



THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE FIRST  
MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH ASSEMBLY  
TRIVANDRUM, 21-23 SEPTEMBER, 2011

**FROM EXPERIENCE TO TESTIMONY**  
THEMATIC GUIDELINES  
FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Dr. Abraham Mar Julios

(Chairman, Core-committee)

## **FOREWORD**

The Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Church, had entrusted me with the task of preparing the Lineamenta or Guidelines for the First Malankara Church Assembly, to be held in September 2011. Evangelization was selected as Theme of the Assembly.

A half-day consultation was done at Shantinilayam, Tiruvalla with a small Group of four people, consisting of Msgr. Antony Kackanatt, Sister Dr. Namita SIC, Mr. Jomi Thomas and me. The first draft of the Lineamenta was presented in Malayalam before the Episcopal Synod, in December 2010, and the Synod Fathers suggested, I should provide an English version as basic text, which could be translated also into Tamil, Kannada and Hindi. The Draft had to be reworked for theological correctness and systematic presentation.

The Key Bible verse we have selected is Isaiah 6:8 “Lord, here I am! Send me”! The Leitmotiv is “From Experience to Testimony”.

The Theme of the Assembly has to be discussed and prayed over by all the sections of the Malankara Church. The message has to be imbibed by the whole people of God and should percolate through the cross sections of the Church. The Eparchial Assemblies and the Church Assembly should motivate us to rededicate ourselves to the great cause of Announcing the Good News all over the world and winning souls for the Kingdom of God, and contributing to the growth of the Church.

I gratefully acknowledge the help of Sr. Namita in drawing up the Malayalam version, and of all those who have helped me in some way.

**Dr. Abraham Mar Julios**  
General Convener, Malankara Church Assembly.

## **INTRODUCTION**

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all what I have commanded you” (Mt 28: 19-20), is the universal mission command of Jesus addressed not only to all the Apostles and their successors, but also to all the faithful who received Baptism and Confirmation.

The Malankara Catholic Church had been very successful in fulfilling the Mission Command of Jesus in the past: it has brought over 400, 000 Faithful through reunions of groups and individuals into the Catholic fold, and about 100,000 people are converted from other religions. Through the concerted efforts of the Hierarchy, Priests, Religious and the Laity, the Church has spread into all the continents, especially through the migrations to the West. In addition to the General Education the Malankara Church attached great importance to the Technical, Medical and Paramedical Education, so that its sons and daughters could find jobs in every continent. This has contributed to the material well-being of our people, but unfortunately the missionary growth of the Church has become stunt, on account of the growing secularization and want of sufficient motivation in all sections of the Church.

### **Goal of the Assembly**

The Ecclesial Assembly is an attempt to give new impetus to the mission-awareness of the Church and raise the level of motivation in the five-year period till the next Assembly. The mission awareness should percolate through all the layers of the Church life, Parishes, Religious Congregations, Educational Institutions, MCCL, MCYM, MCA, Mathruvedi, Pithruvedi, and all the other Pious Associations. It should strengthen the Basic Christian Communities in faith, rekindle the missionary zeal. The theme should loom large in our faith formation (Catechesis), priestly and religious formation programs.

The Ecclesial Assembly should address the need of individual reunions (versus certain forms of ecumenism which discourages reunion) and the urgency to preach the Gospel to the Non-Christians, in spite of the menace from religious fundamentalists. The Assembly should send out a message to the whole Malankara Catholic Church, remembering the exhortation of Apostle Paul: “Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord” (Rom 12:11).

### **Theme of the Assembly**

The Holy Episcopal Synod, after having heard the opinions of the various sections of the Ecclesial community, decided to choose “Evangelization” as the theme of the First Major Archieparchial Assembly, to be held at Trivandrum, 21-23 Sept. 2011. But this theme has to be discussed from Parish Level to District Level and finally to Eparchial Level. The theme has to be discussed also in the assemblies of all the Religious Congregations under the jurisdiction of the Church. The Ecclesial Assembly will be considering only the outcome of the Eparchial Assemblies and the Assemblies of the Religious.

### **Our Methodology**

Jesus adopted a mission strategy reflected in the following verses: “salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4: 22). “I am sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” Mt 15:24), “Go nowhere among the gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10: 6) These commissions can be considered the first phase of the universal commission, which was

to follow: “And the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations” (Mt 24:14) The preaching of the Gospel had to start from Jewish experience of the Salvation, and then it has to be proclaimed to all other nations. Through the death of Jesus on the Cross, the old covenant “was set aside nailing it to the Cross” (Col. 2:14). The distinction between the Jews and Gentiles was destroyed. So a new, world-wide covenant was established, under which a new commission was issued: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt 28:19-20). Jesus before his ascension into heaven said: “You receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1: 8).

