

## **Final Statement, Recommendations and Suggestions from the 4<sup>th</sup> Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Syro-Malabar Church**

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The Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Syro-Malabar Church is a restored and updated form of an ancient ecclesial institution of the St. Thomas Christians called *Yogam*. The fourth Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Church, held from 25 to 28 August 2016 at Sahrdaya College of Engineering and Technology, Kodakara, of the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda, witnessed a grace-filled event of collegial communion in the Syro-Malabar Church. Four hundred and ninety members from twenty countries participated in the Assembly. The Secretariat of the Assembly presented in the Synod the Final Statement, Recommendations and General Suggestions of the Assembly, the outcome of the presentations, group discussions and public interventions in different sessions, and the Synod gave its approval. The Secretariat of the Assembly is pleased to publish these Acts of the Assembly with the permission of His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, the Major Archbishop.

Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad  
02 September, 2016

Bp. Pauly Kannookadan  
Convener

## A. FINAL STATEMENT

### Introduction

1. We, the four hundred and ninety members, coming from twenty countries, six Archbishops, forty one bishops, one hundred and thirty eight diocesan priests, thirty five religious priests, one permanent deacon, seventy eight religious women, seven religious brothers, one hundred and twelve lay men, forty six lay women and twenty six youth, of the fourth Major Archiepiscopal Assembly convoked and presided over by the Major Archbishop His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, the father and head of the Syro-Malabar Church, held from 25 to 28 August, 2016 at Sahrdaya Engineering College, Kodakara, of the Eparchy of Irinjalakuda, witnessed a grace-filled event of collegial communion in the Syro-Malabar Church today, which is in continuity with the ancient ecclesial institution of the St. Thomas Christians called *Yogam*; spent four fruitful days in intense prayer and mature reflection; devoted ourselves to preparing an adequate response of the Church to the challenges of today in witnessing Christ in family and contemporary society, and more particularly, studied the themes of *Simplicity in Life, Witness in the Family, and Mission of the Migrants* as well as other pertinent issues in the Church and society, in general dialogue sessions and discussions in groups. We hold in high esteem our Indian roots and oriental heritage; the joy of being members of the Holy Catholic Church led by His Holiness Pope Francis, and the fellowship enjoyed among all the catholic and other Christian Churches in India, and harmony with our brothers and sisters in other religions. Coming to the close of the Assembly, we gladly make this public statement in order to share with all our sisters and brothers, the fruits of our common deliberations and the future course of action.
2. We want to place on record various issues of urgent concern today. The spread of various forms of religious intolerance across the globe has affected the peace and harmony of the society. The Assembly joined the world in praying for the release of Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil SDB, our brother. We condemn the atrocities committed against the dalits, women, children and the religious minorities. The Assembly is concerned about the plight of the farmers and other inhabitants in the Western Ghats and feel one with their grieves and anxieties. The Assembly appeals to the entire Syro-Malabar faithful for the unity in liturgy and uniformity in its essentials. The Assembly not only claims the immediate reinstatement of

the all India jurisdiction which St. Thomas Christians enjoyed till recent centuries, but also global jurisdiction for the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar migrants and, more importantly, for evangelization. The Assembly earnestly looks forward to the elevation of the Syro-Malabar Church to the patriarchal status by the Holy See.

### **Simplicity in Life**

3. Inspired by Pope Francis's simple way of life, we realized the need to embrace more and more simplicity in life, after the model of Jesus Christ, who emptied himself for our salvation, accepting the life of a servant (cf. Phil. 2, 6-7) so that we are not conformed to the world which is obsessed with luxurious ways of life and driven by individualism and the subsequent consumer culture. Jesus led a life without luxury; he made his entire life a joyful feast. We neither romanticize poverty, nor consider the technological advancement forbidden fruits. On the other hand, we encourage everyone to develop all their God-given talents and reach heights for the glory of God and the good of the nation. Our Christian commitment to simplicity invites us to a moderate life and the just as well as prudent use of our resources so that we can share with the poor and the needy like Jesus, who was poor and yet accessible to all, even to the most sinful person on earth. A life of simplicity leads to inner freedom and complete trust in the providence of God the Father, which in turn, helps us not to be swayed by position, recognition, wealth and other attractions of consumer culture.
4. The Syro-Malabar faithful give high priority to the generous availability of their pastoral leadership. The bishops, parish priests and the religious are invited to find more time to interact informally with the parishioners. The Assembly noted that our priests and the religious are often overburdened, and sometimes even worn-out, with too many programmes that they are not able to animate and guide the families to become effective witnesses of Christ in the world. All faithful, especially the youth, are looking forward to a welcoming attitude from priests and the consecrated in their words and various services. Priests are to accompany families through their distressful moments, such as the moments of mental struggles, times when saddened by serious diseases, death and the funeral service of the dear and near ones.
5. Simplicity invites us to find satisfaction in the minimum. The reason for such a spirituality is the awareness that the resources of the earth are limited. Since "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it" (Ps. 24,

1,) it is a matter of responsible ethics to use the minimum and leave the rest for the needy. The state should make responsible rules to make sure that the resources of the earth are distributed justly to all.

