



Ref. No. Priests/GR/54/2016

28 March 2016

Dear and Rev. Fathers,

Greetings in the Risen Lord and a very Happy Easter!

As I have mentioned to you, we will be taking up the themes of the forthcoming Syro-Malabar Assembly for discussion in our next Priests Conference.

So in this circular I am happy to present to you some basic information and a brief outline about the forthcoming assembly. I have presented the themes in brief and the questions for your reflection as presented in the *Lineamenta*. These you can reflect and discuss and you can come prepared for our next conference to be held on 14th April 2016.

Some basic information about the Syro-Malabar Assembly

1. What is Syro-Malabar Assembly?

Traditionally the Syro-Malabar Church had an ecclesial institution called the “*Yogam*.” Today the updated form of this *Yogam* is the Syro-Malabar Assembly. Often known as the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly of the Syro-Malabar Church, it is a canonical assembly. It is where, “in fidelity to the teachings of the Church and in obedience to the legislation given by the Roman Pontiff to the Eastern Catholic Churches,” the Syro-Malabar Church responds to the contemporary issues pertaining to the life of her children in all walks of life. It is a gathering of representatives from all sections of our Church. It is a consultative body, and it advises the Major Archbishop and the Synod on matters of major importance to the Church and its mission.

2. Why Syro-Malabar Assembly?

From time to time the Syro-Malabar Church and her members need self-reflection, self-renewal at personal, familial and institutional levels. Therefore, every five years the Major Archbishop convokes this Assembly to review the Church’s way of carrying out her mission so that she is effective in her action and be consistent with her calling to a Gospel way of life.

3. Choice of themes for the Syro-Malabar Assembly 2016

To respond to the signs of the times and the challenges that need to be addressed today, Syro-Malabar Church invites her members to suggest themes for discussion and action. For the present Assembly after much consultation among eparchies, religious institutes, migrant communities and individuals, several themes were gathered. In August 2015 the Synod of Bishops chose three of the most frequently mentioned themes among the suggested ones: 1. Simplicity of Life, 2. Witness in Family, and 3. Mission of the Migrants.

This is also the first time that the Syro-Malabar Assembly takes up to discuss more than one theme. The Assembly has also given opportunity to the faithful to sound their preoccupations and needs with regard to the life of the church and has received themes from them so that the Assembly will be fully relevant while responding to today's situations and challenges.

4. When and Where

The Syro-Malabar Assembly 2016 will be conducted from 25th to 28th of August at Sahrdaya College of Engineering and Technology, Kodakara, Thrissur District. Kodakara is 20 km south of Thrissur town and about 10 km north of Chalakudy.

5. Organization and Participants

Besides the Major Archbishop, Archbishops, Bishops, and the working committee, the participants include from every diocese the Proto-Syncellus, Syncelli, Chancellor/Vice-Chancellor, Secretary to the Archbishop/Bishop, Director for Family Apostolate, Director for Evangelization/Mission, Secretary of the Presbytery Council, Secretary of the Pastoral Council, a Coordinator from the Diocese for the Assembly and representatives from all sections our Church.

The Central Organizing Committee for this year's Assembly consists of: **Mar Pauly Kannookadan (Convener), Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath (Member), Mar George Rajendran SDB (Member),** Fr. Shaji Kochupurayil MCBS (General Secretary), and Fr. Joby Maprakavil MST (Program Coordinator).

6. What is *Lineamenta*?

Lineamenta literally means 'outline' in Latin. It is a broad outline of the topics or themes that intends to elicit observations and responses. It contains a set of questions after each theme presented so as to facilitate discussions. The responses from various levels of discussions are gathered and are integrated with the discussions of the Assembly and together they make the 'working document.'