As we will follow the three steps traced out by Jesus:

1. **Start from Jerusalem** = (Your own Church) Begin with your experience of faith, Word of God and Sacraments, the liturgical experience of the Risen Lord through the “Crown of the Year”, the fasts and feasts. The experience of the Lord in the community of Believers: your parish, religious community, prayer group, etc. – We feel the need for “Evangelization of the Evangelized” or re-evangelization of the Church.
2. **Go through Samaria** = (Separated Brethren) Samaritans were originally Jews, but during the period of the Assyrian Exile, those who remained in Samaria entered into marriage with the Non-Jews and the purity of Jewish blood was lost. They accepted only the Torah (The Books of Moses) and the Prophets; they rejected the all the historical books (Ketubim) and rejected Psalms, poetic and metaphorical works. Jews and Samaritans seldom mixed socially. Jews considered Samaritans better than gentiles, but inferior to Jews. They worshipped on Mount Gerizim instead of Jerusalem. But Jesus praised them on different occasions: (Lk 10:30-37; Lk 17: 12-19; Jn 4: 7-26), and showed mercy to the Samaritan village which rejected him (Lk 9: 51-56)
3. **Reach to the ends of the earth = Mission to the Gentiles (Non-Believers)** From the very beginning of the Church, there was hardly any doubt on the mind of the Apostles, that the Gospel was “Good News for the whole world” (Lk 2:10). The magi were pagans. Jesus worked miracles for the gentiles.

Peter after his vision from heaven (Acts 10) declares: “God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (v. 28) and “ I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him (vv. 34-35). “And the believers from the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles” (v. 44)

Regarding the mission to the Gentiles, we can find the most important declaration in the Apostolic period, in Acts 13:46 “And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles”.

## CHAPTER 1

# THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF EVANGELIZATION

In the last 5 decades subsequent to the II Vatican Decree “*Missio ad Gentes*”, there appeared several groundbreaking Encyclicals of Popes like the *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio*, *Ut Unum Sint* and Apostolic Exhortations like, *Christifideles Laici*, and *Dominus Jesus*. We have also taken inspiration from the Indian Mission Congress held under the name “*Prabhu Yesu Mahotsava*” in Mumbai (2009)

The Popes have been trying to address some basic questions raised from all over the world regarding relevance of the evangelizing mission in the present world. Today there are so many theologians who ask: Is missionary work among non-Christians still relevant? Has it not been replaced by inter-religious dialogue? Is not human development an adequate goal of the Church’s mission? Does not respect for conscience and for freedom exclude all efforts at conversion? Is it not possible to attain salvation in any religion? Why then should there be missionary activity?

“In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man’s conscience? To what extent and in what way is that evangelical force capable of really transforming the people of this century? What methods should be followed in order that the power of the Gospel may have its effect?” (*Evangelium Nuntiandi*, 4)

### SOME THEOLOGICAL INPUTS FROM *REDEMPTORIS MISSIO*

The duty of evangelization starts from the basic tenet of our faith, the *Credo*: “I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father.... For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”<sup>5</sup>

#### 1. “No one comes to the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6)

5. In reply to the Jewish religious authorities who question the apostles about the healing of the lame man, Peter says: “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.... And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10, 12). This statement, which was made to the Sanhedrin, has a universal value, since for all people-Jews and Gentiles alike - salvation can only come from Jesus Christ.

#### 2. The universality of salvation:

Paul writes: “Although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth - as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’ - yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:5-6). One God and one Lord are asserted by way of contrast to the multitude of “gods” and “lords” commonly accepted. Paul reacts against the polytheism of the religious environment of his time and emphasizes what is characteristic of the Christian faith: belief in one God and in one Lord sent by God.

### **3. Revelation becomes definitive in Jesus Christ**

In the Gospel of St. John, this salvific universality of Christ embraces all the aspects of his mission of grace, truth and revelation: the Word is “the true light that enlightens every man” (Jn 1:9). And again, “no one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (Jn 1:18; cf. Mt 11:27). God’s revelation becomes definitive and complete through his only-begotten Son: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world” (Heb 1:1-2; cf. Jn 14:6). In this definitive Word of his revelation, God has made himself known in the fullest possible way. He has revealed to mankind who he is. This definitive self-revelation of God is the fundamental reason why the Church is missionary by her very nature. She cannot do other than proclaim the Gospel, that is, the fullness of the truth which God has enabled us to know about himself.

