



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 - 9 JUNE 2018

REPORT

The Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants organized 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 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 put our heads together and reflected 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 second mission consultation meeting on *ad gentes* mission was on 9 June 2018 at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad. The invitees were the leaders of the lay associations of the Syro-Malabar Church. Thirty persons representing AKCC, Christeen, CLC, CML, FIAT Mission, Jesus Youth, Pro-Life, Covenant and SMYM have attended the meeting.

The meeting began at 10.05 a.m. with a prayer session led by Fr. Sebastian Muttamthottil MCBS, the secretary of the Commission and Sr. Praveena CSN, the office-secretary. Bp. Sebastian Vadakel MST, the Chairman of the Commission welcomed all to the consultation meeting. In his welcome address, Bp. Sebastian Vadakel explained the context of the consultation. In the letter to all the bishops of India, Pope Francis has affirmed that this is the right re-established as well as a duty and obligation. The Church is missionary by her nature and all are called to holiness. Evangelization also is a call to holiness. When we look at the history of our Church, we had collaborated with the East Syrian Church which was a missionary Church. East Syrian Church was known as a Church on fire. When we had our own hierarchy and freedom, we collaborated with other Churches for evangelization. After Vatican Council II, we had missionary eparchies and many missionary communities. Our priests and religious were going to the north to do the missionary work in India. Our lay faithful were also in the forefront of the missionary movements of our Church through prayer and financial support. Whenever our laity has awakened, there were vigour in the missionary movement.

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The Curia Bishop of the Syro-Malabar Church Mar Sebastian Vaniyapurackal inaugurated the mission consultation by lighting the lamp. He has asked the participants not to fail in participating in the Church gatherings and to nurture the missionary activities of the Church and encourage one another. Then he explained the nature and functioning of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia at Mount St. Thomas. He pointed out the increase of clericalism in the Church and reminded all that the commission to preach is an obligation of all the faithful in the Church. Just like the Apostles were filled with the Spirit and went out to preach, we are also to be filled with the Spirit to be missionaries. We are getting the model for this from our families in which mothers rarely go to their own homes and remain mostly in the house with a commitment to the family. Likely, we are also to be committed for the missionary work.

The inaugural address was followed by the Sharing by Rev. Fr. Dr. Jose Cheriambanatt MST who was the former secretary of the Commission. He said that this is an occasion to “Rejoice and to be Glad”. We desire to be on the shore but Jesus asks us to throw our nets into the deep ocean. We shall not be in our comfort zone like Prophet Jonah. The new Eparchy of Shamshabad is a child we received after centuries. Mission is to be our goal and is our holiness. Jesus asks us to pray to the Lord to send the labourers. Until the harvest is ready, labourer is needed; only then comes the role of harvesters. That is why Jesus asks us to pray for sending the labourers not the harvesters. The labour before harvest is very important: prayer, encouragement and accompaniment. There should be a clear vision of mission. It is not establishing institutions, but involving in the affairs of the Father. Our mission works must be rooted in the Word of God. The Protestants missionaries practise this by preaching and writing the Bible verses everywhere. We shall do the mission work without much infrastructure, and the rest will be provided by the Lord. Syro-Malabar Church was and is a missionary Church and that is why there are many missionaries working in other Churches *sui iuris*. We must be in the mission with prayer and closeness to the people there. We shall arrange mission magazines and encourage vocations to the missions. As Pope Francis said, a missionary is the one who constructs with the Lord by using name of Christ, by using the Word of God, by witness (holiness) and by undergoing martyrdom.

Sharing by the Associations

1. AKCC: At present, AKCC is not so active in the direct missionary work, but has strong desire to involve. In its centenary year, it is planning to adopt 100 mission centres. Just like the Europe developed because of Christian values, we must spread Christian values in India for its development. The laity are not recognized in the ecclesial forums. They are just like the tiny plants that get sunlight through the leaves of giant trees (clergy). At present, no parish priest thinks beyond parish and no bishop thinks beyond his own eparchy. Use the laity and their resources for the entire Church.

2. Christeen: Evangelization and proclamation among the children is the main area of work. It conducts retreats for children and also families, publishes magazines for the children and organizes

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Eucharistic conferences for the children. It has already started preparation for the Great Jubilee of 2033.

3. CLC: It arranges sharing of the missionaries for the children. It supports mission and missionaries through prayer. There is a strong need of new evangelization.

4. CML: It prays for the mission centres. Each unit has a mission centre to pray and support financially. A Youth Mission Service link for free service in the missions is being organized. When missionaries visit parishes, an interactive session is arranged. Documentation on the mission centres is helpful to introduce them. Mission visit at forane or eparchial level are organized. We shall have youth gatherings in the Mission.