6. Our pastoral activities must not be too much preoccupied with celebrations and constructions. The money we spend for luxury is an infringement on the rights of the poor. We need to voluntarily set a ceiling to our celebrations and constructions, and instead use the resources at hand to empower the weak and the needy within our locality. The Assembly highly recommends that at least a significant percentage of the expenses of parish feasts and other celebrations is spent for works of charity. The Assembly has found it appropriate that the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church sets guidelines for celebrations in connection with marriage, other sacraments and the feasts, taking the poor into serious consideration. A more collaborative pastoral ministry, in which priests, the religious and the laity assume their pastoral responsibility, can make the Church simpler and more effective. Every member of the Church is invited to share as well as accept the talents of all the faithful for the betterment of the Syro-Malabar Church and the wider society.

### **Witness in Family**

7. The pastoral orientation of the Syro-Malabar Church has been resolved to be family-centred. Family is a home of love and garden of life. Hence, the Church is committed to address all the issues encountered by families in the contemporary world. The Assembly urges all bishops, priests and the religious to combine their pastoral acumen with diligent discernment of the challenges of families. Going to families is a home coming for the Church. The Church lives in and evolves through families; and each family finds its religious and community-identity in the Church. Witnessing families make the presence of God in the Church visible to the world. Just as the joys of the family are also the joys of the Church, threats to the family are threats to the Church as well. While the Assembly gave thanks to God for the joy of love experienced by the vast majority of Syro-Malabar families, it also decided that Church urgently devotes all her ministerial services to safe-guard families from all dangers and promote love and life. The contemporary family is facing many challenges which may be grouped into three sets: first, challenges of structure and sustainability of the family, second, challenges of affectivity and emotional maturity of family members, and third, social, cultural, religious, economic, and ecological

challenges. The Assembly assessed the causes and consequences of all these challenges in detail and concluded that there are six ways in which we can address them with immediate effect:

8. (i) The Assembly proposed many practical ways, and invited each eparchy to invent more concrete ways *to promote life and protect marriage*. (ii) The Assembly expressed its deep concern in the increasing *loss of affectivity in families* and urged everyone to cultivate their homing instinct by rejoicing in family-times, family-prayer, family-meals, family-trips, etc. (iii) Having realized that there are a good number of Syro-Malabar faithful who suffer due to the *brokenness in marriage and family relationships*, the Assembly suggested all priests, religious and pastoral workers to accompany the wounded ones among us with compassion and help them to resume joyful family life. (iv) The Assembly observed that we need to grow in respect for *equal dignity of men and women* without, however, reducing complementarity between male and female into simple similarity or plain equality. (v) *Marriage Preparation Course* offered now to young men and women has been observed to be in need of revision and refinement. The marriage preparation of the youngsters should have various stages, starting with programmes offered to teenagers. The Assembly concluded that the overall aim of such courses is formation of family. (vi) The Assembly declared that the Church is compassionate, as God always is, to the weak and the wounded in marital love and familial or personal life, and therefore asked everyone to learn the virtue of accompaniment in mercy in the school of Jesus in the Gospel.
9. Efforts shall be taken to speed up the tribunal procedures of the marriage cases, making use also of the new provisions offered by the recent *motu proprio, Mitis et Misericors Iesus*. The Church should take concrete steps to include qualified women religious in the marriage tribunals. Family apostolate centres may introduce post-marriage courses for the ongoing formation of the families. The Church should avail the services of apostolic couples to accompany families.
10. The Assembly noticed that a set of addictions makes family life difficult and fragile in different degrees depending on what each addiction destroys in family life. The Assembly trusts that addictions can be overcome through psychological and spiritual treatments and accompaniment. Some of the addictions that require urgent attention of all involved in pastoral ministry: addiction to smoking, alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, social networks, TV serials, etc.