### **4. Christ is the one mediator between God and mankind:**

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tm 2:5-7; cf. Heb 4:14-16). No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit.

### **5. We need not expect any Messiah other than Jesus of Nazareth:**

In Christ “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 2:9) and “from his fullness have we all received” (Jn 1:16). The “only Son, who is the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18) is “the beloved Son, in whom we have redemption.... For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross” (Col 1:13-14, 19-20). It is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance, whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history’s center and goal:<sup>2</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev 22:13) ...God’s plan is “to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10).

## **TRINITARIAN STRUCTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSION**

The Trinitarian structure comes out wonderfully well in John 20: 21-23: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit...”

### **a) Father: The Source of Mission**

The origin of Christian mission is the Father. The salvific will of the Father is expressed in Jn 3:16 “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but so that the whole world might be saved through him”. The Son and the Holy Spirit can be considered as the two hands of the Father extended to the world.

## **b) Mission is Christ-centered**

Jesus is the Apostle is one sent to this world (Heb 3:1). He was always led by the awareness that he had to inevitably preach the Gospel. “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4: 43).

Christ set out for his public ministry after having prepared himself for the long thirty years, and on his maiden speech at the Synagogue of Nazareth he declared his mission policy: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim the release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4: 18-19). Going from town to town, preaching to the poorest—and frequently the most receptive—the joyful news of the fulfillment of the promises and of the Covenant offered by God is the mission for which Jesus declares that He is sent by the Father. And all the aspects of His mystery—the Incarnation itself, His miracles, His teaching, the gathering together of the disciples, the sending out of the Twelve, the cross and the resurrection, the permanence of His presence in the midst of His own—were components of His evangelizing activity.

He made the will of God his food: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (Jn 4: 34) He completed the work of human redemption through his passion, death and resurrection and he died on the cross saying that his “mission is fulfilled” (Jn 19:30).

## **c) The Agent of the Christian Mission is the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit was present at the creation of the cosmos. Actually the history of creation is also the history of redemption. Creation of the cosmos was the preparation for the redemption of mankind. Fulfillment of the human redemption also occurs through the spirit.

We see the spirit active in the Blessed Virgin Mary at the time of the conception of the Saviour; it is after receiving the Spirit in Baptism of Jordan that Jesus sets out on his public ministry. When Jesus promised the sending of the Spirit, he said: “...the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you” (Jn 14: 26). The activity of the Spirit is to witness Christ in all the spheres of life of the Church. Jesus warned the disciples of future persecutions, and assured of Spirit’s presence in their lives: “When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Mt 10: 19-20). On the day of Pentecost, the “Breeze of God” (I Kings 19: 12) has become a “Tempest” (Acts 2: 2) and worked wonders and signs in confirmation of the Spirit’s presence. The ‘fiery’ speech of Peter after Pentecost converted 3000 men. The Spirit of God, who has been working hand in hand with the Apostles and early Missionaries of the Church, is still active in the Church with his manifold gifts, offices and ministries. The Spirit will go working as an extended “hand of God” (Mk 16: 20) till the end of the world, when Christ’s Kingdom will be definitively handed over to his Father. Till that time the “Spirit and Bride (Church)” will continue to say Maranatha (Our Lord is coming)!

## CHAPTER 2

# DUTY OF THE CHURCH FOR EVANGELIZATION

The Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve. She is the normal, desired, most immediate and most visible fruit of this activity: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations.”[37] Now, “they accepted what he said and were baptized. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.... Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.”[38] - Having been born consequently out of being sent, the Church in her turn is sent by Jesus. The Church remains in the world when the Lord of glory returns to the Father. She remains as a sign - simultaneously obscure and luminous - of a new presence of Jesus, of His departure and of His permanent presence. She prolongs and continues Him. And it is above all His mission and His condition of being an evangelizer that she is called upon to continue [39].

The presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit, either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people’s salvation.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says, “Evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (EN 14). In the same encyclical the Pope again reminds us, “Evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply an ecclesial act” (EN 60). These statements show how intimately evangelization is related to the Church (For this part we depend on M. Vellanickal, “The evangelizing mission of the Syro-Malabar Church”, May 2009)

### **1. The Threefold Ministry of the Word**

Though the ministry of the Word can be carried out in the Church in different ways as the description in Ac 2:42-47 shows, this is carried out basically in three ways, namely, receiving the Word, living the Word and celebrating the Word. The threefold apostolic ministry corresponds to these. The teaching ministry corresponds to ‘receiving the Word’. The shepherding ministry corresponds to ‘living the Word’. The sanctifying ministry corresponds to ‘celebrating the Word’.

