a meeting of representatives of various Christian Churches convened in Thiruvananthapuram in connection with the Commission Report, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced the decision to publish the report. The recommendations that have already been implemented were explained at the meeting, and the Chief Minister assured that the implemented measures would be published on the website.

The recommendations that remain to be implemented are those that require amendments to central and state policies, as well as various laws and regulations, and those that require further in-depth examination. The Government is striving to include all sections and to address their concerns. The Chief Minister directed that the issues of various sections be submitted in writing. During the discussion, a demand was raised to appoint a monitoring committee to hold discussions with the Government regarding the published information and the recommendations yet to be implemented. The Chief Minister informed that, after carefully

studying the opinions raised in the discussion and the written submissions regarding the Justice J.B. Koshy Commission Report, another meeting could be convened.

Minister for Minority Welfare V. Abdurrahman, Minister for Law P. Rajeev, Chief Secretary Dr. A. Jayathilak, Additional Chief Secretary Dr. Rajan Khobragade, Principal Secretary Sharmila Mary Joseph, Chief Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Dr. K.M. Abraham and others were present. Representing the Christian community were various Church hierarchs and representatives. On behalf of the Syro-Malabar Church, as deputed by the Major Archbishop, Fr. James Kokkavayalil, Rev. Dr. John Thekketara, and Prof. Josukutty Ozhukayil participated in the meeting.

CHEV. PROF. J. PHILIP; A PERSON WHO BROUGHT REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT STUDIES: MAR RAPHAEL THATTIL



Bengaluru: Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil of the Syro-Malabar Church expressed his deep sorrow at the passing of Chev. Prof. J. Philip, an em-

inent personality in management education. Prof. J. Philip was a distinguished figure who brought revolutionary changes in higher education in India, especially in the field of management studies. Though he rose from Punnakunnathussery Parish of the Archeparchy of Changanacherry to global prominence, he firmly held on to his faith and ecclesial roots, recalled the Major Archbishop. Mar Raphael Thattil said that

he prays for the eternal rest of the departed soul and shares in the grief of the bereaved family members and friends. Chevalier Prof. J. Philip, Founder of XIME, one of the leading management institutions, and former Dean of XLRI, was a person who showed the world through his life how Christian values could be integrated into educational vision. Former Director of the Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru, and

National Founding President of the Indian Management Association, he gained national and international recognition in various capacities and founded XIME campuses in Bengaluru, Kochi, and Chennai. In collaboration with the Archeparchy of Changanacherry, he also started XIME International School at Pallikkunnu, Ettumanoor. He was honoured with the title of Chevalier by Pope Leo XIV for his outstanding contributions in

Church and social spheres and was also a recipient of the Excellence Award, the highest honour conferred by the Archeparchy of Changanacherry. The funeral services held at St. Anthony's Church, Bengaluru, were led by Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil of Changanacherry as the principal celebrant. The mortal remains were laid to rest at St. Patrick's Cemetery, Hosur Road. A large gathering including students and colleagues paid their last respects.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT YEAR 2026; PALAKKAD EPARCHIAL LEVEL INAUGURATION



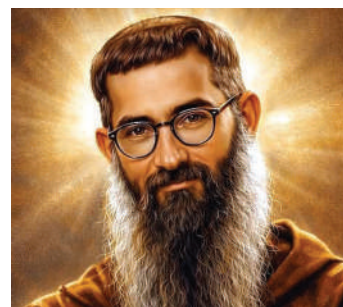
Palakkad: The Eparchy-level inauguration of the 'Community Empowerment Year 2026' of the Eparchy of Palakkad was held on February 28 at Mundur Yuvakshethra College and was inaugurated by Justice J.B. Koshy. Recalling that the government initiated steps to study the backward condition of the Christian community following the continuous demands of the Syro-Malabar Church, he observed that the people in the high-range regions are presently facing conditions unfit for human habitation. The tragic reality today, he said, is that what grows on the trees is taken away by squirrels and monkeys, what is planted in the soil is destroyed by wild boars, and the

human person who ventures out to inquire into these matters is attacked by wild animals. He clarified that the Commission report is not directed against any other community but rather seeks to address the livelihood issues of the people in the coastal and high-range regions. He also stated that the cooperation of the Church and various organizations helped in preparing an accurate report.