The Response of the Church to the Challenges of Today: Simplicity in Life, Witness in Family and Mission of the Migrants

SIMPLICITY OF LIFE

Consumerism and individualism have become the cancer of our existence today. They eat us from within and destroy us. The Church today invites us to counter these philosophies and negative paradigms of human living. We need to work towards a paradigm shift. Our Christian calling is to a "Simplicity of Life." It is seen as our joyous attachment to God our creator and to whom all things belong. Virtuously it lies in the middle between extreme frugality and extravagance. It calls for simplicity in attitudes, action, styles, and structures and so on.

a. The Simple life of Jesus Christ and His teachings

The Gospel teachings and the simple life of Jesus Christ become our sources for a paradigm shift. The Incarnational event presents us the true meaning of simplicity in the self-emptying of Jesus who though in the form of God put on the nature of slave. His life on earth was

simple; so too were his teaching and examples. What he left behind for his disciples to celebrate in his memory was just ordinary bread and wine and in every Holy Qurbana we celebrate the greatness of this simplicity.

b. Simplicity in the Teachings of the Church

The Church continues the rich tradition of being poor in the light of the Gospels. She herself has brought out teachings on simplicity highlighting the practical Christian life, use of human resources, eco-spirituality and the like. At the same time the Church and her members encounter in today's world challenges to living a simple life and we need to lay out practical guidelines to achieve it.

c. Contemporary Challenges to Simplicity

Emotional and social needs of the human beings never reach a point of satisfaction. Consumerism feeds and thrives on the unsatisfying emotional and social needs. Consumerism thus becomes a great challenge to living a life of simplicity. Money seems to dominate human relationships. Simplicity requires that dominance of money is to be overthrown.

d. Practical Suggestions for a promoting a spirituality of Simplicity

Pastoral leadership that includes Bishop, priests, and seminarians have to adopt a simple lifestyle. Personal simplicity follows simplicity in dress, meals, travel and in the gadgets use. Pastoral availability especially to the marginalized and the poor is one of the important expressions of simplicity.

e. Parish and Pastoral Life

The Church is present locally in a Parish. Simplicity and spiritual development have to be the prime aims of parishes. They have to be expressed as acts of mercy to the poor. Priests must focus on pastoral ministry while reducing time and energy spent on celebrations and huge constructions. Our activities must strengthen family relationships.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you understand by Simplicity in Life? Which are the contemporary trends found in the Church and in individual life against Simplicity? What shall be our approaches to those trends?
2. Compare the teachings of the Gospel/Jesus Christ and the views of Modern Society and Individuals about a meaningful human life.
3. How does consumerism affect the individual, family and parish/religious community/society? How can we overcome the bad effects of consumerism in human life?
4. Do you think that ecclesiastical and religious institutions are barriers for the propagation of simplicity in the Church? Give your views.
5. What are the concrete steps that you propose to ensure Simplicity in the Church -pastoral leadership, religious communities, parish, family and individual life?

WITNESS IN FAMILY

The renewal of the family can be done in three key areas: first, to find effective ways and means to proclaim the gospel of family; second, we need to identify successful ways and styles of pastoral accompaniment of families and young couples; and third, to update the concept and practice of formation of Christian families.

PART I: The Gospel of Family

1. God's Plan for Family

- i. God seals the first couple with His image & likeness
- ii. The complementary nature of the unitive & procreative aspects of marriage is part of God's plan. This highlights the dignity of conjugal act

2. Family as the Domestic Church

The sweet fellowship in a Christian family is the first intense actualization of ecclesial communion. The vocation to family life is a divine invitation to holiness.

3. Family as the Basic Cell of Society

Family is a school for richer humanity. In the family, persons find themselves related to each other and this they learn to appreciate relatedness as a gift.

PART II: Challenges of the Contemporary Family

1. The Structure & Sustainability of the Family

Vast majority of Syro-Malabar faithful live Church's teaching about marriage and the family. However, there is a variety of unwholesome tendencies that some men & women seem to develop (Civil divorce, cohabitation, shrinking family-size etc.).

2. Affectivity & Emotional Maturity

Due to various personal as well as socio-cultural reasons there is loss of affectivity in contemporary Syro-Malabar families. Indiscriminate use of media by children and family members pose a great threat to family affectivity and personal maturity.