#### **a) Receiving the Word**

The Church is the Assembly of God’s people who have received the Word (Ac 2:41), namely who have come to believe in Jesus Christ, the Word of God and profess their faith in it. The Christian community was known as the community of believers (Ac 2:44; 4:32). It was not sufficient that they received the Word once but had to continue in the Word. Hence the ministry of the Word in the Church took the form of teaching, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Ac 2:42). This apostolic teaching in the Church that sustains the Church as a community of believers takes different forms such as preaching, teaching, catechesis and theology. As part of the preaching there were also signs in Jesus’ ministry, “And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Ac 2:43).

## **b) Living the Word**

The Church is the Assembly of God's people who also live the Word that they believe and profess. This practically takes the form of fellowship. The experience of the Word of Life, and its communication result in communion and fellowship (I Jn 1:1-3). The first Christian community was the best example of it, "All who believed were together and had all things in common, and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as they had need" (Ac 2:44-45). When the Word enters in daily Christian living, that Christian life is bound to be a life of fellowship and love, which is the distinguishing mark of the disciples of Jesus (Jn 13:34-35). The shepherding ministry is the ministry of leadership and it is in view of establishing order and unity in the community. Since it is a question of practical daily life of the members of the Church, this apostolic ministry of the Word concretely takes the forms of spirituality and discipline.

## **c) Celebrating the Word**

The Church is the Assembly of God's people who celebrate the Word that they have received. The Word resounds in the Liturgy of the Church in joy and praise. Again this is exemplified in the first Christian community, "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts. 2:46-47a). After the preaching of Paul and Barnabas the response of the people is described thus: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of God" (Acts. 13:48). The sanctifying apostolic ministry is in view of building up the Christian community as a worshipping community through their celebration of the Word of God. The celebration of the Word concretely takes the form of liturgy in the Church.

## **d) Proclaiming the Word**

It is this threefold service of the Word that constitutes the essence of the Church and which enables the Church to proclaim the Word of God. The Ac 2:47b reads thus, "The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved". The Church became an evangelizing community precisely as a community which constantly received, lived and celebrated the Word which it received from the apostles. The written Word of God or the Bible has to be situated within the context of this living Word of God embodied in the Church. Preaching the message of the Bible independent and isolated from the living Word of God in the Church is an aberration of the concept of evangelization. It is the whole people of God that preserves the Word or the Gospel.

The Church as a body, receives, lives and celebrates the Word or the Truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Hence the Bible, the written Word, has to be received in the living community of faith in the Church. The Word proclaimed by the apostles, out of which the Church was born, and preserved in the Church through the threefold ministry gradually becomes the 'Divine Tradition' including the Bible, the written Word within a broader ecclesial tradition of Theology, Spirituality, Discipline and Liturgy. Hence the essential unity of the Word of God is to be admitted. This unity is recognized even by St. Paul who is the apostle set apart for the ministry of the Word. In his epistles, he depends entirely on the **Kerygma** (I Cor 15:2-7), **liturgy** (I Cor 11:23-25; 16:22; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15), **hymns** (Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20) **confessional formulas** (I Cor 12:3) and **theological terminology** (I Thes 4:1-11; I Cor 6:9-10) of the early Church.

At times, Paul speaks of handing down what he had received (I Cor 11:2, 23; 15:1-3). All these show that the Word or the Gospel Paul preached was simply the proclamation of his life in the Church. This unity of the Word of God is explicitly stated by Vatican II in its Decree on Divine Revelation, “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one Sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church” (DV, 10). The Word does not exist in the abstract, but concretely in the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary faith expressions of the Church. Therefore an authentic proclamation of the Word demands a fidelity and solidarity with the heritage handed down by the apostles as enshrined in the faith-expressions of the Church.

## **2. Liturgy and Proclamation of the Gospel**

The liturgy or the celebration of the Word is the noblest and highest self—expression of the Church (SC 41). The old maxim also has it that the “Eucharist makes the Church”. It is in the liturgy (especially the Eucharist) that the Church lives at full stretch and in its purest form. In the New Testament times the Christians identified themselves as “the

Church”, in the act of their coming together. This happened especially when they were celebrating the Eucharist and praying. The Second Vatican Council also acknowledges this pre-eminent position of the liturgy in the Church, “The Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows” (SC. 10). The Council in the same text makes it clear that all apostolic works are directed to the liturgy.