## **Mission of the Migrants**

11. It is God's plan to diffuse his 'Chosen People' into all nations so that his reign reaches the ends of the earth. The Assembly gladly notes that the Syro-Malabar Church has grown to a global Church through its vital presence in most of the continents of the world, mainly thanks to the migration in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Realizing that God has a special call to our Church, the Syro-Malabar Church is to work hard in the vineyard of the Lord, for the good of the generations to come which will in turn enrich the Universal Church.
12. By initiating and ensuring pastoral care for all, we need to seriously respond to the divine command of searching for the lost. The Syro-Malabar migrants, wherever they live, are integral part of the Syro-Malabar Church. Recognizing them as own children and accompanying them wherever they go, our Church is to assist the migrants with a pro-migrant mind. We should boldly strive for materializing the provisions for pastoral care envisaged by the Holy See. The Assembly believes that migrants are ordained by the mission command of Jesus to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
13. Syro-Malabar migrants are deeply rooted in wherever they find themselves. The migrants try hard to transmit the faith to the next generation through good family relations, their value system, family traditions and prayers, cultural and ritual practices. However, the Assembly also realizes that many among the youth and the young couples have to develop a sense of belongingness to the Syro-Malabar identity.
14. To face the complexities of migration, simple pastoral care solutions are not enough. In order to transform the migrants as living Christians and matured missionaries, strong organizational set up such as a stable Global Office cum Research Centre, a Migrant Theological Forum, a Global Wing for the Catechetical Department, etc, are to be created. A five-year plan is to be initiated to implement effectively the issues raised by the *Lineamenta* and the *Instrumentum Laboris*.
15. Ecclesial identity is the uniqueness of any Syro-Malabar faithful. Our Church should preserve the essential elements of its rite which includes liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline. The Synod of Bishops has to authentically speak about the 'essentials and the accidentals' of our ecclesial identity, especially about the essentials to be followed globally, which, the Assembly thinks, is inevitable for fostering unity in our Church. The preservation of the

ecclesial identity is to be distinguished from its cultural identity while the former stands for the essentials of one's Christian faith, the latter for the expressions of day-to-day life. Living the Syro-Malabar identity, though one in faith and practices but different in languages and cultures, the migrants become torch-bearers of Christian faith, forerunners of charity and pioneers of unity wherever they live. The migration is not merely for the material well-being or transmission of faith across generations, but more for witnessing and proclaiming Jesus to all people to the ends of the earth.

## **Conclusion**

16. Many other concrete proposals related to the triple-themes of the Assembly as well as a number of solid suggestions concerning the general life of the Church and the society have come up in the sessions, which this Assembly forwards as *Recommendations* to the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church for favourable and time-bound implementation.

17. We raise our hearts and minds to praise and thank God our Father who graciously sent His Holy Spirit to guide us through the sessions of the Assembly and rekindled our faith in Christ, hope in His promises and love for everyone. We pray that He continues to help us to grow in Christ-like simplicity, experience the joy that God has hidden in the love in the family and take up our ecclesial mission into the places of migration. We confidently invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Thomas, our Father in Faith, St. Alphonsa, St. Kuriakose Chavara, St. Euphresia, Blessed Kunjachan and Blessed Mariam Thresia of Syro-Malabar Church for the effective implementation of the proposals of this Assembly. May God who began his good work among us may bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ (cf Phil 1:6) Amen.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **SIMPLICITY IN LIFE**

#### **Recommendations for Action at the Major Archiepiscopal Level**

1. In connection with pastoral visit, bishops shall avoid all publicity measures, except the information given by the parish priest to the parish community. Arrange it as a family celebration of the parish with bishop, the father of the

parish community. Bishops shall reach the parish on the eve of the pastoral visit as far as possible and have evening meals with the parish priest and stay overnight with him. He visits the sick and the old in the parish, besides interacting with the parishioners at various levels.

2. Celebrations in connection with ordination, birthdays, feast days and jubilee of bishops, priests and the consecrated could be moderate focusing on the community entrusted to him/her. Avoid frequent tours and excessive spending on material possessions.
3. When the bishop comes for various functions in parishes and institutions, avoid reception from the parish boundary or from the church gate, and flexes and arches along the road.
4. Bishops shall opt for vehicle sharing whenever possible. Priests and lay persons too are invited to do the same.

#### **Recommendations to Parishes, Priests, Men and Women in Consecrated Life**

5. The following guidelines regarding feasts and celebrations may be observed: (a) Avoid parish celebrations sponsored by a single individual. Instead, under the guidance of the parish priest and the parish council, either every family in the parish contributes to the parish feast (e.g. their wage of one day) or a number of people together as a group voluntarily contributes to the parish feast. (b) Avoid flexes and arches in connection with celebrations. (c) Avoid inconvenience and disturbance to the public, especially road blocks and sound pollution. Stop using loud speakers at night in the house of the deceased. Consider revising the way a parish conducts processions in connection with feasts and Good Friday to avoid inconveniences to the public. (d) Let the parish conduct no firework in connection with feasts and other celebrations. There shall not be any more *vedivazhipadu* as special devotion in churches.
6. A significant percentage of the total expenditure of parish feasts and other celebrations need to be spent for works of charity.
7. Parish priests may consider finding more time to interact informally with the people, especially after celebrating Holy Qurbana on Sundays. Instead of being overburdened by too many meetings and programmes, it is suggested that the parish priests be increasingly available to animate and guide families.