3. Social, Cultural, Economic & Ecological Challenges

Social and cultural changes in our times influence our families both in positive and negative ways. Families are to be reshaped by genuine positive socio-cultural changes. Families should take note of negative challenges like individualism and consumerism

4. Special issues

Some of the special issues that today need to be addressed are the problem of interreligious and civil (non-sacramental) marriages, shrinking size of the family, young men & women delaying or avoiding marriage, addictions of various types, and the problem of dehumanizing poverty.

PART III: Practical Ways to Enrich the Quality of Family Life Today

1. Proclaiming the Gospel of the Family

The Gospel of the Family has to be proclaimed through homilies, catechesis and other formal and informal means. Each local church has to teach the sublime theology of family with direct reference to its fundamental nature and Christian specificity as succinctly presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

2. Pro-life attitude and activities

Pastors have to exhort couples to "increase in number; do not decrease" (Jer 29:6). Church has to offer wholehearted support to pro-life and pro-family efforts to end abortion, to increase the family-size and to restore respect for life.

3. Support to overcome difficulties in raising the children

Church plays her pro-active role, first, in supporting parents to overcome the social, economic and spiritual difficulties related to their concrete parental work of raising their children, and second, in accompanying through personalized pastoral programmes and catechesis the children, adolescents and young people through their developmental stages in life

4. Family prayer

The practice of daily family prayer and reading of the Word of God are to be encouraged. However, taking into consideration the different features of urban and migrant families pastors need to assist the faithful to develop family spirituality fitting in each context.

5. Duties of children

The Church has to teach the duties of children and parents in the Christian family. Children's respect for their father and mother is required by God's commandment.

6. Duties of parents

The most important duties of Christian parents include: (i) to educate children to fulfill God's law, (ii) to provide for children's physical and spiritual needs, (iii) to create a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity and disinterested service are the rule, and so on.

7. Ecclesial vocation of family

The essence and the role of the family are to safeguard, reveal and communicate love. Families are to be trained to be prototypes of the Church-faith communicators. Family is part of God's plan for both keeping faith alive and in the current generation and passing it on to the next.

8. Accompanying Families & Young Couples

The Church should also encourage pastoral accompaniment of wounded families and young couples who begin to build up families. Periodical house visits and house blessing are two effective aspects of the ministerial spirituality

9. Family & Christian Formation

It is high time that the dioceses revised the marriage preparation course. While doing this local and global issues and trends in marriage practices and family life are to be taken into consideration. Further we need to prioritize family apostolate in the pastoral ministry. Priests and religious currently in ministry should also be given short-term advanced courses in family apostolate

10. Questions for Discussion

1. Are the families aware of the biblical and magisterial teachings on Christian family? Which are the aspects of theology of family that need to be emphasized today?
2. Is everyone in the family aware of the equal dignity of man and woman?
3. How can we address the question of shrinking of the family-size in the Syro-Malabar communities?
4. What are the major challenges of contemporary families? List them according to their seriousness and urgency.
5. Do the families have a true family-prayer experience? What are your suggestions to improve the quality of family times, especially family-prayer?

MISSION OF THE MIGRANTS

Syro-Malabar Church has grown to a global Church mainly due to the migration of the 20th and 21st centuries. Some of the Syro-Malabar faithful compelled by the scarcities in the homeland and inspired by the perceived opportunities in other countries and regions migrated from their homelands. The migrant communities have grown to the second and third generations becoming sons and daughters of that soil at the same time spreading the Good News of our Lord, in the multi-cultural-linguistic and religious contexts of the world.

1. Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Migration

Bible is a book of migration. The OT examples of migration as in the mystical call of Abraham to move, Isaac's call to leave his home, Joseph who is taken to Egypt to save Egypt from famine etc. are prototypes of the situation of migrants today. Jesus' entire life is a testimony for human mobility.