Presiding over the function, Bishop Mar Peter Kochupurackal of the Eparchy of Palakkad observed that in the changing context the Syro-Malabar community is growing into a global community. The socio-economic and political circumstances in Kerala are accelerating migra-

tion. In his presidential address, he said that the community is not begging for anyone's generosity but is only seeking its constitutional rights. The guidelines for the various programmes to be implemented in the Eparchy over the course of one year were presented by Adv. Justin Pallivathukkal, and Justice J.B. Koshy released the action plan document. Fr. Arun Kalamattil presented the theme. Extensive programmes aimed at the spiritual and social upliftment of the community are intended to be implemented in the Eparchy in the coming months. Fr. Antony Puthanangady, Catholic Congress Global Vice President Treesa Liz Sebastian, Adv. Bobby Bastian, Solly Thomas, Jibin Pius, Melvin P. Anil, and Ebin Kanivayal addressed the gathering. Eparchy Vicar General Mons. Jeejo Chalackal and Catholic Congress Director Fr. Cherian Anjilimoottil gave leadership to the programme.

CAPUCHIN PRIEST THEOPHINE PANDIPPILLY DECLARED VENERABLE



Vatican City: The Capuchin priest Theophine Pandippilly, widely known during his lifetime as a holy and zealous preacher and often referred to as the "Francis Xavier of Kerala," has been declared Venerable by Pope Leo XIV. The decree recognizing his heroic virtues was promulgated on 21 February 2026 by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints with the approval of the Holy Father.

In the same set of decrees, the heroic virtues of the Italians Francesco Lombardi and Fausto Gei were also recognized, granting them the title Venerable. The Holy Father also raised the Lebanese priest Béchara Abou-Mourad and the French Franciscan priest Gabriel Maria

(Gilbert Nicolas) to the rank of Blessed. Fr. Theophine Pandippilly was born on 20 July 1913 at Kottappuram in Kerala and was baptized with the name Michael. He joined the Minor Seminary of the Archeparchy of Verapoly in 1929. Later he entered the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin on 31 October 1933, taking the religious name Theophine, and was ordained a priest on 20 April 1941.

Renowned as a powerful preacher and missionary, Fr. Theophine lived a life marked by deep prayer, pastoral zeal, and a spirit of Franciscan poverty. Through his retreats, sermons, and pastoral ministry, he inspired many faithful to deepen their spiritual lives. He passed away on 4 April 1968. His cause for canonization was officially opened on 10 January 2005, when he was declared Servant of God. With the recognition of his heroic virtues, he now bears the title Venerable, bringing him one step closer to beatification and eventual canonization.



DIARY OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

FEBRUARY 02 - FEBRUARY 28

- **02 Monday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam
Inaugurated the Chair for Peshitta Studies at Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Vadavathoor, Kottayam.
- **03-10:** Attended the Plenary Assembly of the CBCI at Bangalore.
- **08 Sunday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* during the Plenary Assembly of the CBCI at Bangalore for the participants
- **10 Wednesday:** Inaugurated 24th College Day of Naipunya Institute of Management and Information Technology (NIMIT) and declared the Autonomous Status of the Institute.
- **15 Sunday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at St. Mary's Church, Moonamparambu in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **16 Monday:** Presided over the Ash Monday Service and celebrated the Holy *Qurbana* at Mount St. Thomas Chapel, Kakknad.
Officiated the final part of the funeral rite of Rev. Fr. Joseph Palatty at Fathima Matha Church, Anappara in the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly.
- **19 Thursday:** Blessed and Inaugurated Child Development Centre at *Sahrudhaya* Early Intervention and Empowerment Kendra (SEEK), a venture of the Social Service Department of the Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly
- Inaugurated the Executive Committee Meeting of the *Catholica Congress* at Mount St. Thomas, Kakknad
- **20 Saturday:** Presided over the public meeting of the Inauguration of Archbishop Joseph Powathil Foundation at Media Village, Changanacherry
- **23 Tuesday:** Received Shri. Kiran Rijjuju, the Honourable Minister of Minority Affairs at Mount St. Thomas, Kakknad
- **26 Thursday:** Inaugurated Catholic Congress-GCC Global Meet at Bahrain
- **27 Friday:** Celebrated Holy *Qurbana* at Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Bahrain
- **28 Saturday:** Received Shri. George Kunria, Minister of State at Mount St. Thomas, Kakknad



From the Celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* presided over by the Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil, in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia in Bahrain, during the Middle East Leadership Conference of Catholic Congress