In fact, the celebration of the Word has a pre-eminence in the threefold ministry of the Word in the Church. The ministry of the Word in the Church becomes a cyclic experience of the Word or the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ centred on the celebration of it especially in the Eucharistic liturgy. Hence the liturgy (especially the Eucharist) can be rightly qualified as the best proclamation of the Word.

### **a) Proclamation of the Word of God through One’s Life**

The Calling of the Individual Christians is to be the “Salt of the Earth” (Mt 5:13) and “Light of the World” (Mt 5:14). That is why Saint Peter advised his Christians: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2: 9).

### **b) Witness as a Worshipping Community**

If Christianity was rather widespread in India before the arrival of the Portuguese, it was due to the missionary enterprises of the St. Thomas Christians. India, being a land of ancient Religions and Sages, its people has a special appreciation for mysticism, spirituality and God-experience. As we can make out from the tradition of the St. Thomas Christians, the missionary and spiritual life was pioneered by monks in the Syrian and Indian ecclesial tradition. The Syro-Malankara Church should adopt a missionary approach that is more in tune with her traditions and more appealing to the Indian mentality, namely giving a witness as a praying and worshipping community.

### **c) Witness as a Loving and Sharing Community**

Formation of our parishes as loving and sharing communities will certainly give an effective witness to our Christian faith. Are our parishes attracting people of other churches and faiths? Is the mutual unity, co-operation and mutual concern visible in all our activities?

### **d) Witness of Ashram Spirituality**

Ashram life and spirituality is characteristic of the Indian tradition. The missionary dynamism of the Church of the East was primarily due to the asceticism and monasticism cultivated in their ecclesial tradition. Hence a recapturing of the spirit of asceticism and monasticism will enable our Church to be more effectively missionary in its outreach.

Mar Ivanios founded the Order of Imitation of Christ as an Instrument for the evangelization of India. Therefore he adopted truly Indian way of life in mentality, life-style, dress and simplicity of life. But today, we have to ask ourselves, whether the maxims of the world are influencing our monastic communities?

Kurisumala Ashram founded by Francis Acharya and Bede Griffiths at Vagamon tried to marry western spirituality with Indian spirituality. A great contribution of the Kurisumala Ashram was in the translation of Penquito from Syriac to English and then popularizing it. Various attempts for inculturation of Liturgy and 'Sannyasm' are to be appreciated, although it has not come to a full fruition for various reasons.

### **e) Witness of a Culturally Integrated Community**

In the context of the cultural pluralism of India, evangelization should take the form of living one's faith and ideals in the local cultural situation. When you live your faith in conformity with your major culture, that will be a homogenous community, not a foreign element. St. Thomas Christians lived in conformity with the Indian traditions of language, food, clothing, building, ideas, ethics etc. The inculturation is the way of life of the people, not an artifact of a few theologians

### **f) Witness of a Community in Dialogue**

In the context of the religious pluralism of India, the Malankara Church, its missionaries and the ecclesial communities should be open to dialogue with Major Religions and Non-Catholic Churches of India. This demands respect for other religions and readiness to acknowledge truth in them. However this does not mean watering down one's own faith. Dialogue will help us ultimately to rediscover the authenticity of our own faith.

### **g) Witness of a Community Committed to Service**

In the context of injustice and oppression on various levels in the Indian Society, the Christian Community should take on the character of a Servant-Church, committed to the liberative mission of Christ. The educational and social involvement and activities of the Church should be characterized by truth, justice and integrity and should be authentic expression of love and service as revealed in Jesus Christ.

### **3. Promotion of Priestly and Religious Vocation**

To motivate and recruit young men and women for priestly or religious life is also a Missionary activity; because promotion and nourishment of vocation is a necessary condition for future sustenance and development of missions. Paucity of children in families and purely economic calculations about children from the part of the parents, is today a great handicap to Evangelization.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **THE NEW EVANGELIZATION**

### **1. What is the New Evangelization?**

New evangelization is a theme repeatedly proposed in the writings, exhortations and magisterial teachings of John Paul II. It is a program for all the faithful in the Church to proclaim Christ to all people. It is a call to “duc in altum” “(put out into the deep). It is a renewed effort to find new ways to re-propose the eternal truth of the Gospel where there is an “eclipse of the sense of God” created by the mighty winds of individualism and secularism. People given into this culture have lost the ‘sense of the sacred’ from their lives (For this part we depend on the article “The New Evangelizaion” by V. Vallikatt, Detroit).