2. The Nature and Complexity of Migration

The history of humanity has been a history of migrations. The reasons for migrations: the desire for improvement of one's own life situation, an attempt for survival, quest for a new meaning and fulfilment in the transitory existence on earth, etc. Both internal and international migrants face enormous social and political problems.

3. The Syro-Malabar Migration: History and Growth

In the late 1950's, the Syro-Malabar faithful started migrating and this gathered momentum in the 1960's and peaked in the 1980's. In India, more than 2,00,000 faithful and outside India, 5,50,000 faithful (Gulf countries, Europe, United Kingdom, Singapore, Africa) need to have proper ecclesiastical circumscription.

4. The Challenges of the Syro-Malabar Migration

Migrant families that have been transplanted to a new soil, different from that of their birth, require to be specially nurtured for their growth. Church is unable to identify the migrants in cities as it lacks information, infrastructure, systems etc. Mixed marriages and disparity of cult marriages are on the increase among the Catholic migrants.

5. The Prospects of Syro-Malabar Migration

Within the span of 75 years, the Church has spread to all the continents of the world. The migration was never a pre-planned concerted effort. SM Church is now beyond the need of the pastoral care of the migrants, transcending to the exigencies of the global SM Church. The global identities are to be emphasized in all levels of the Church (cultures, languages, religious backgrounds, etc.)

6. Questions for Discussion

1. Are the migrants satisfied with the pastoral care they get from the Syro-Malabar Church? What are the ways and means to reach out to the Syro-Malabar migrant communities?
- 2, What steps can be taken to prepare the priests and other ministers engaged in the pastoral care of the migrants so that they can be made more equipped and efficient to address the needs and challenges of the migrant community?

3. How to bring about adaption, integration, inculturation and intercultural effectively among the global migrants, especially in the value system, rituals and family traditions?
4. What is the identity to be kept by the Syro-Malabar migrants? What are the essential and accidental elements the first generation migrants as well as the second and further generations are expected to live as their ecclesial identity?
5. How can the migrant communities participate meaningfully and actively in the evangelizing mission of the Church? What are the challenges? Suggest ways and means to encounter them.

Note: Along with this circular, kindly find the *Lineamenta* in Malayalam, you are expected read and come before the priest conference on 14th April 2016.

News and Events

1. Orientation Program for Priests

Orientation Programme for Priests was held at Sangamam on 14th and 15th of March. Rev. Fr. Joseph Pamplani, theologian and the secretary for the Synodal Commission for Doctrine, Rev. Fr. George Chiramelil, Judicial vicar, Archeparchial Curia, Kakkanad, Rev. Fr. Biji Koipuram, CANA, Changanassery, and Rev. Fr. Jimmy Thekkekadumathil animated the sessions on both days. The programme was very enriching both in terms of knowledge and clarification of doubts that were practical in nature. The priestly togetherness of the presbyterium was enjoyed and highlighted during moments of prayer, meals, and the *Thattukada* in the evening preceded by familial games. Thanks to Rev. Fr. Johnsilal Kuriakose for his leadership, to the deacons and brothers who were at the helm with him making the days happy and memorable. We thank our young priests who organized the games.

2. Year of Mercy adoration for 24 hours

We in our Thuckalay Diocese observed the “24 Hours for the Lord” in each of our parishes beginning in the morning of Friday 18th March and ending 19th morning. I was happy to hear from the parishes that the day was well organized and many took turns to spend their time adoring the Eucharistic Lord and to go for confessions. Let us continue to inculcate in our people the culture of Eucharistic Adoration and help them seek the abundant and freely available forgiveness and mercy of the Lord.

3. Priesthood day and Recollection for Priests and Religious

The presbyterium and the several of the women religious gathered at Sangamam on 22nd March to celebrate the Priesthood Day. The day was enriched with the recollection talk given by Rev. Fr. Mani Puthiyidam, the Vicar General of Changanassery Archdiocese. It was a day of fasting and prayer. I thank Rev. Fr. Mani for his availability and for giving us a very inspiring recollection talk.