KARUNYA TRUST WITH NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENT IN MUMBAI MARATHON



Mumbai: Karunya Trust, the charitable wing under the Archeparchy of Kalyan, actively participated in the 21st edition of the Tata Mumbai Marathon held on January 18, 2026, with the support of more than 1,000 donors, over 80 online fundraisers, and more than 300 runners. Representing Karunya Trust, 14 participated in the full marathon, 17 in the half marathon, and 45 in the open 10 km category. Including Archbishop Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, Head

of the Archeparchy of Kalyan, Fr. Lijo Velliyamkandathil, Director of Karunya Trust, and Fr. George Vattamattathil, Finance Officer of the Archeparchy, 234 persons participated in the Dream Runners category. Since 2012, Karunya Trust has been associated with the Mumbai Marathon, utilizing this platform for fundraising for social activities and for raising awareness and upholding the rights of marginalized communities. The participation of 40 children

from Mumbai slums representing Karunya Trust in the marathon clearly reflected its inclusive approach. The Mumbai Marathon is a major fundraising opportunity for the social welfare initiatives of Karunya Trust implemented in various parts of Maharashtra. Operating in districts including Mumbai and Thane, Karunya Trust carries out comprehensive development projects for the welfare of waste pickers, persons affected by HIV/AIDS, tribal communities, and women.

SYRIAC LANGUAGE COURSE AT MAR WALAH ACADEMY FROM APRIL 13



Kakknad: In order to preserve the heritage of the Syriac language and to introduce this language to the new generation, the *Mar Walah* Syriac Academy at Mount St. Thomas, Kakknad, is organizing a basic course. The Syriac language holds an unparalleled place in Christian heritage

and history. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ. Hence, the study of this language helps in understanding the truths of the Gospel in their original form. The prayers and hymns of the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala were preserved in the Syriac language for centuries. This language is essential for understanding the depth of our liturgical tradition. Syriac also stands as a sign of Kerala's ancient connections with

the Middle Eastern regions. The numerous Syriac words incorporated into the Malayalam language are evidence of our cultural exchange. The *Mar Walah* Syriac Academy was established to promote the study of Syriac by highlighting its liturgical and cultural importance.

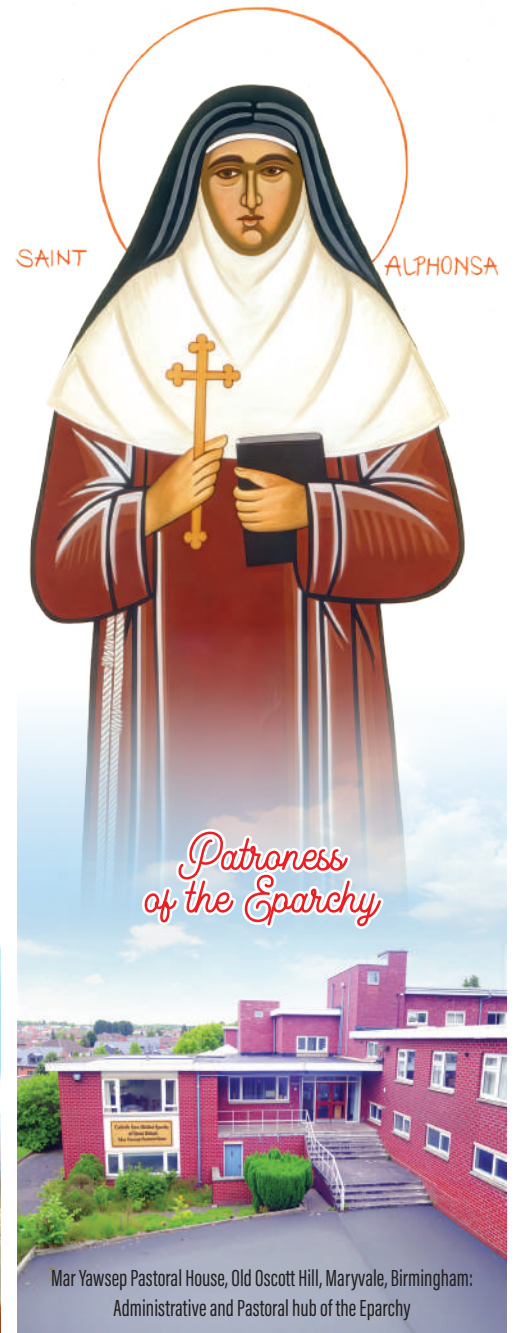
The classes will be held from April 13 to 18, 2026. The intensive training programme, conducted from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., will give special em-

phasis to Syriac grammar, pronunciation, and liturgical music. Those who wish to reside and study will be charged ₹350 per day, including food and accommodation, while day scholars will be charged ₹200 per day. Interested persons are requested to register at the earliest via email at lrcmarwlah@gmail.com or through WhatsApp at +91 9497324768. For further details: Rev. Dr. Jobin Kanjirathinkal (9497324768, 9562753358)