8. Avoid overly bureaucratic procedures in the parish. Keep the office door open and available to the people. Avoid distracting engagements and excessive preoccupations with social media. Priests are to accompany families through their distressful moments, such as the moments of mental struggles, times saddened by serious diseases, death, particularly unfortunate events of suicide, and the funeral service of the dear and near ones.
9. The pastoral leadership is to be open to creative criticisms and suggestions from the laity. Welcome everyone with open heart, without any discrimination - old and new generations, sinners and the just, regular church-attendees and marginalized, etc. Approach the troublesome people in the parish with an attitude of understanding, acceptance and forgiveness.
10. Introduce the practice of pastoral planning and regular evaluation together with the parish council and the consecrated in connection with every pastoral activity. Create awareness in all, especially lay leaders, on the mind of the Church regarding celebrations and constructions. Pastoral ministry needs to focus on building up the community, rather than on construction. Avoid competition in the construction of buildings like churches, schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. Keep the expenses at a medium level, most necessary for the services offered to all and restrain spending money on making the buildings luxurious and ostentatious. Strictly follow a master plan, approved by the Eparchy and prepared in advance taking into account the requirements to achieve the purpose of the building and also the poor and the needy around us.
11. Encourage the consecrated women and men to revivify and strengthen their charism by being faithful to prayer life, especially Holy Qurbana and liturgy of the hours. Institutions run by the consecrated people are to reflect their charisms. The houses and institutions of the consecrated people are to be centres of pastoral activities in collaboration with the parish priest and under the guidance of the bishop without, however, disturbing the serenity of their community life.
12. Parishes and houses of consecrated women and men are encouraged to give priority to new forms of pastoral ministry that help empowering the last, the least and the lost in the society such as prison ministry, organ donation initiatives, ministry among the mentally and physically challenged, the mentally ill, the women in distress, alcohol and drug addiction conscientization, etc..

13. Priests and the consecrated women and men are to be trained to explore ministries that offer programmes suitable to various age groups. Include leadership and public relations skills in the ongoing training programmes of priests and the consecrated women and men.
14. Cap the growth of our institutions - schools, colleges, hospitals, etc., by avoiding the world of competition that benefits only a few privileged and focusing on the empowerment of the wider masses. Special attention is to be given to improve the standard of our aided schools so that the children of the weaker sections of the society may be empowered for optimum actualization of their potentialities.
15. Simplicity demands not only sharing of our financial resources but also other resources such as knowledge, skills and experience. Create human resource banks in the parishes of retired as well as active men and women so that the parish becomes a forum where they can utilize their experiences and talents for the good of the community, especially the weaker sectors.

#### **Recommendations to Families and Individuals**

16. Do not fall in the hands of consumer culture while celebrating marriage, baptism, ordination and other sacraments in the family. Do not entrust them to event managers for the sake of extravaganza; instead, make it an experience of communion. Celebrate these events with the poor and the needy by helping them in their needs and supporting them in their disabilities.
17. In marriage and other family and church celebrations, create awareness and take measures to avoid luxury and waste, which are infringements on the rights of the poor. Dress and decorations are not to show off oneself, but to celebrate a solemn occasion meaningfully. Memorable events like marriage are to be celebrated with family relations and close friends, and not in the midst of a crowd invited for pomp and publicity. Waste no food. Avoid competition and imitation in marriage and other celebrations. Make helping the poor and empowering the marginalized a core element of any celebration.
18. Children learn most effectively from the simple and sharing life of their parents. Parents are to bring up their children by exposing them to the hard realities of life. Let them take their children to poor homes and encourage them to be Jesus' merciful hands in the society. Let the children be trained to ask questions as to

why there is inequality and respond to any unjust intervention from the part of public and private agencies, even if it is in the name of development, that curtail the empowerment of the marginalized.

19. Do not resort to unethical means to grow financially; for example, excessive interest rates for loans, depositing money in institutions that raise money unethically, giving or receiving money for permits and benefits from government and other related agencies and so on. Encourage productive investments that are oriented towards collective growth of the society at large and community in particular.
20. Every family needs to have a family budget. The mother of the family needs to have an equal role in the decision-making process of the family. Allow children to know the financial situation of the family, and train them to discipline their expectations accordingly. Discourage families to borrow money for celebrations.

### **WITNESS IN FAMILY**

#### **Recommendations for Action at the Major Archiepiscopal Level**

1. Introduce Couples' Ministry in Family Apostolate: The Church may encourage couples' ministry to couples and families. There are already some successful initiatives in some eparchies. It is good to make a study of this emerging couple-ministry in view of introducing it, if found helpful and effective.
2. Revise Marriage Preparation Course: The Marriage Preparation Course could be re-imagined. The content of the course could be updated with more case studies, sessions for the parents of the candidates, classes on the distinctive sacramental nature of Christian marriage, marriage liturgy, etc. One effective way to correct the cultural tendency to banalize Christian marriage as just one form of many legally valid forms of marriage is to insist on the use of the title "Holy Matrimony," which may be rendered either as *thiru vivaham* or *visuddha vivaham* in Malayalam. A new name that could be given to Marriage Preparation Course is Family Formation Course.
3. Make a Study of and Give Pastoral Care for Inter-Faith Families: The Church may make an objective study of the number and faith-situation of inter-

religious families in our Church. Catechesis and faith formation to children living in inter-religious and inter-denominational marriages is an urgent need.

