

Annual Report of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants

Submitted to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of the Migrants and Itinerant People

Warm Greetings from the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the migrants!

As per the request of Your Grace we are happy to present a brief report of the various programmes of the Commission from Sept 2011- Aug 2012 on the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar migrants in India and abroad. At the very outset the Commission sincerely thanks His Grace Rt. Rev Antonio Maria Veglio, the President, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of the Migrants and Itinerant People, and Most Rev. Bishop Joseph Kalathiparampil, its Secretary and all other members of the Dicastery for the support and encouragement they have extended to the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants in this report year. During the year the Commission was trying to systematize its activities as per the teachings of the Vatican II and other subsequent documents especially the *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*. This report, in 2 sections, presents the activities, concerns and challenges regarding the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar migrants in India and abroad.

Introduction

The Syro- Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants assists the Major Archbishop of the Church in carrying out his responsibilities towards the Syro-Malabar migrant faithful outside the proper territory of the Syro- Malabar Church (in India and aboard) and to animate and co-ordinate the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Members of the Commission

Bishop Sebastian Vadakel, MST	Chairman
Bishop Simon Stock Palathra, CMI	Member
Bishop Anthony Chirayath	member
Fr. Jose Cheriampanatt MST	Secretary

Major Events of the Year

Commission Meetings

Between Sept 2011 and Aug 2012, the Commission met three times to discuss the issues related to the pastoral care of the migrants in India and abroad. Besides, the Secretary kept all their Episcopal members informed of all the developments through email regularly. The Commission has been successful in maintaining an effective correspondence with the appointed pastors/chaplains and migrants of the Syro-Malabar Church, principally through e-mail and telephone. Christmas greetings and messages were sent to all the centers through e-mail. Correspondence is regular with almost all the centres/places/countries of the Syro-Malabar migrants.

Erection of the Eparchy of Faridabad

The erection of the Eparchy of Faridabad a Syro-Malabar eparchy erected in North India for the pastoral care of the migrants is a gift to the Syro-Malabar Church. The Commission sincerely thanks the Holy Father and Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of the Migrants and Itinerant People for the same.

Pastoral Visit of the Major Archbishop to Migrant Centers

Major Archbishop visited some of the migrant communities in India and abroad. His visit has boosted the enthusiasm and spirit of the communities.

Visit of the Commission Chairman, Members and Secretary

The Commission Chairman, members and secretary visited various migrants centers like Bangalore, Baroda, Aurangabad, Goa etc., in India and a few other centres in abroad in connection with various occasions and celebrations there.

Orientation Classes for Catechism Teachers

As part of the faith formation of the migrant communities the Commission has started contacting the priests in- charge and other responsible persons in the

respective centres to arrange training programmes for the catechism teachers. The training is given by the Synodal Commission for Catechism.

Mission Seminar and Gatherings in Migrant Centers

The Syro-Malabar Church is celebrating Mission Year from Aug 2011-Aug 2012 with a view of rekindling the missionary dynamism of all sections of its faithful. In connection with the mission year gatherings and seminars on *ad gentes* mission were arranged in Bangalore, Bhopal, Delhi, Kolkotta and Aurangabad to animate the missionary dynamism of the Syro-Malabar faithful.

Exploring New Centers of Migrants

The Commission has initiated the process of contacting and organizing Syro-Malabar communities in Dar es Salem in Tanzania, Kampala in Uganda, Johannesburg in South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia in Asia.

Our Major Concerns

African Countries

There is a sizeable number of our people in the African Countries of Nigeria, Libya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa. We have sent one priest to the Archdiocese of Pretoria, South Africa. Since their numbers in other centers are not clear nor are they organized, the Church has not approached the local Ordinaries in these countries for the pastoral care of its faithful. We look for the erection of personal parishes and other arrangements for effective pastoral co-ordination of our migrants in these countries.