TEN YEARS OF BLESSING:

A Decade of the CATHOLIC SYRO-MALABAR EPARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN



Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal

A Historic Beginning

The Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain stands today as a vibrant and flourishing home for tens of thousands of Syro-Malabar Catholics across Great Britain. The story began on 16 July 2016, when His Holiness Pope Francis established the Eparchy by decree, recognising the liturgical, theological, spiritual, disciplinary, cultural, and pastoral needs of the growing Syro-Malabar community in Great Britain (England, Scotland & Wales). The announcement was made public on 28 July 2016, marking a moment of profound joy and hope for the faithful.



The official inauguration took place on 9 October 2016 at Preston's North

EPARCHIAL CURIA

Very Rev Dr Antony Chundelikkat (Proto Syncellus)	Rev Dr Mathew Pinakkattu (Chancellor)
Rev Fr Joe Mathew Moolecherry VC (Finance Officer)	Rev Fr Fanzwa Pathil (Vice Chancellor)

End Stadium in Great Britain. In a historic celebration attended by more than 10,000 faithful, Syro-Malabar Bishops from across the globe, Bishops from Dioceses throughout the UK, leading political figures, priests and sisters, His Excellency Mar Joseph Srampickal was ordained and enthroned as the first Bishop of the Eparchy by His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry. On the previous day, St Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Preston was blessed establishing a spiritual centre for the community. Prior to his Episcopal Ordination, His Excellency Mar Joseph Srampickal made a 15 day long pastoral visit of the entire Eparchy, from Aberdeen to Exeter, visiting the Holy Qurbana Centres and meeting the Syro-Malabar priests and faithful, and Bishops and priests of the Latin Dioceses across Great Britain. After the inauguration of the Eparchy on 11th October, the Curia was formed, laying the administrative foundation for the Eparchy's mission.

Laying Strong Foundations

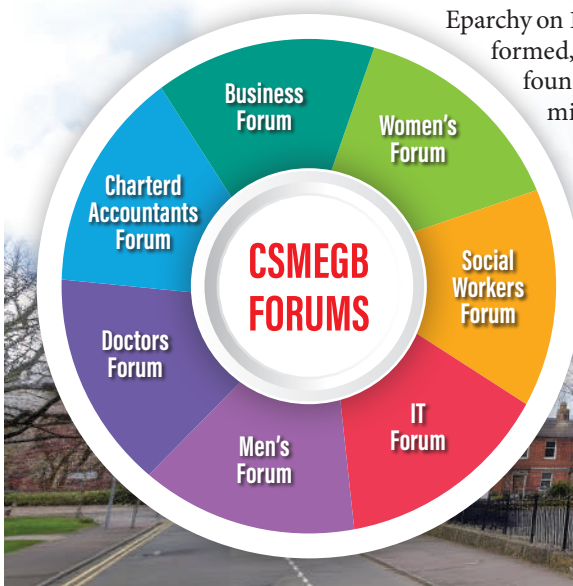
The Eparchy took significant steps in strengthening its organisational structure when it was officially registered as a CIO with the Charity Commission on 22 June 2017. This registration enabled the Eparchy to operate transparently and effectively, ensuring that pastoral, financial and administrative responsibilities were carried out with accountability.

Soon after the charity structure was fully established, the minor seminary of the Eparchy was inaugurated at Preston. Meanwhile, the Eparchy started coordinating a growing network of communities. 173 Holy Qurbana Centres had already been active across Great Britain during that time. These centres were formally organised into parishes, missions, and proposed missions; the Eparchy was divided into eight regions, as announced in the Bishop's circular dated 19 March 2018. A major milestone followed shortly after; the first parish of the Eparchy, with its own building, was blessed in Liverpool on 12 May 2018, marking the maturing identity of the community.