4. Ordination to Diaconate

Bro. Vinu Joseph was ordained Deacon on 23rd March at Munchirai Parish Church. We thank God for Deacon Vinu who has decided to follow the footsteps of Jesus as his minister. Congratulations to Deacon Vinu.

5. Minor Orders and Vestition

Bro. Jebanesh Singh received his Minor Order *Hevpadyakanusa* on 21st March at the Minor Seminary. Bro. Toji Sebastian had his Vestition on the same day. Bro. Shijo will receive his *Karoyusa* on 16th April and Bro. Subin his Sub-Diaconate on 18th April. Congratulations to you all.

Forthcoming Events

1. Priestly ordinations and First Holy Qurbana

We are eagerly awaiting the gift of four new priests this year. They will be ordained on 1st and 2nd of April. Deacon Anil and Deacon Samuel will be ordained on 1st April at Killiyoor parish; and Deacon Justin and Deacon Ajin Jose on 2nd April at Mukkootukal parish. As I requested in my previous circular I request you again that as many of you as possible take part in these Ordinations. This is a very important moment in the life our Diocese and in the life of these candidates.

The new Priests will celebrate their First Holy Qurbana for our Diocese on 12th April 2016 at Sangamam. Priest conference will be held on the same day.

2. Bible Magic show

Rev. Fr. Augustine Thalodil is organizing a Bible Magic show at Padanthalumoodu parish on 24th April 2016 at 6.00pm. Rev. Fr. Michael Ousepachan of Palai diocese will be the main magician. His show will be based on Bible bringing out themes through his performance. Kindly encourage people to buy the tickets as the proceeds will be used for the construction of Manjalamoodu church.

3. Vocation Camp

The annual vocation camp will be held from 1-4 May 2016 at St. Mary's Minor Seminary. Kindly encourage suitable boys to take part in the camp. I also kindly remind you of our duty to promote vocation to the priesthood. Fr. Shoji and Fr. Abin will visit Kerala to look for suitable candidates.

4. Priests Conference and Welcoming the New Priests

On 14th April we will have our Priests Conference. It will be an apt time for us to congratulate our new priests and thank God for their calling and their gift to our Diocese and we wholeheartedly welcome them. Let us join the new priests who will celebrate mass for us on that day at 9.30 am.

5. Inter-departmental meeting

On 14th April in the afternoon at 2 o'clock Inter-departmental meeting will be held at the Bishop's House. Kindly remember to bring your Annual report with financial statement and submit it at the meeting.

6. VBS Seminar

There will be training session cum seminar for the VBS teachers at Kalluvilai on 23rd and 24th of April. Kindly arrange to send teachers as needed.

7. Catechism Exams

On 24th April the Second Semester Exams for Classes 10, 11, and 12 will be held. Kindly inform the teachers and the students.

Other Pieces of News

1. On 20th March foundation stone was laid for a new Church at Pilankalai and a collection towards the new Church was made. Pilankalaia is cared for by our CMI fathers. I thank the Regional