4. Declare Some New Celebrations in the Church: Declaring the feast day of Sts. Joachim and Anna as Grandparents Day, the feast day of the Nativity of our Lady as Girls' Day, and the feast day of St. John the Baptist as Boys' Day would help everyone to remember and celebrate the gift of grandparents, girls and boys in our families.

#### **Recommendations for Action by the Major Archiepiscopal Commissions**

5. Organize Awareness Programmes: (a) Let the *Commission for Family, Laity and Life* conduct many awareness programmes and workshops for families, especially for youth and children on the theme of the Catholic vision of sexuality. Similarly, special awareness programmes could be conducted for catholic doctors and nurses in order to prevent the practice of abortion. (b) It would be helpful if the Church's *Internet Mission* offers special ministries to our people working in the IT sector. (c) The Church may prepare general guidelines for *Marriage Tribunals*, especially regarding the recently introduced brief process for nullity cases and ways to speed up all canonical procedures. An orientation programme in this connection for Bishops and the officials in the Tribunals is also recommended. (d) People living in irregular unions and broken families have so many doubts about their state of grace, which entails an open discussion on problems in marriage. It would be helpful if the Church can tell clearly who can receive communion and who cannot, which at the moment is left to the personal discretion of the parish priest. *The Commission for Clergy* could address this problem.

#### **Recommendations for Action at the Eparchial Level**

6. Give Age-Group Based Formation: Each eparchy may give special attention to the formation of girls and boys and the empowerment of youth. Girls need to be informed of the traps (such as differently motivated love-affairs, sex rackets, etc) awaiting them in the contemporary world, especially when they go for

studies and work in big cities far away from their home. Generally speaking, girls are highly qualified and well-placed. Each eparchy needs to take special care to empower boys. Youth in each eparchy can be empowered through Bishop-Youth dialogue on various concerns, and youth catechesis as well as other sessions on various topics (for instance, personality development, job opportunities in Government sectors, PSC training, etc) offered to them.

7. Open Help-Desks: Quite many of our youngsters are unaware of job opportunities in the Government sectors. Make arrangements at the eparchial level to gather information in this regard and pass it on to youth through career news-bulletins or social media. Open help-desks in eparchies and parishes to help families to know governmental projects, subsidies, helps, etc.
8. Take Care of Widows: Each eparchy may open special centers and visualize programmes for organizing and protecting widows. They need assistance and support in regard to their pension related issues, claiming governmental aids, education of children, and, in some cases, possibility of second marriage.
9. Offer Financial Assistance to Large Families: Each eparchy may explore ways and means to give financial assistance to the third and the fourth child in the family. 50% concession to the third child and 100% concession to the fourth child in Catholic schools and hospitals would be a great help for parents. Eparchial Social Service Centers, either individually or jointly across neighbouring eparchies, may offer social security, especially, medical insurance to families.
10. Use Retreat Centers and Spiritual Movements for Formation: The Church is blessed with a number of retreat centers and various movements. Traditional spiritual methods may not be equally appealing to all children, youth, couples, widows/widowers, and grandparents. Eparchies may promote age-based, group-based and need-based retreats and seminars. For instance, prayer methods of movements like Jesus Youth and special retreats for expectant couples have been found very helpful for youth and couples respectively.
11. Open More De-Addiction and Counseling Centers: Each eparchy may generously encourage people who are doing Christian ministry in de-addiction

centers and counseling centers, and establish more of this kind. Alcoholism is a serious problem among the Catholics. Our families are ruined by a set of other addictions as well. Addiction to smoking, drugs, gambling, pornography, social networks, and T.V serials are some of them which need psycho-spiritual counseling and ongoing care. Let each eparchy has a number of resource persons who can give clear awareness about the pitfalls and promises of social media, especially to new users of mobiles and internet, and help everyone, especially the children and youth, to make a controlled and guided use of mobile phones, television, computers, internet, and other social media. Couples coming with proposals for divorce may be first directed to a counseling given by faith-practicing couples.

12. Help the Landless and the Homeless: Eparchies and parishes may motivate people to offer tithes and make other contributions, which may be used for purchasing land and making homes for the landless and homeless people in our Church. Dalits among us deserve a special consideration.