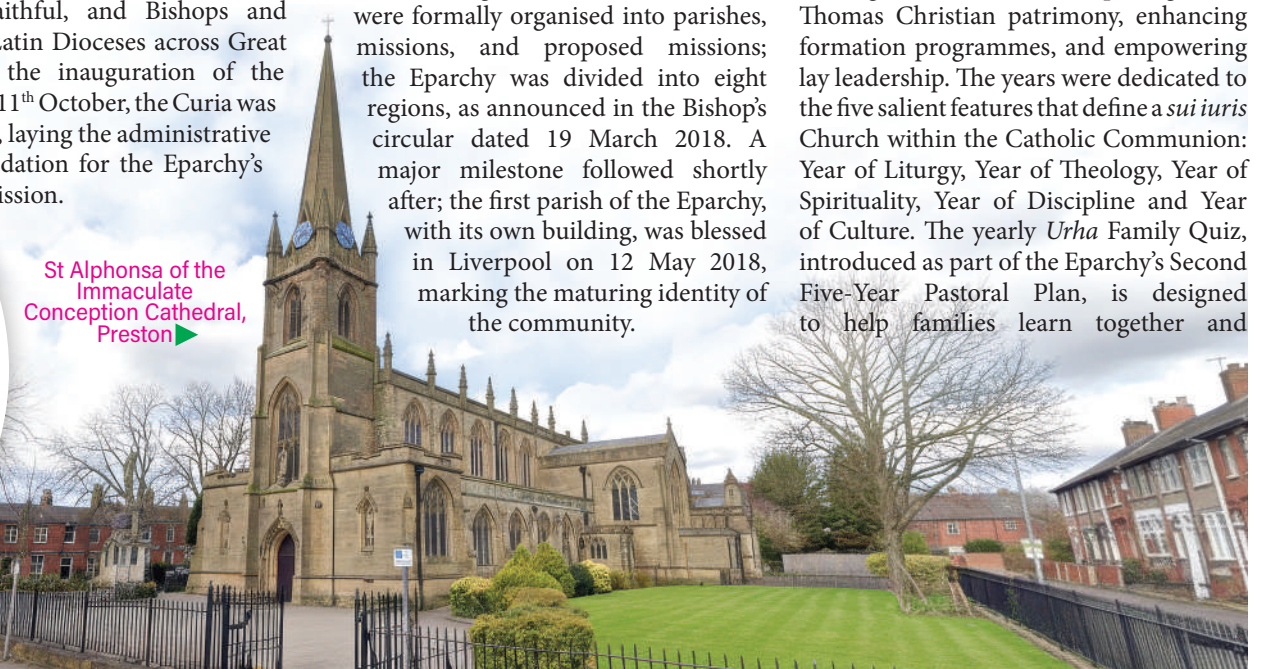
Pastoral Vision and Strategic Growth

A hallmark of the Eparchy's first decade has been its commitment to long-term pastoral planning. The first Five-Year Pastoral Plan from 2017 to 2022, titled 'Living Stones', was launched on 26 November 2017. This plan focused on building eparchial structures, strengthening catechesis, and nurturing a unified identity among the faithful. The five years were dedicated to: Year of Children, Year of Youth, Year of Families, Year of Family Units and Year of Parishes.

The second Five-Year Pastoral Plan from 2022 to 2027, 'The Holy to the Holy Ones', began on 27 November 2022, shifting its focus toward deepening the St Thomas Christian patrimony, enhancing formation programmes, and empowering lay leadership. The years were dedicated to the five salient features that define a *sui iuris* Church within the Catholic Communion: Year of Liturgy, Year of Theology, Year of Spirituality, Year of Discipline and Year of Culture. The yearly *Urha* Family Quiz, introduced as part of the Eparchy's Second Five-Year Pastoral Plan, is designed to help families learn together and



St Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Preston



deepen their understanding of the rich East-Syriac heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church. Each year's quiz is based on the specific theme of that year within the Five-Year Pastoral Plan, encouraging families to explore their faith, history, and traditions in a structured and engaging way. Beyond its immediate purpose, the *Urha* Quiz is also creating

Expanding Infrastructural Facilities

A major milestone in the Eparchy's infrastructural and pastoral development was the purchase of the Mar Yawsep Pastoral House at Maryvale in Birmingham on 25 July 2024. This centre was blessed on 16 September 2024



Solemn blessing of the Mar Yawsep Pastoral House: Mar Joseph Srampickal and Priests with His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil

an invaluable and lasting resource. The study materials prepared for the quiz are steadily growing into a significant body of knowledge that can be accessed by anyone, at any time. In this way, the *Urha* Quiz is not only strengthening family learning today but also building a long-term, ecclesiastical formation for the entire Eparchy. These two Five-Year Pastoral Plans have guided the Eparchy's growth with clarity and purpose.