- superior Rev. Fr. Luka Kollamparampil CMI and the CMI fathers for their generous missionary work in our diocese.
2. Home mission in the Mankarai region ended on 21st March.
 3. The renovated Church at Mekkarai was blessed on 23rd. All the fathers and sisters from Shenkottai Mission participated. I thank Rev. Fr. Peter Kizhakeyil for animating the Missionary Community at Shenkottai and for leading the mission towards its growth.
 4. The renovated presbytery and Rosary Garden at Malaicode was blessed on 28th March. Congrats to Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumpuram for carrying out the renovation work especially the Rosary Garden for prayer and reflection.
 5. From 6th to 13th April I will be visiting North East India. From 27th April to 15th May and 17th to 21st May I will be visiting our benefactors in Europe and Qatar.
 6. On 17th April Most Rev. Peter Remigius, Bishop of Kottar will be celebrating his Golden Jubilee of Ordination. Kindly remember him in your prayers.
 7. On 3rd April will be the Episcopal ordination of Mgr. Christudas Rajappan as Auxiliary Bishop of Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum. We congratulate the Bishop-elect on his appointment and Episcopal Ordination and we assure our prayers as he takes up the new task as the Auxiliary Bishop.
 8. Very Rev. Fr. Christudas is appointed the Director of AIDACT. We congratulate him and we wish him God's blessings
 9. Rev. Fr. Sathianesan has come to the diocese to take part in the ordinations of our deacons. We welcome him to the diocese. He will return to Rome on 13th April.
 10. Rev. Fr. Josy Puthenpurackal will reach the diocese on 18th April for holidays; he will be with us for a month. As we welcome him to the diocese, we wish him a very happy stay and all the best.
 11. Rev. Fr. Dency will complete his MBA studies and will return to the diocese on 13th April. We welcome him to the diocese. Hearty congratulations to Fr. Dency on his successful completion of MBA studies.


Conclusion

The celebration of Easter is once a year. But the truth is every Sunday is Easter when we remember the Risen Lord. Every day when we look at the St. Thomas' Cross we use in our Liturgy we are inspired by the theology of Resurrection. For us the Syro-Malabar Catholics the Mar Thoma Cross is a dynamic symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The flowery arms of the Cross symbolize joy. The Holy Spirit on the top of the Cross shows that Christ was risen through the work of the Spirit.

We are now in the Easter season and we are an Easter people. But our joy as Christians is not merely seasonal. We exude that joy of having met the Risen Lord always and everywhere. We Catholics are the living flowery arms of Jesus Christ and of his redemptive work in the world. We are people anointed with the Holy Spirit. May we continue to realize though we are earthen vessels we contain the treasure of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6,7).

With my prayers and blessings,

Yours in the Risen Lord,



+George Rajendran SDB
Bishop of Thuckalay



BISHOP'S ENGAGEMENTS

April 2016

DATE	DAY	TIME	EVENTS
1	Fri	09.30am	Killiyoor: Priestly Ordination of Dn. Anil and Dn. Samuel
		03.00pm	Soosaipuram: St. Alphonsa College Annual Day
2	Sat	09.30am	Mukkootukal: Priestly Ordination of Dn. Justin and Dn. Ajin
3	Sun	12.00pm	Trivandrum: Episcopal Ordination of Mgr. Christudas >> Angamaly
4	Mon	04.30p	Angamaly: Holy Qurbana at St. George Forane Church
5	Tue	10.30am	Nithravilai: Marriage
		02.30pm	KKSSS: GB meeting
6-13			North East India Visit
14	Thu		BISHOP'S BIRTHDAY
14	Thu	09.30am	Sangamam: New Priests Holy Qurbana followed by Priests Conference and Discussion on Themes of SM Assembly; Bishop's Birthday celebrations
		02.00pm	Interdepartmental Meet
15	Fri		Thengappattinam: Helping Poor, Monfort Brothers
16	Sat	06.00pm	Anayadi: Holy Qurbana at SJSM Convent
17	Sun	10.00am	Kottar: Golden Jubilee of Bp. Peter Remigius
		12.30pm	Mecode: Charitable trust annual day
18	Mon	10.00am	Angamaly: Marriage Mass at St. George Forane church
19	Tue	11.00am	Kanjirapally: First Holy Communion Mass
20	Wed	06.00pm	Christurajapuram: Holy Qurbana at SMSM Convent
21	Thu		Bishop's House
22	Fri		Bishop's House
23	Sat		St. GEORGE - Bishop's Patron, Feast
23	Sat	05.00pm	Munchirai: Feast day Mass
24	Sun	03.15pm	Cheeramchira: Holy Qurbana at St. George Church
25	Mon		Recollection day (Personal)
26	Tue		Bishop's House
27 April - 15 May			Europe Visit

Fr. K. J. Antony SDB
Diocese Secretary