



# Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants

## Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church

Bishop Sebastian Vadakel, MST (Chairman)  
Fr. Sebastian Joseph Muttamthottil, MCBS (Secretary)

Archbishop Mathew Moolakkattu, OSB (Member)  
Bishop Mathew Arackal (Member)

### MISSION CONSULTATION - 27 APRIL 2018

#### REPORT

The Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants planned to organize three Mission Consultations in the context of the recent ecclesiastical provisions of erection of the two Eparchies (Hosur and Shamshabad) and extension of the two existing Eparchies (Ramanathapuram and Thucklai) that has posed new challenges and provided new opportunities of ‘*ad gentes* mission’ for the Syro-Malabar Church. The letter of the Holy Father Pope Francis to all the bishops of India is a reminder that obliges us to think why “In India, even after many centuries, Christians are only a small proportion of the population.” Pope’s request to all “the beloved Churches in India to be generous and courageous in witnessing to the Gospel in the spirit of fraternity and mutual love” is also an invitation to accelerate the missionary activities of the Indian Church. Along with this, the Synod of the Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, held from 8 to 13 January 2018 has requested all to extend their generous support for works of evangelization mission. The Major Archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, in his Circular after the first Session of the XXVI Synod of Bishops of 2018, also writes, “The right for evangelization and pastoral care throughout the country given to the Syro-Malabar Church is a great opportunity for intensification of the evangelization mission of the Church in India.” It was in this context the entire faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church are requested to put our heads together over how to respond to this new situation as a Church to reflect over this topic and make proper plan of action for the ‘*ad gentes* mission’ in India.

The first Mission Consultation was held on 27 April 2018 at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad. The invitees were the priests, brothers and sisters who are in-charge of evangelization / mission *ad gentes* in the Syro-Malabar Eparchies in the ‘*territorium proprium*’ and in the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of the Syro-Malabar Church, or the Syro-Malabar Provinces in Kerala. There were 40 participants from the Eparchies and the Institutes of Consecrated Life.

The meeting began with a prayer session led by Fr. Sebastian Muttamthottil MCBS, Secretary of the Commission, and Sr. Praveena CSN, the Office Secretary. Bp. Sebastian Vadakel MST, the Chairman of the Commission welcomed all to the meeting. In the welcome address, Bp. Sebastian Vadakel has reminded the participants that since the Church is missionary by her nature, it is our duty to reflect over how to advance our mission work in this new context and how to coordinate the missionary activities of the Church in the areas having different language, culture and life style. He has asked all to identify the challenges of mission work that the Church in India face in the present context, as the early Church that faced challenges in spreading the Gospel in those times. He invited all to reflect together on the challenges and the ways to overcome them.

*Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Curia*

*Mount St. Thomas, PB. 3110, Kakkanad, Kochi - 682 030, Kerala, India*

*Tel: 0484-2424768; 6461268 Fax: 0484-2422727; Email: sec2cepcm@gmail.com, Web: www.cepcm.org*



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The Major Archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry lighted the lamp and inaugurated the meeting. In his inaugural address, he spoke of the role of the Commission to coordinate the evangelization activities of the whole Syro-Malabar Church. He appreciated the efforts of the commission in this regard through gatherings and visits, and the preliminary works in the formation of the Syro-Malabar Eparchies outside the proper territory. He said: “My first concern is evangelization and I wish that shall be same of everyone;” and it is for this purpose, the Holy Father has given us this new provision for evangelization in entire country. While acknowledging the mission work done by the Eparchies and Institutes of Consecrated Life in their own way, he has asked all to work together as a Church. He explained that what is given to us is the right for evangelization and pastoral care of our faithful - it was correcting an error and the universal Church accepting our right. Though, canonically, the whole India is not our proper territory, we have our own provisions for pastoral care and evangelization. Now it is our duty to work. We must not be enthusiastic to form structures first, but work and form structure as the fruits of our work. The institutions in the mission have swallowed the real nature of our mission work and made it secure within our comfort zone. We are called to be for the poor through works of charity and mercy. We shall strive to break the comfort zone and come out. There should be a simplicity and Christian nature for all our institutions. We need institutions, but it is not our ultimate goal. This new right for evangelization shall be well utilised by us. The legal complications will be settled by the offices. The Major Archbishops desired that 5% of the priests from our Eparchies shall go to the missions to strengthen the evangelization mission.

Mar Raphael Thattil, Bishop of Shamshabad, has shared his experience in the mission and requested all to think of the universality of the Church beyond one’s own Eparchy or Institute. Pope Francis sees the Syro-Malabar Church as a Church with the fidelity and patience of the wise virgin, equipped with an abundant supply of oil, so that the light of her lamp may enlighten all peoples in the long night of awaiting the Lord’s coming. He explained the difference between *intra gentes* and *ad gentes* mission: our migrants are always missionaries who carry out our patrimony and heritage, and therefore, we must care our migrants - *intra gentes* mission; our work among the other people is *ad gentes* mission. He accepted the reality of sending our sons and daughters to Latin Church for mission work when we had no freedom for it. He has reminded all of their duty to work for our own mother Church when we have multi-jurisdiction in India. We shall do the same providing the provisions of Syro-Malabar Institutes to our new mission Eparchies. Eparchies and Institutes are to come forward for *ad gentes* mission so that the light of our lamp may enlighten all peoples in India. We must promote personnel to the mission Eparchies.