Two major Eparchial Gatherings—in November 2017 and May 2022—brought together priests, deacons, religious, and lay representatives to reflect on the Eparchy's mission, evaluate progress, and discern its future direction. These gatherings have played a vital role in shaping the Eparchy's pastoral priorities. *Denha*, the weekly e-news bulletin of the Eparchy was first launched in 2021, which is a one-stop-shop for the faithful of the Eparchy to access recent information from the Eparchy.

Strengthening Eparchial Leadership and Structures

To ensure effective pastoral governance, the Eparchial *ad hoc* Pastoral Council was established on 7 August 2020. This *ad hoc* Pastoral Council provided valuable consultation



Consultative Meeting of the Eparchial Pastoral Council held at Leicester in May 2025

during a period of rapid growth. On 27 April 2024, the fully constituted Eparchial Pastoral Council was formally established, marking a significant step in collaborative leadership and lay participation. Regional Councils were established through the Bishop's circular published on 9 August 2023 to strengthen the administrative and pastoral structure of the Eparchy.

Today, the Eparchy also operates through 20 Commissions and 7 Forums, each dedicated to areas such as catechesis, liturgy, youth ministry, family apostolate, evangelisation, and social outreach. These bodies ensure that pastoral care reaches every corner of the Eparchy.

by His Beatitude Mar Raphael Thattil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. The Pastoral House is envisioned as a centre for formation, retreats, training programmes, and administrative coordination. It represents a long-awaited dream of having a dedicated pastoral hub for the Eparchy.

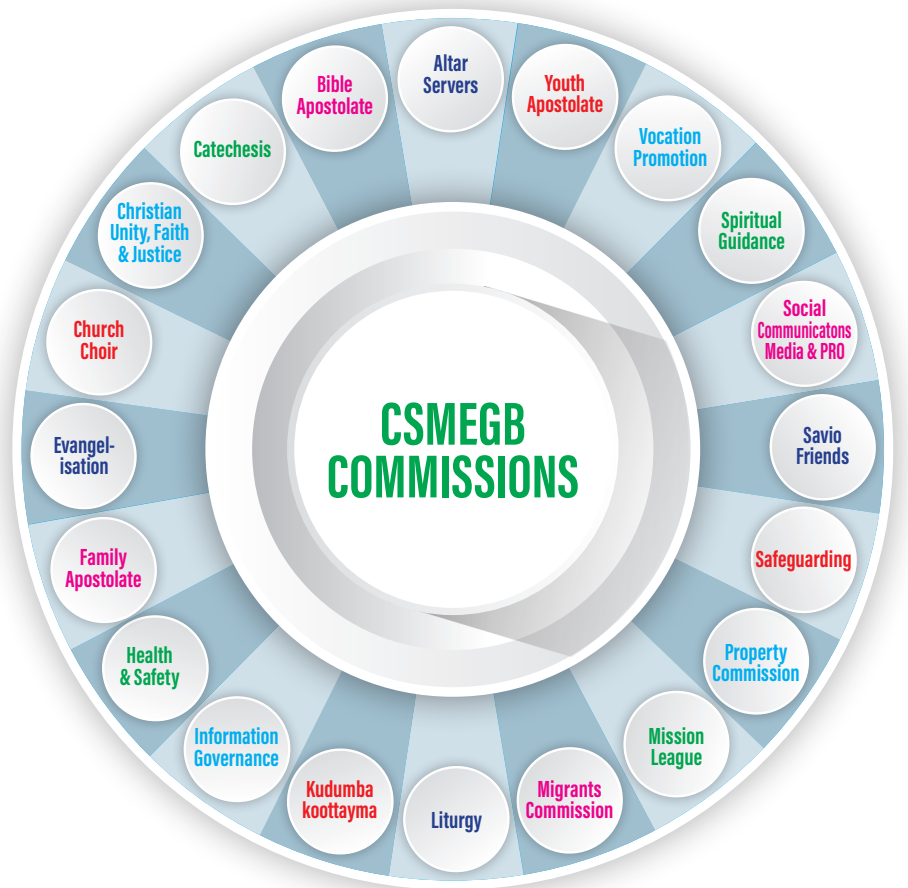
The Carmel Divine Retreat Centre at Darlington also became part of the Eparchy in 2026 by the immense generosity of the Marymatha Province of the Vincentian Fathers. It further enriches the infrastructural resources of the Eparchy where the spiritual formation of all the faithful and those that still need to have encounter with Christ will be served.