Australia and New Zealand

In Australia there are around 36000 Syro-Malabar faithful. Some of the Dioceses in Australia have, at the request of the Syro-Malabar Church, appointed Syro-Malabar priests proposed by the Major Archbishop as chaplains to the migrant communities. Still there are a number of dioceses in Australia with large Syro-Malabar faithful without proper arrangement for their pastoral care. In New

Zealand too, two Syro-Malabar chaplains are appointed by the local Ordinaries on the recommendation of the Major Archbishop. What the Syro-Malabar Church is now looking forward to in these countries is a more stable canonical structure for the proper pastoral care of its faithful.

Europe

In countries like Germany, Switzerland and France, no Syro-Malabar priest is officially appointed as parish priest or chaplain with proper recommendation of the Major Archbishop. In Italy, a national Co-ordinator and a few chaplains are appointed for the Syro-Malabar faithful. But the community is not yet organised into a well knit Church. But in many dioceses in the UK Syro-Malabar chaplains have been appointed with proper recommendation. What the UK and other European countries urgently need is the appointment of national Co-ordinators with some canonical standing to co-ordinate the pastoral activities of the chaplains.

Gulf Countries

Though there are about 400, 000 Syro-Malabar faithful living scattered in the Arabian Gulf countries, distributed in 2 Vicariates of Arabia and Kuwait, there is still no organized pastoral care provided to our people in any of these places, except in Doha. The Vicars Apostolic are opposing the idea of appointing the Syro-Malabar priests proposed by the Major Archbishop as pastors, holding on to the *Rescript*. The extensive presence of Syro-Malabar faithful calls for the creation of a Syro-Malabar juridical set up for the whole of the Arabian Gulf countries. Proper pastoral care in the Arabian Gulf countries can be assured only by the erection of a separate Syro-Malabar Exarchate in the region.

Asian Countries

Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong Other Cities of Asian Countries

There are around 1000 Syro-Malabar families settled in Singapore alone. People are very eager to get the service of Syro-Malabar priests for their pastoral needs. Now they are not getting any pastoral service as per the Syro-Malabar tradition. The Major Archbishop and the Chairman of the Commission have discussed with the local Bishop the possibility of appointing a full time Syro-Malabar priest for the pastoral care of our migrants in Singapore. But the local Ordinary has not yet

accepted the request of the Community or the Commission for the appointment of a Syro-Malabar pastor in the country.

Similarly, in Hong Kong and Malaysia and other cities of Asian countries there are fairly big communities of our migrants. It is an urgent need to have at least one Syro-Malabar priest, appointed as official chaplain in each of these countries.

The Situation in India

We appreciate and gratefully acknowledge the step taken by the Apostolic See in cooperation with the bishop's conferences of India to erect the Eparchy Faridabad for the Syro-Malabar faithful in North India. However, much more needs to be done. The twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad, has a big Syro-Malabar concentration, which is about 30000. But not even a personal parish has been erected for the Syro-Malabar Church there. Although the archbishop is interested and supports the cause of the Syro Malabar migrants, no Syro-Malabar priest is officially appointed as parish priest or chaplain with the proper recommendation of the Major Archbishop.

Besides in cities like Ajmir, Allahabad, Bhilai, Bilaspur, Lucknow, Kanpur and so on there is sizeable number of our faithful. In these places the local ordinaries do not make any provision for Syro-Malabar migrants in spite of the clear instruction in n.52 of *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* that local ordinaries are to provide proper and adequate pastoral care for the members of another *sui iuris* church, living within the area of his territory, in their own ecclesial traditions.