5. FIAT Mission: Making the Bible available in the local languages (their translation and printing) is a main service done by it. It conducts three months' Training for evangelization for the youth selected from the tribals and sends them back to their own native tribes. It mainly utilizes the spiritual resources from Kerala. It also sends missionaries abroad like Keniya, Iraq, etc. A team of 40 goes to the mission to conduct retreats and for baptism. There are more than 300 missionaries in FIAT. It conducts Great Gatherings of Mission (GGM) and through intercessory prayers it overcomes the financial burdens. There are 32 Eucharistic adoration centres. It has invited 2 Syro-Malabar Congregations only for evangelization and for creating parish communities.

6. Jesus Youth: It is a missionary movement at the service of the Church having a mission among the youth. There are more than 2000 youth working with one-year commitment. Once a missionary is always a missionary. There is also nurses' ministry. It gives financial helps to more than 300 students. It organizes one-month mission experience programme in a family in the mission centre. They adjust to the food, living styles and culture in the mission, and accelerate cultural enhancement (Mission-Kerala). There is a magazine called Kairos Global Magazine.

7. Pro-Life Movement: Everyone needs a personal experience and there shall be occasions to have such experiences at parish level. We must live with the Church and for that there must be a sense of belongingness. When one feels that it is not his/hers, there will be indifference. It accompanies persons and families. There is a need of Charismatic Commission for Syro-Malabar Church.

8. SMYM: It is the right time to enquire the reasons why the youth go away from the Church. It works according to each culture. It makes interventions in the social issues.

9. Covenant: It publishes lives of saints for the children and conducting retreats.

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Proposals from Common Sharing

1. We need to react to the issues against the Church.
2. The Church must consider the faithful and their children in our own institutions for job and education.
3. We shall quote from the Bible when attending a public meeting (priests, religious and laity).
4. The Church must consider seriously the scandal by the priests - priests becoming the wolves among the sheep.
5. Evaluate whether the Institutions of the Church enhance the faith or becoming a scandal to the faith and Christian values.
6. Appoint the priests with an experience in the mission as parish priests.
7. Arrange mission meetings in the Mission.
8. Use social media for evangelization.
9. Visit the mission and have at least a mission experience once.
10. Use the service of the retired people for the missions.
11. When the missionaries come to Kerala, give them occasions to preach on missions.
12. Find out the reasons why parents are not sending the children to missions.
13. Prepare a textbook on the mission and teach it as an auxiliary text of catechism.
14. There shall have vocation banks at eparchial level.
15. Propagate the works of the missionaries in the mission.
16. Send all priests to the mission for 2-3 years.
17. Form prayer groups for the mission in parishes.
18. Focus on the works of evangelization than on the social works.
19. Coordinate all the mission activities at Major Archiepiscopal level.
20. Give occasions to know each other to different people who work for the mission. There shall be the gathering of such associations and organizations at least once in a year.
21. Channelize the charisms of different associations and organizations for the mission.
22. Give formation to the laity for working in the mission.
23. Need of proclaiming the uniqueness of Jesus everywhere, even in the missions.
24. Take leaders to the missions.
25. Arrange space for the interested couples in the missions.

Concluding Message by the Major Archbishop.

The Major Archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry gave the concluding message. He said that though we are doing evangelization and missionary activities in the parishes and eparchies, we have to promote and strengthen mission *ad gentes*. This right was not denied to our Church but was restricted due to many reasons. This restriction was removed and Pope Francis has asked us to do this mission *ad gentes* in India. At present the lay faithful have more opportunities for evangelization and, therefore, they should come forward. Besides working in their own mode, the lay associations shall cooperate and support the missionary endeavours of our

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Church/Eparchies/Institutes of Consecrated Life. The *Cherupushpa Mission League* was doing so. The units of CML used to send money collected by children to the mission areas. There shall be a strong move from our part for the mission *ad gentes*. When we are given more opportunities, it is our obligation to work more ardently for the missions. Otherwise, this new opportunity will be futile. We shall strive to have people filled with the Holy Spirit who moves them to baptism. The families that pray together are great strength for the missionary works. Our joint efforts with missionary zeal though prayer and support shall move the hearts of the people. The light of Faith lit by St. Thomas the Apostle shall light the entire nation through our creative missionary works.

After the concluding message, there was a photo session with the Major Archbishop. The meeting was concluded around 3.45 p.m. with an appraisal by the Chairman Mar. Sebastian Vadakel and vote of thanks by Sr. Praveena CSN, the Office Secretary.

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