Even in countries where the truth of the Gospel has shined for centuries, large number of Christians has lost the light of Gospel in the secular culture. Therefore the Church requires re-proposing the eternal truths of the Gospel in a way that is meaningful to the men and women of our age. This new way of proclaiming the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, as a response to the challenges that the contemporary world creates for the mission of the Church, is called by John Paul II, ‘A New Evangelization’.

In the darkness of secularism, there is a deep thirst for God in the hearts of every one in the form of need for truth, profound freedom and unconditional love. It is in response to this thirst for God, the Holy Father proposed the new evangelization. He believed that the moment has come to commit all the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to proclaim the mission ad Gentes. The Changes in the present day society makes evangelization all the more urgent. The deterioration of the Western civilization and the weak condition of the Church in many parts of the world where vibrant Christian communities existed in the past makes our commitment to evangelization imperative. New evangelization is not preaching a new message. The content of evangelization is always the same, and always relevant, the Gospel of salvation given in Jesus Christ. It is new in its ardour, methods and expressions. It is the responsibility of the entire people of God. It is directed to individuals and to the whole culture. It involves renewed efforts and commitment to working towards Christian unity. John Paul II also wanted to make the Christian families the centre of the new evangelization.

### **1. What are some of the main theological trends that have undermined the call to the new evangelization?**

The theological trends after the Vatican II, have raised questions in the minds of many regarding the necessity of Church and sacraments as means of salvation and has lead to extreme theological positions of undermining the uniqueness of Christ in the economy of salvation.

Danger is in “an exaggerated form of egalitarianism that puts every religion, every conviction and every moral practice on the same level, giving no higher status or authority to any particular creed or group”(Avery Cardinal Dulles SJ). Belief in Jesus Christ as the “sole and universal Savior of mankind” (Dominus Iesus, 13) has been interpreted by many theologians in a way as to include faith in any religion. Religious pluralism has been taken as a fact of human existence, giving way to replacing evangelization by inter-religious dialogue. This is far away from the teaching of the Church on inter-religious dialogue, where dialogue is one of the means of evangelization. For example, there are theologians who think that there is no need to evangelize the Jews as God has already made an ‘eternal covenant’ with their fore- fathers. This position is in total contradiction to the life and mission of Jesus Christ and the evangelizing ministry of the Church from apostolic times.

Similarly, the emphasis on ecumenical dialogue has tempted many Christians to see the Church and every Ecclesial community on the same level. Theological dialogue should seek not pragmatic compromise but agreement in the fullness of truth.

The individualistic secularity has an unhealthy impact on eschatology. There is confusion in the minds of many Christians about the ‘last things’. Heaven is often understood and interpreted as a ‘universal human right’. There are theologians and even pastors who think that hell is a medieval superstition rather than an essential component of the teaching of the Gospel. Cardinal Dulles thinks that they are doing devil’s work.

In a world where millions of children are killed in their own mothers’ wombs the attitude created by the theological thinking that “we may hope for the salvation of babies who die without baptism, even though we cannot affirm that they are saved” (International Theological Commission) reflects the spirit of the times rather than the teaching of the Church. The ‘misplaced compassion’ of pastors and theologians often do more harm than any good.

Lumen Gentium article 16 is often interpreted partially and independently from the rest of the Council teachings on salvation and the ‘possibility’ of salvation is interpreted to mean probability and presumption giving the impression that salvation can be assumed to “people who have never heard the Gospel” and the second part “through no fault of their own” is interpreted lightly and their choice of “exchanging truth for a lie” is often omitted.

## **2. What is the Message we have been entrusted to proclaim?**

The message that we have been entrusted to proclaim is the Good News of the Kingdom of God made present to mankind in the Person of Jesus Christ, through his words and deeds, especially through his death and resurrection and through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has come to this world to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. As the kernel and centre of His Good News Christ proclaimed salvation. There fore the centre of Church’s mission is to proclaim the message of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

This salvation is not only of this world. It is essentially eschatological. It is preaching of hope in the promises made by God in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. It includes preaching of God’s love for us and our love for God and the preaching of brotherly love for all men. It is also preaching of the mystery of evil and of the active search for good. It essentially includes preaching of the search for God Himself through prayer and in communion with the Church and a life of grace through the sacraments culminating in the Eucharist.