Although *Erga migrantes Caritas Christi* (n.52-55) and other previous documents especially the Council documents (CD. 23, 27, OE 3-4), have laid down clear policies on the pastoral care of the migrants, the Syro-Malabar migrants in India are facing various challenges and problems. In most of these places the Divine Liturgy is celebrated by Latin Rite priest (in some cases, of Syro-Malabar origin). In some other places initiatives are taken by the laity or prayer groups to bring priests of the Syro-Malabar Church to celebrate Divine Liturgy occasionally. Hence, in many places our faithful lack opportunity for liturgical life and faith formation. And in some Latin Dioceses like Bhopal bishops do not follow the normal procedure. The appointment of priests for the pastoral care of our migrants

is done without any reference to the Major Archbishop. They also appoint priests without proper eastern ecclesial formation, incardinated to Latin dioceses as pastors of the Syro-Malabar migrants. Due to the lack of proper pastoral care many of our faithful, especially students migrate to other sects and marriages, take place outside the church. In places where the Syro-Malabar faithful are given proper pastoral care they have grown well in their faith according to their ecclesial tradition and fruits are evident in the form of vocations to priesthood and religious life.

Lack of appreciation in the Latin Dioceses of the identity of the Syro-Malabar Church as Individual Church and, considering it as a mere ethnic group are the basic reason for all these problems. Of course some of the Archbishops and bishops have erected personal parishes for the Syro-Malabar migrants and try to provide adequate pastoral care in the eastern rite and ecclesial tradition. However, in many dioceses like Aurangabad, Vijayawada even where personal parishes are erected the respective Ordinaries and priests are not ready to share the infrastructure with the Syro-Malabar migrants for the pastoral activities.

Challenges for the Syro-Malabar Church in India Today

Denial of All India jurisdiction and the subsequent territorial restriction placed on the Church on *ad gentes* and the pastoral care of the migrants is the most serious problem faced by the Syro-Malabar Church. Only the restoration of All India jurisdiction can open up the whole of India for evangelization activities by the Syro-Malabar Church. All India jurisdiction and subsequently erection of Dioceses covering the whole of India will add to the missionary dynamism of the Catholic Church in India and will definitely add momentum to the evangelization and pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar migrants.

Fifty years elapsed after Vatican II and seven years after the publication of *Erga migrantis caritas Christi* and the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church have approached Holy see several times to regain her rights for evangelization and pastoral care of the migrants everywhere in India. Dialogue with the Latin hierarchy was recommended by the Holy See. It has never been successful. So direct intervention of the Holy See is urgent in this matter. Because justice delayed is justice denied.

This short report on the situation of the Syro-Malabar faithful living outside its jurisdiction in India and outside makes clear the inadequacy of the pastoral

provisions made so far and, in some cases, the total denial of it. As a result the large number of the Syro-Malabar faithful is cut off from the ecclesial heritage and tradition of their own Church. This is a question of faith and many fall away and join non-Catholic communities or sects who provide some pastoral care conducive to their own culture and language.

A Word of Appreciation

In this report we have tried to highlight major challenges and problems faced by the Syro-Malabar migrants in the course of their mobility. We greatly appreciate the Pontifical Commission for putting in clear terms the policies of the Church in the pastoral care of the migrants especially the Eastern catholic migrants. Though seven years have elapsed after the publication of the *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* many of its teachings are not implemented in the case of the migrants of the Syro-Malabar Church. We remember with gratitude the erection of the Eparchy of Faridabad for the Syro-Malabarians. The same principle may be extended to other places of Syro-Malabar concentration. Only establishment of parishes and of eparchies in centers of Syro-Malabar concentration can solve the issues of the Syro-Malabar Church permanently. So we request the serious attention of the Pontifical Council on this matter. May we also take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to Your Grace Rt. Rev Antonio Maria Veglio, the President, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of the Migrants and Itinerant People, and Most Rev. Bishop Joseph Kalathiparampil, its Secretary and all other members of the Dicastery for the support and encouragement extended to the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants.

Promising our whole hearted cooperation to the pastoral initiatives and efforts of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People,

Bishop Sebastian Vadakel MST
Chairman, Commission of Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church

Fr. Jose Cheriampanatt MST
Secretary