### **Recommendations to Formation Centers**

13. Focus on a Family Oriented Formation: Many priests and the consecrated seem to be not sufficiently capable of accompanying families, especially those in crises, fruitfully; some of them seem to be quite uncomfortable with ministries to families. Seminaries and other religious formation centers may consider this matter seriously. Some ways to address this problem are including “Family Apostolate” as a major topic in the academic programme in all formation centers, ensuring the presence of lay people, families and especially women in priestly formation, etc.

### **Recommendations for Action at the Parish Level**

14. Foster a Spirituality of Everyday Family Life: In order to bring back the culture of family prayer in our community, let each parish, in consultation with families, fix a certain time for evening family prayer. In case, even when the entire family or one or another member is absent at the time of the family

prayer, the concept of a fixed time will remind and encourage them to pray in an appropriate manner. Encourage everyone to pause the work or whatever one is engaged in at the Angelus Bells and prayerfully recite the Angelus, which could be concluded with giving of *kaikasthuri*. Encourage everyone to greet each other with “Praise be to Jesus Christ.” Parishes shall not take over any family custom and celebrate it at the parish level, which would deprive traditional familial celebrations (for instance, the breaking of the paschal bread).

15. Arrange Pro-Life and Pro-Family Programmes: Parishes may conduct at least one pro-life seminar in every year, and many post-Marriage courses. Couples need to be conscentized about their moral and spiritual responsibility to receive the gift of life and raise children responsibly. Priests may also arrange classes conducted by Catholic doctors and psychologists for the adolescent boys and girls.
16. Offer Special Care for Youth and Children: Pastoral care of young men and women needs to be intensified in coordination with their parents. Parish priests may encourage families to give equal educational opportunity to both girls and boys; and encourage the social custom of girls visiting the house of the boy whom she might marry. It is good that each parish maintains a register of youngsters leaving the parish for higher studies and jobs. They need to be followed up in their new destination, and helped to get connected with the Syro-Malabar community in their new place of residence. During their house-visits priests and the consecrated may take note to talk with children; often they talk with parents only. Children need to be involved in the works of charity in the parishes.
17. Create a Special Cell for Pastoral Accompaniment in Parishes: Parish priests can take initiative to form a special cell in their parishes consisting of the parish priest and, at least, one consecrated woman and one couple, which may visit families in difficulty and offer help. This can also function as a cell for conflict resolution in and among families in the parish.

18. Open Day-Homes in Parishes: It is good to create more common spaces for the elderly people to come together and spend their free time happily and fruitfully. Day-homes are to be encouraged in parishes for this purpose.

### **Recommendations to Families**

19. Insist on the Practice of Daily Family Prayer: Due to various reasons family prayer is either disappearing or becoming a mechanical routine act. Encourage women at home to gather everyone at the evening family prayer. Let each day the parents gently inquire whether their children prayed or not during the day. Parents may resume the practice of blessing their children laying hands on their head. Families seem to lose trust in God, and so they need to grow in the experience of God's providence. This can be achieved by cultivating a habit of prayer before and after each meal, work, travel, etc. Also, the Eastern practice of Jesus Prayer – *Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Have Mercy on me a Sinner* - will bring in the grace of continuous prayer in all the faithful.
20. Find Family Time to Share the Joy of Being Together: Parents need to spend a good amount of time with their children and talk to them. One of the best times when parents and children can talk is the time after the family prayer in the evening. Parents need to take children out occasionally for a picnic and pilgrimages. Encourage more communication and conversation in families; cooking together and eating together are two practical ways to that effect. Think of family get-togethers in which grandparents get a prominent place. It will be good if families set a time table for children to watch TV and play computer games and so on.

## **MISSION OF THE SY RO-MALABAR MIGRANTS**

### **Recommendations for Action at the Major Archiepiscopal Level**

1. Celebrate liturgy and sacraments in uniform way in accordance with the Synodal directions in all the migrant places. The Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church may state authentically about the 'essentials and the accidentals' of our ecclesial identity, especially about the essentials to be

followed globally in order to develop and foster a common Syro-Malabar Ecclesial identity.

2. Establish a stable Global Office cum Research Centre, a Migrant Theological Forum and a Global Wing for the Catechetical Department in order to cater to the exigencies of the Global Syro-Malabar Church and to transform the migrants as living Christians and matured missionaries. In preparation of the 1950 Death Anniversary of St. Thomas, declare a five-year programme (2017-2022) for the mission of the migrants to implement effectively the issues raised by the *Lineamenta* and the *Instrumentum Laboris*.
3. Declare world-wide Syro-Malabar missions for the migrants covering all the faithful especially in Africa, Central and South America, Middle East and other parts of Asia, etc. Appoint coordinators for all the Syro-Malabar missions from the Priests, Permanent Deacons, the Consecrated or Laity; if needed also Episcopal leaders using the provisions of the law (CCEO cc. 87, 148).
4. Take steps to make separate eparchies in Gulf, Chennai and the Rest of India as early as possible. Affiliate SMCA in Gulf to Catholic Congress and recognize it as the approved lay organization of the Syro-Malabar Church. Set up a centre at Myaplore to help the pilgrims of our Church.
5. Open up Knanaya pastoral care opportunity for the Knanaya community wherever there is sizable number of faithful.

