

Syro Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church
Major Archiepiscopal Curia, Mt St Thomas, P.B. No. 3110, Kakkanad
Kochi-682 030, Kerala, India. website:www.smcim.org

Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Migrants

Mission

The love of Christ towards migrants urges us (cf. 2Cor. 5:14) to look afresh at their problems and to respond more efficiently to the pastoral needs of the Syro-Malabar faithful living outside the *territorium proprium* of the church in India and abroad.

The Major Archiepiscopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of the Migrants is constituted to assist the Major Archbishop of the Church in carrying out his responsibilities towards the migrant Christian faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church.

A. The Hierarchs of other *Sui iuris* Churches and the Commission

1. The commission shall “seek appropriate information concerning the Christian faithful who reside outside the territorial boundaries of the Church” (*CCEO 148 §1*) and submit it to the Major Archbishop.
2. On the verification of the information collected or the demand made by the faithful living outside the territory, the commission may approach the respective ordinaries of the place and make request to exercise the most suitable juridical option from among those foreseen by the CIC and the CCEO (*Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* No. 50).
3. Even though entrusted to the care of a local hierarch/local ordinary or pastor of another Church *sui iuris*, they still remain ascribed to their own Church *sui iuris* (*CCEO 38*, cf. *CIC 112*, §2). Therefore, the commission shall see that the community is given adequate pastoral care as per the patrimony of the Syro-Malabar Church and help the hierarchs or pastors to fulfill their responsibility.
4. Where there are faithful of a different rite, the local hierarch/local ordinary should provide for their spiritual needs through priests or parishes of that rite (*CIC 383§2*, *CD 22*, *EMCC 53*). The commission should ensure that the priests ministering the faithful are well trained and equipped to foster the faith of the community in the patrimony of the Syro-Malabar Church.

5. The local hierarch/local ordinaries, who appoint presbyters, pastors or syncelli for the care of Christian faithful of Patriarchal/Major Archiepiscopal Churches, are to formulate plans of action with the Patriarchs / Major Archbishops who are concerned in the matter (*CCEO 193§3*). When the time is ripe for the appointment of a pastor/chaplain, the commission shall request the Major Archbishop to present the name of the priest to the hierarch, so that he can appoint him for the care of the community. There shall be a written contract regarding the term and conditions of the service of the priest between the commission chairman and the local hierarch/local ordinary.
6. Wherever there is a considerable number of faithful to form a parish, the commission can suggest the possibility of the matter to the local hierarch that he erect a personal parish for the Syro-Malabar faithful. (*CIC 518*). No centre shall continue as a mission or a mass centre if it has 100 families or more. Only personal parishes with Syro-Malabar priests as pastors (appointed as in No.5) will ensure the context suitable for proper pastoral care for the Syro-Malabar migrant community (*CCEO 280§1*).
7. Even when the separate parishes or centers are erected for the Syro-Malabar faithful, these will continue to form integral parts of that diocese of the appointing bishop, and the parish priests/chaplains of the Syro-Malabar personal parish/center will remain members of the same diocesan presbyterate (*EMCC 55*). Therefore, the Syro-Malabar priests taking care of the Syro-Malabar faithful in the dioceses/vicariates of other *sui iuris* churches shall be obedient to these local hierarchs/local ordinaries under whose jurisdiction they are. However, they shall exercise their ministry in conformity with the patrimony (liturgical, theological, spiritual and canonical) of the Syro-Malabar Church (cf. *CCEO Can. 28§1* and *PaG 72*).
8. The commission shall keep regular contacts with the Hierarchs/Ordinaries of the emigrant personal parishes and Mass/mission centers, to discuss matters concerning those parishes/centers. Further, the commission shall issue circulars and pastoral letters on behalf of the Major Archbishop, in consultation with the local hierarch/ordinary, for the faith formation of the community in those parishes/centers.

B. The Pastors / Chaplains in-charge of the Syro-Malabar Migrants

9. Normally only those Syro-Malabar priests, who are ascribed to the Syro-Malabar Eparchies or institutes of Consecrated life/Societies of Apostolic life of the Syro-Malabar Church or to their Syro-Malabar provinces, shall be appointed parish priests/chaplains to do pastoral care for the Syro-Malabar

migrants. However, when needed and available the help of other priests of the Syro-Malabar origin may also be enlisted for the same.

10. Priests doing pastoral care for the migrant community, whether in India or abroad should undergo a short term training offered by the commission. They should personally meet the Major Archbishop/the Chairman Bishop of the Commission before taking up their ministry.
11. The appointed pastors/chaplains shall observe the Particular Laws of the Syro-Malabar Church in the administration of the parish. Therefore, in all erected parishes/centers, they shall ensure the participation of the faithful after the model of *palliyogam* (Parish Council) in organizing parish activities and in the administration of the temporal goods. In other cases, there shall be the proper sharing of the responsibilities of the administration with elected members from the community.
12. The Sacred Liturgy and the Sacraments celebrated for our migrant communities shall always be the Syro-Malabar liturgy using the approved texts and adhering to the rites and the mode of celebration approved by the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church.
13. In the personal parishes and other established centers, even if not erected as parishes, the faithful should be invited to register their families and names and the church registers and documents shall be properly maintained and preserved. However, ample opportunities of co-operation and interaction with the other Catholic communities in the proximity are very essential to foster Christian fraternity avoiding any sort of exclusivity.
14. The pastors/chaplains shall take interest to guide the community to preserve the Syro-Malabar heritage especially in the practice of fast, abstinence and penance, celebration of the major feasts and in conducting various spiritual exercises for the community. They shall organize regular catechism classes for the children and youth using the texts approved by the synod. Great importance should be given to the proper catechetical formation of the faithful as per the tradition and heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church.
15. The pastors/chaplains need to be in regular contact with Major Archiepiscopal Commission and should send it annual reports regarding the state of the community, the apostolic activities and events in the parish.
16. They shall promote and strengthen Christian life by establishing pious associations of the Christian faithful with the approval of the local Hierarchs/ordinaries.

17. As regards the administration of the temporal goods, making collection among the faithful for any purpose etc. the particular law of the diocese and the direction of the local Hierarchy shall be strictly followed.
18. Through regular family visits, organizing family unit prayer meetings, study classes etc. the pastors should help the migrant communities to feel united and strengthened in their Christian faith. They also need to be initiated into the customs and manners of the people of the land where they live. The positive interaction with the fellow Christian faithful of the land should be mutually enriching experience for both the communities.
19. Promoting the missionary thrust of our church, the migrant community must be made an evangelizing community wherever they are. They should be properly instructed of the missionary character and responsibility of theirs and be encouraged to contribute their share to the missionary activities of the Syro-Malabar Church. Pastors should conduct special mission animation programmes for the faithful and promote priestly, religious and lay missionary vocations from among the faithful.
20. Normally, the parish priest / chaplains presented by the Major Archbishop may be appointed for a period of three years. Their term may be extended for another period of two years. After that they may be called back or appointed in some other place with the agreement of their own hierarchs/ordinaries. In case of necessity they may even be called back during this period by the Chairman of the Commission sending an advance notice of two months to the local hierarch / ordinary to the effect. Similarly, the local hierarch/bishop may, in serious cases, with due information to the commission, send back such a priest replacing him with another Syro-Malabar priest presented by the Major Archbishop.

Kakkanad
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+ Varkey Vithayathil

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Major Archbishop of the Syro Malabar Church