Fr. Paulachan Kochappilly gave the orientation talk. He said that we all are one and united in the evangelization mission. He appreciated great works done by the women religious in this realm. As we pray in the Holy Qurbana, “I will sing Your praises among the peoples.” He told that the challenges provide opportunities: to remove the barriers for evangelization, to move to new places, to burn with the passion for the Lord who is God of nations, etc. It is the right time to get away from indifferences, it is the time of third exodus. He asked all to be the Gospel and give the Gospel which

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is evangelization. It is the celebration of our life in Christ. To be a Christian means to evangelize and, therefore, to be a true Christian is the real evangelization. There are external as well as internal challenges to the evangelization. Internal challenges are from within a person like lack of Jesus-experience, indifference to liturgy or prayers, lack of witness or genuine life in Christ, etc. The external challenges are like lack of knowledge about missions, simplicity, etc. One can overcome these challenges with the power of the Spirit - the internal spiritual experience. He has requested all to assimilate the basic mystery of the Incarnation (*Bhasha*, *Bhojanam* and *Bhajanam* -language, food and worship) in the evangelization mission.

### Suggestions by the Participants

After the key addresses, there was a sharing session in which the participants shared their expectations and suggestions. They are the following:

1. The Church and the missionaries must be clear how to move and where to move in the evangelization mission. Missionaries are to be motivated and prepared for this. When we have passion for mission, finance will not be our worry. Many lay missionaries witness to this fact.
2. We must be ready to work for long term in the mission and the Church shall send only those who have passion for mission.
3. CEPCM shall conduct more awareness programs for the missionaries as well as other faithful. Train the missionaries and teach the mission aptitude of the Church which shall not be the individual work but the collective mission work of the Church. Plan the mission work in groups and have the evaluation of the missionary activities.
4. The missionaries must have the experience of the Holy Qurbana, which is the centre and source of all our missionary activities.
5. Give mission awareness to the seminarians and in the parishes.
6. CEPCM shall give some orientation to the missionaries.
7. The Church shall channelize vocations to the missions and be cautious about the Latin bishops who block admitting vocations from the Latin faithful.
8. The Church shall promote our CML to revive the missionary spirit among the people.
9. The Church shall ask each forane to pray for an Eparchy in the mission.
10. Prepare newsletters on the mission to make the people know about the mission centres.
11. Prepare full timers from the CML for the missions as Jesus Youth does.
12. Revive passion for mission than for institutions.
13. Visit families in the evenings; pray and eat with them (home mission).
14. Remove the distorted vision on the mission and give real picture of it.
15. Change the practice of taking the best for the eparchies in Kerala and giving the remaining for the mission eparchies.

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16. Organize some programs for the parish priests to know the mission.
17. Conduct discussions on the mission among the bishops
18. Give mission exposure to the catechism teachers and the youth.
19. Setting aside the competitive spirit, work together for the mission.
20. Redesign the mission policy of the Syro-Malabar Church.
21. Give the spirit of mission through catechism classes.
22. Give opportunities for knowing and visiting the missions to those priests who are interested.
23. Ask the visiting missionaries to share their experiences to the seminarians so that they shall be inspired to go to missions.
24. Make the languages of the mission areas part of the seminary curriculum.
25. Form a Mission Team at central level to train the missionaries.
26. Have prayer centres for the mission because only with the power of prayer mission work will be effective.
27. Intercessory prayer and one-hour adoration for the mission in the parishes and religious houses.
28. We shall have passion for Christ and compassion for the poor.
29. The Church in Kerala must support the Church in the mission with money and personnel.
30. Be united regarding liturgy wherever we go so that our liturgical formation will be uniform.
31. The Church shall conduct and encourage mission exposure programs.
32. Do direct evangelization wherever it is possible.
33. The Church shall gather the youth for mission.
34. Take interested families to the mission.
35. Missionary bank at Major Archiepiscopal level.
36. Give to all priests at least three-years compulsory service in the mission.
37. Organize mission exposure for seminarians and students.
38. Enkindle the mission spirit in the children through CML and its activities like *pidiyari*, mission collection, etc.
39. Take steps to come out of the comfort of institutions and to go to the people.
40. Make all the faithful aware that all are missionaries.
41. Trust the laity and make them collaborators. Motivate them to acquire top positions like IAS or civil services through which Christian values are conveyed.

After the discussions, Bp. Raphael Thattil has explained the plan of organizing the works of evangelization and pastoral care. Entrusting those areas to the respective Eparchies and to the Institutes of Consecrated Life which are close to their existing mission areas. When we begin the new mission centres, they are to be in our Church. Many Eparchies and Institutes have come forward

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to take up new areas. He pointed out the instances of Latin bishops blocking new vocations to the Syro-Malabar Institutes of Consecrated Life.

The Curia Bishop Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, in his concluding message, shared his experiences in the missions. The missionaries leave their comfort zone and going to remote villages. They struggle a lot to stay in the villages and work for them. There shall be vocations to the missions and the parish priests shall encourage vocations especially to the missions. The mission visits of the parish priests give them a better understanding of the missions.

After the appraisal by Mar Sebastian Vadakel and vote of thanks by Sr. Praveena CSN, the Office Secretary, the meeting was concluded by 4.00 p.m.

Bp. Mar Sebastian Vadakel MST, Chairman  
Abp. Mar Mathew Moolakkatt OSB, Member  
Bp. Mar Mathew Arackal, Member

Fr. Sebastian Joseph Muttamthottil MCBS,  
(Secretary)  
Sr. Praveena CSN, Office-Secretary