#### **Recommendations for Action by the Major Archiepiscopal Commissions**

6. Bring out books on family prayers, family liturgy and family traditions in local languages, with cultural adaptations. All these efforts help the Church to get inculturated into the land. Make available from the curia, books, both soft and hard copies, on the Sacraments and Sacramentals and other official prayers in English and local languages. In order to unite the migrants and to create a sense of belongingness among the migrants, publish a solid multilingual news magazine.

7. Shape new model of catechism in the diaspora where the traditional method may not be suitable. In such places, let the parents be responsible for teaching the catechism to their children using approved text books and let the Church conduct catechism examinations and issue certificates for these children. Organize Syro-Malabar International Migrant Youth Conference as early as possible. Convene a special conference of the mission eparchies and migrant mission centres to discuss their specific problems.
8. Start pilgrimage to seven Churches founded by St. Thomas and other famous pilgrim centres. Encourage our faithful to visit them at least once in their life time. Unify the works of Charity carried out under the initiative of the global migrants. Support the migrant communities to register as legal entities, to raise funds, to purchase lands, construct churches etc.
9. Design mobile applications in order to locate Syro-Malabar communities in their new place of living. Revise the common Migrant Directory. Collect a data bank of migrants to help them to register in the migrated parish. Create properly laid out website, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and other internet and smart phone opportunities to nurture effective bond and better communications.

**Recommendations for Action by Archieparchies, Eparchies, Mission Eparchies, Migrant Eparchies, Migrant Missions**

10. Introduce the method of adoption/partnership urgently for globalizing our Church by financially sound institutions, parishes, foranes, missions and eparchies. Strengthen the Association of the Supporters of the Syro-Malabar Mission (ASSM) in order to support the needy. Select zealous missionaries and train them to handle the languages and the issues of the migrants. Give opportunities to the missionary-spirited priests to serve in the migrant places or in the missions at least for a period of time. Invite the missionaries to share their experiences in the mission field and evaluate periodically on their performance to equip them as better missionaries.

11. Foster distant and field lay missionaries including the retired hands, zealous youth and others for the migrant communities. Provide leadership training to the lay leaders in order to equip them to be part of various councils and associations. Publish official books to conduct family unit meetings in the diaspora under the guidance of the lay leaders.
12. Establish office for the migrants in each Eparchy and appoint a director to deal with the issues of the migrants especially of those migrants coming to Kerala from other Indian States. Open chaplaincies for them, however respecting their culture, language, traditions and rite.
13. Give pastoral care not only for the Syro-Malabar Migrants but also for the Latin faithful in their rite by the mission eparchies with exclusive jurisdiction. Give special care to the migrants from the mission eparchies to the migrant eparchies or migrant missions. As part of globalization and evangelization (a) Take initiative to conduct Syro-Malabar liturgy in the major seminaries and formation houses of other *sui iuris* Churches and teach oriental liturgy, canon law and ecclesiology in those institutions; (b) Be aware of their mission of being bridge builders in the society; (c) Celebrate the liturgy in local languages especially for the second and further generations; (d) Invite the Bishops and other hierarchs of the locality for festal celebrations, conventions etc. especially for preaching.

### **Recommendations for Action by Parishes and Mission Centres**

14. The Mother Church may (a) enquire if the migrants follow the Syro-Malabar Church in their migrant places; (b) insist on the free-state certificate or other letters from the Syro-Malabar priest-in-charge; (c) do not demand donations prerequisite for the administration of the sacraments in their local parishes; (d) do not force them to take a new membership in their local parishes as this demand prompts for dual membership within the same Church; (e) help the returnees with information regarding the government welfare schemes for them.

15. Establish centres for catechesis, retreat, evangelization, Bible study, inter-faith dialogue, etc. in the main cities wherever there is a significant number of faithful. Construct the churches in the migrant places in a very simple style without giving any scandal to anyone. Name the new parishes after the Saints and the Blesseds of the Syro-Malabar Church. Give special focus for archives and documentation of history in the stable migrant communities.

### **Recommendations to Families and Individuals**

16. Promote the migrant families to foster their faith through their value system, family traditions and prayers, cultural and ritual practices, daily prayers, frequent celebration of the sacraments, Sunday catechism etc. Teach the new generation the deeper significance of the traditions and rituals which their forefathers used to practice. Give chance to the youngsters to express their mind as to whether these traditions and rituals are helpful to their spiritual and ecclesial life. Teach the families and individuals about the right and duty to receive the sacraments from the Syro-Malabar Church. Make available reading materials about these topics with essential teachings of the Church.