The Kingdom and salvation is offered to the human beings as grace and mercy. It demands a subjective response to the objective deeds of redemption by Jesus Christ, which means a personal appropriation of the grace of the redemptive works through conversion and faith. This great gift

of God is “liberation from every thing that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by Him, of seeing Him, and of being given over to Him”. (EN.9)

The Good News of the Kingdom is meant for all people of all times. Those who have received it and formed part of the community of salvation can and must communicate and proclaim it through the witness of their life and through the word. Thus the evangelised become the evangelizer. Evangelization includes proclamation, conversion, incorporation into the body of Christ and service.

### **3. How could the New Evangelization be implemented in parish settings**

The implementation of evangelization in parish setting should aim at a radical conversion of all the faithful leading to a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ and a renewed vigor to proclaim the Good News to all. Individuals, families and parish communities should be re evangelized in the light of the Church’s renewed commitment to evangelization, leading to a spiritual renewal and zeal for evangelization. Communities should be shaken from their present slumber of maintenance to a renewed consciousness of mission. Programs should be planned according to the situation and the challenges present in each culture.

Keeping in mind the words of John Paul II, that “in future evangelization will depend largely on the domestic Church,” special attention should be given to evangelization of the families so that the pastoral care of the families will become the focus of the new evangelization. A new evangelization of the families is a necessary prerequisite for the evangelization of the world. Catechetical Christian formation of children and young adults is a very important area demanding the attention of pastors and catechetical leaders. It is important to initiate some evangelizing activities that will attract everyone in a spirit of belongingness at parish and community level to counter the individualistic mentality that is prevalent in today’s culture, (keeping in mind that belonging is as important as believing!). All efforts should be taken to make the liturgical celebrations more meaningful to the life of the people, a fountain of spiritual nourishment.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **OUR MISSION PATH**

#### **A. Witnessing in Jerusalem and Judea – “Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father” (Acts 1: 4)**

In the following pages we are going to tread spiritually the path followed by the first Apostles as directed by the Lord in Acts 1: 8. As Jerusalem is the capital of the erstwhile Judea, we understand both of these Places as one concept.

Early Church in Jerusalem is described by the Fathers of the Church as “Sion, Mater omnium Ecclesiarum = Zion, Mother of all Churches”. The earliest members of the Antiochian Church were Jewish Christians, who fled from Jerusalem, on account of persecutions. Zion is the symbol of the Church (Heb 12: 22) Our liturgy is so much influenced by the Jewish Religion and customs. What was the role of Jerusalem in the mind of a Jew?

### **For Jews**

- Jerusalem was the “umbilicus of the earth”
- It is the Seat of God, his dwelling place on earth
- It is from Jerusalem, that God teaches and guides His people
- It is the Mount Moriah, where Abraham sacrificed his son
- It is the place, where Adam and Eve were buried
- Jerusalem Temple was the symbol of the unity and identity of the People of God

### **For Christians**

- It is where the Eucharist and Priesthood were instituted
- It is the place of the passion, death and resurrection of the son of God
- It is the place, from which Jesus ascended into heaven
- It is the place, where the Holy Spirit was showered upon the Disciples of Christ
- It is the place of the Initiation of Christian Church
- It is the place of the early Apostolic Church, as described in the first part of Acts of Apostles
- It is the place, from where all the missionary activities of the Church were commissioned.
- It is to the Jewish-Christian Community of Jerusalem, that we owe our Liturgy, religious Ethos and Spirituality

So symbolically our Church, more precisely, our parish church is our “Jerusalem”, where all the redemptive activity of Christ, pouring out of the Spirit, teaching of the Word of God are enacted, and our life and goods of life are shared in a closely-knit community of Christians. It is the place from which our Christian life is experienced and nourished, and it is the font from which our Christian mission originates.

How do we appreciate the life in the Parish? Does it serve to experience the power of the Word and of the Spirit? Does the Preaching of the Word and Celebration of the Eucharist motivate you for evangelism? Do our Pious Associations inspire our children and youth for missionary activity?

#### **a) Evangelization is an activity of the Spirit.**

‘Acts of the Apostles’ can be said as ‘Acts of the Holy Spirit’. After the first Council of Apostles in Jerusalem they decreed: “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:29). The Spirit’s activity and the activity of the Apostles go hand in hand. God attracts people to himself through the Spirit and strengthens the missionaries for courageous testimony: “When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Mt 10: 19-20).