A Flourishing Eparchy

Over the last ten years, the Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain has grown into one of the most dynamic Catholic communities in Great Britain. The 8 regions of the Eparchy were reconstituted into 12 regions through the Bishop's circular dated 31 March 2023, considering the recent increase in the numbers of faithful in the Eparchy. Today the eparchy has 8 parishes, 71 missions and 27 proposed missions,

and a faithful community of over 80,000 faithful. A dedicated Presbyterium consisting of 80 priests serve these communities, ensuring that the Holy Qurbana, other sacraments, catechesis, and pastoral care are accessible across the Eparchy. The Diaconal Ordination of M'shamshana Michael (Tony) Kocherry on 9th December 2023 is yet another milestone in the history of the Eparchy. Today, the Eparchy has three Major Seminarians and two Minor Seminarians.

Eparchial annual pilgrimages to Aylesford, Walsingham and to other pilgrim locations across the globe have become a living witness of the rich traditions of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy,



that have been passed down from Mar Thoma Sleeha over the generations. The Pious Associations of the Eparchy are well attended by faithful of all age categories. The Catechetical Teachers'

Eparchy continues to nurture the St Thomas patrimony of the Syro-Malabar Church while contributing vibrantly to the Catholic Church in Great Britain. As part of the Bishops' Conference of



Thaiboosa: Annual Eparchial Women's Forum gathering (2025)

Training programme is exemplary and supports the teachers in moulding the faithful of the next generation. Today, the Catechism Ministry of the Eparchy stands proud, supported by over 2400 dedicated teachers and more than 17000 enthusiastic students. The *Suvara* Bible Quiz conducted annually by the Bible Apostolate of the Eparchy during the Season of *Sauma Ramba* (Great Fast) has 2500 participants this year.

England and Wales, His Excellency Mar Joseph Srampickal is playing a vital role in the wider Catholic life and the Evangelisation efforts of the Catholic Church of Great Britain. The role of lay leaders in the Eparchy is unparalleled, as all commissions and forums of the Eparchy have lay leadership being the major driving force.

A Decade of Gratitude and Hope

Relying on Maran Isho M'shiha, Mar Joseph Srampickal has produced 22 Pastoral letters and 130 circulars, in both Malayalam and English, meeting the linguistic needs of all faithful of the Eparchy. The Eparchy's growth is not merely numerical, but it also reflects a

As the Eparchy celebrates ten years of Blessing, it looks back with gratitude and looks forward with renewed commitment. The journey from its establishment in 2016 to its flourishing present is a testament



Echoing the Marthoma Nasrani Tradition and Culture: Oshana Sunday at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission, Stoke-on-Trent

deepening of faith, unity, and Mar Thoma Margam identity. Through its liturgical life; evangelisation and catechetical programmes; youth initiatives, especially the *Nuhra* Youth Retreat Teams; vibrant Family Units; and the Bible Apostolate and Family Apostolate ministries, the

to God's providence, the dedication of its clergy and religious, active leadership of the lay leaders and the unwavering commitment of its faithful. The next decade promises continued growth, deeper evangelisation, and an ever-stronger witness to the Gospel.



In the context of the attacks that have plunged the Middle East into fear, Pope Leo XIV

INVITATION TO PRAY FOR PEACE

has called for a day of prayer for peace. The Pope stated that stability and peace are not built through mutual threats or weapons that sow destruction, pain, and death, but only through reasonable, authentic, and responsible dialogue. Facing the possibility of a large-scale disaster, the Pope urged nations

and allies to fulfill their moral responsibility to intervene before the conflict turns into an irreparable rift. Referring to the volatile situations emerging in Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent days, the Pope further invited both nations to make an urgent return to dialogue.

Amidst the escalating gravity of the conflict in the Middle East, the Syro-Malabar Church observed Friday, March 6, 2026, as a Day of Prayer, following a call from Major Archbishop Mar Raphael Thattil. Extending the Church's prayerful solidarity to all victims of the war and the faithful residing in affected



regions, the Major Archbishop urged the community to pray that world leaders embrace Pope Leo XIV's appeal for peace with an open heart, fostering a renewed path toward tranquility in the Middle East.

APOSTOLIC JOURNEYS OF POPE LEO XIV



The Press Office of the Holy See announced on Wednesday,

February 25, that the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, will un-

dertake Apostolic Journeys to Algeria, Cameroon, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Spain, and Monaco.