17. Appoint youth pastors who will develop *Koinonia* among the youth (working and studying) and young families. Help them to resist the global cultural trends such as mixed marriage, disparity of cult marriage, civil and non-Catholic marriages, living together, etc. Assist them to face the challenges raising from the uncertainty about marriage, nuclear family, consumerism, blind imitation, workaholism, laxity on values, egoistic and self-centred life etc. Pastors may attend to those who away from the ecclesial life due to frequent weekend vacations with friends.

### **Recommendations to Consecrated Men and Women**

18. Avail the ministry among the migrants of those priests or consecrated originally belonging to the Syro-Malabar Church but (a) are now being ascribed to the Latin dioceses or institutes of consecrated life (b) have joined the Syro-Malabar eparchies or instituted of consecrated life but now lending

their services in Latin dioceses. Make sure before appointing them that they are persons with convictions and zeal for the ecclesial patrimony of our Church.

19. Encourage the Syro-Malabar consecrated men and women to start provinces and houses in the migrant fields. Insist to celebrate Syro-Malabar liturgy and live other ecclesial identity in their houses with some regularity, even if they are serving in the Latin dioceses.

### **Recommendations Regarding Formation and Vocation**

20. Promote good vocations from the migrant communities, which is the duty of everyone, especially the parents. Give opportunities for the candidates from the migrant places to do at least one part of their formation in the Mother Church.

## **C. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS**

1. In response to the growing intolerance across the globe, pastoral approaches of the Syro-Malabar Church need to focus on peace and harmony in the society.
2. In response to the atrocities being committed against the marginalized, the Syro-Malabar Church needs to give more emphasis on affirming the dignity of the dalits, women, children and the religious minorities. The Church may take special interest to gain the rights of the dalit Christians due to them. The Church may also organize a campaign of writing letters to the government for this cause.
3. As part of giving importance to ecological concerns, let the institutions and parishes promote 'clean campus' and 'clean parish' projects.
4. While committed to the protection of the earth and its inhabitants, measures are to be taken to improve the plight of the farmers and inhabitants in the Western Ghats and to be at their side in their grieves and anxieties. Since traditional agriculture is facing several problems and severe crisis, new types of cultivation and related industries are to be invented and implemented by agencies like INFAM under the Church leadership. Similar approach ought to be taken with regard to traditional industries.
5. The Assembly appeals to the entire Syro-Malabar Church for the unity in liturgy and uniformity in its essentials.

6. In order to reduce the gap between the Church leadership and the people of God, avoid addresses like reverend, very reverend, most reverend, etc in the Church gathering. Avoid the presence of more than one bishop in functions.
7. The entire Church and the society is urged to do whatever is possible, especially ardent prayers, for the immediate release of Fr. Tom Uzhunnalil SDB.
8. The Assembly appeals to the Holy See to elevate the Syro-Malabar Church to the status of a patriarchal Church *sui iuris*.
9. It is important to find ways and means to initiate qualitative and quantitative measures to implement the proposals of the Assembly. As part of periodic assessment, a socio-pastoral auditing of all the efforts to implement the proposals of the Assembly has to happen.
10. Whenever an unjust structure or activity occurs within the neighbourhood (e.g., unjust wages, corruption in public or semi-public institutions, socially and environmentally harmful practices like polluting water, air etc.), a parish community may get involved in resisting such practices and restoring justice.
11. Rich families are to be encouraged to adopt poor families to support them in their financial, educational and social needs. Select the children of the poor families at their young age, without patronization, and help them in their upbringing and education and thereby bring them to the mainstream.
12. Appointments in and admissions to our educational institutions are to be transparent according to the general norms and Christian values.
13. It is good to have common dress code for bride and bride-groom in wedding ceremony as the case children for baptism and solemn Holy Communion.
14. Syro-Malabar Anthem is to be sung in the entire Syro-Malabar Church on appropriate occasions.
15. Ensure that gender equality is respected and practiced in the entire Syro-Malabar Church.
16. It is encouraged to have PROs from among the lay persons in all the eparchies. Media cells and legal cells are to be established in the eparchies.
17. Encourage mission initiatives by lay persons, for instance FIAT Mission's initiative to print Bible in various languages by providing used papers to them.
18. Promote social media to propagate faith.
19. Encourage collaboration between parishes and the houses of consecrated life in the pastoral ministry. All measures are to be taken to foresee, prevent and overcome conflicts.

20. A scientific study about yoga has to be conducted and proper guidelines are to be given to the faithful.

Bp. Pauly Kannookadan, Convener .....

Bp. Sebastian Adayanthrath, Member .....

Bp. George Rajendran, Member .....

Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad

02 September 2016