The first of this year's Apostolic Journeys will be a one-day visit to Monaco. Scheduled for March 28, ahead of Holy Week, the visit is in response to the invitation extended by the country's political leadership to Pope Francis and subsequently to Pope Leo XIV. Monaco is a European nation in which the

Catholic faith is the official religion. It is the second smallest country in the world.

The longest Apostolic Journey of 2026 will be a ten-day visit to the African nations of Algeria, Cameroon, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea, from April 13 to 23. In Algeria, the Holy Father will visit Algiers and Annaba; in Cameroon, Yaoundé, Bamenda, and Douala; in Angola, Luanda, Muxima, and Saurimo; and in Equatorial Guinea, Malabo, Mongomo, and Bata.

The third Apostolic Journey of 2026 will be to Spain, from June 6 to 12. The Pope will first arrive in the capital city of Madrid. As part of his visit to Spain, the Holy Father will also travel to the Canary Islands, which are well known in connection with migration to Europe. Each year, thousands of migrants from African regions arrive there by boat. This visit also fulfills a long-held desire of Pope Francis. During the trip, the Pope will visit Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF SPLENDOUR

Vatican City: The Vatican has begun preparations for the 400th anniversary celebrations of Saint Peter's Basilica, the spiritual heart of Christians worldwide. The 400th anniversary of the dedication of this Basilica — the foremost pilgrimage center of the Catholic Church and a marvel of architectural art — will be celebrated in 2026. After nearly 120 years of construction, the present Basilica was consecrated on November 18, 1626, by Pope Urban VIII.

The grand church was built over the tomb of Saint Peter. When the old church constructed in the fourth century by Em-

peror Constantine the Great deteriorated over time, the Church decided to build a new Basilica. Construction began in 1506 during the pontificate of Pope Julius II. The Basilica was completed through the genius and craftsmanship of world-renowned architects and artists such as Donato Bramante, Michelangelo, Carlo Maderno, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

One of the largest churches in the world, Saint Peter's Basilica covers an area of 227,000 square feet and can accommodate around 60,000 people. Its dome is world-famous in architectural history. Designed by

Michelangelo, the dome rises more than 136 meters above ground level. Among the artistic treasures within the Basilica are Michelangelo's renowned sculpture *Pietà* and Bernini's bronze *Baldacchino*, both of which continue to captivate visitors.

On the occasion of the fourth centenary, special Holy Masses and liturgical celebrations will be held in the Vatican with Pope Leo as the main celebrant. Exhibitions highlighting the construction history of the Basilica and the spiritual heritage of the Church have been arranged in association with the Vatican Museums. In



preparation for the anniversary, the Vatican has completed extensive renovation works, including the restoration and polishing of the ancient sculptures and paintings within the Basili-

ca. It is expected that hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from different parts of the world will arrive in the Vatican to celebrate this significant milestone in the history of the Catholic Church.

COMMISSION ESTABLISHED TO REFORM THE EASTERN CANON LAW



Vatican City: The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops has established a new Canon Law Commission to study and propose reforms concerning the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. The new commission will work in collaboration with the Canon

Law Commission established in December 2023 for matters relating to the Latin Church. In light of requests from various Eastern Catholic Church leaders and the synodal journey undertaken thus far, the commission has been formed to receive proposals and suggestions

regarding the reform of Eastern canon law. Its first meeting was held at the General Secretariat of the Synod on 20 February.

According to Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod, the commission was established recognizing the need for a specific body to address certain matters relating to the relationship between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church, taking into account the particular characteristics of Eastern canon law. The commission will collaborate with the Study Group established in 2024 by Pope Francis and will include canon law

experts selected from advisory bodies connected to the Dicastery for Legislative Texts and the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches.

The Eastern Canonical Commission established by the General Secretariat of the Synod includes the following key members:

President: Cardinal Mario Grech – Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops

Coordinator: Juan Ignacio Arrieta Ochoa de Chinchetru

Members: Fr. Sunny Thomas Kokkaravalayil, S.J., Fr. Lorenzo Lorusso, O.P., Fr. Pablo

Gefaell Chamochin, Fr. Astrid Kaptijn

Emerging proposals from the synodal process - particularly from the 2023 Synthesis Report and the Final Document of the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2024) - will be implemented through this commission. Through an official press release, Cardinal Grech invited individual sui iuris Churches and Episcopal Conferences to submit their suggestions and observations to the General Secretariat of the Synod before 15 April 2026.