In the Malankara Church we believe in the activity of the Spirit, not so much as individual possession, as the Spirit of Christ given to the Bride of Christ. The Word of God is inflamed by the Spirit, as well as the Sacraments are all distributors of the Spirit. For a Malankara Catholic,

his parish church is the place where he receives the renewal of the power of the Spirit, not so much in any of the much acclaimed Retreat Centres.

**b) Missionary activity is an Ecclesial Activity**

It is not an enterprise of individuals, but an ecclesial activity exercised within the Church, in communion with the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops. Paul who was a solitary in missionary activity came back to the Apostolic College. He describes: "I went up (to Jerusalem, the seat of the Apostolic College) by revelation. And I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had in run in vain" (Gal 2: 2). So Paul came into the mainstream of the Church with the approval of the Leader Team of Apostles, Peter, James and John.

**c) Missionary activity should be centered on the Eucharist**

The goal of the mission is to bring the saving fruits of redemption wrought by Christ to all the peoples. As the Eucharist is the commemoration of the Paschal Event of Christ, a Christian who can personalize the paschal mystery like Paul, "He loved me and handed over himself for me" (Gal 2: 20) can go out with missionary vigor and courage.

**d) Missionary activity should be based on the teachings of Christ and that of the Teaching Authority of the Church.**

Paul wrote to Galatians: "...there are some who trouble and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him accursed" (4: 8-9). There are so many people today, who preach the gospel of prosperity, who deny the need of suffering and cross, people who make compromises with the standards of the world, who speak pleasingly without saying the radical demands of following Christ. Paul had already warned in 2 Tim 4: 3-4):

"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths". So the sons and daughters of the Church should hold fast to teachings of the Church, which is "the pillar and bulwark of truth" (I Tim 3: 15).

**e) The inevitability of Suffering in Mission Work**

The Evangelists describe the last journey to Jerusalem as journey into the passion and death of Christ. In God's wisdom there was no other way for the world's redemption than through suffering. The Way to Calvary is also the way to glory.

Suffering was part of Paul's Calling as Missionary:

"The Lord said to him: 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name' (Acts 9: 15).

A prophet named Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'". When we heard this, we and the people there begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking

my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:11-13).

#### **f) Missionaries should have deep spirituality**

The first missionaries of the Church of Antioch were Barnabas and Saul and it is said of their mission: “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”. Then after fasting and praying they laid hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13: 2-3). Three things preceded the sending, namely prayer, fasting and imposition of hands by the apostles.

### **FROM EXPERIENCE TO TESTIMONY**

Two examples (points only) are given below to illustrate how one has to pass from the level of a divine experience to testimony. The experience of the Sacred Liturgy, the Fasts and Feasts of the Church, the prayer and charismatic experience should motivate us to be witnesses for Christ.

#### ***Example 1.***

The best example for passing from a Liturgical Experience to Missionary Witness is **Isaiah Chapter 6: 1-8.**

In the story of Isaiah, take these following elements into consideration:

- Deep Awareness of God
- Sense of Wonder, the beginning of Adoration
- The appearance of God (Theophany)
- Earthquake and Sounding of Trumpet as manifestation of God’s presence.
- Sense of Repentance and Confession
- Conversation with God
- Remission of sins coming from the Altar of the Lord
- Burning coal, the symbol of the Holy Spirit
- Awareness of being sent by God
- Launching of prophetic mission with great enthusiasm and courage.

#### ***Example 2***

##### **Saint Thomas the Apostle**

- Absence of Thomas in the Community of Disciples (the Church)
- Absence of Jesus in Thomas’ life
- That creates sense of guilt, and the stubbornness to experience the -{Risen Lord.
- Appearance of Jesus in the Disciples’ community
- Seeing the nail wounds and touching the open side of Jesus
- Thomas experiences the passion of Jesus, but his declaration “My Lord and My God” pertains to the Confession of his resurrection.

One who professed once “Let us go and die with him” (Jn 11: 16) was not with Jesus when he died.

Therefore he came to India, proclaimed Jesus for twenty years and died in testimony of his faith in the Risen Lord.

The above-mentioned two experiences happened in a liturgical assembly; and they became missionaries after this experience.

## 2. Sacraments of Baptism and Myron

We understand the identity of a Christian through the Sacraments of Baptism and Myron. It is from the sense of identity, the sense of mission originates. Please note the correspondence of identity and mission, as depicted in the texts of Sacraments of the Syro-Malankara Church (Koodasa Kramangal).

<b>IDENTITY</b>	<b>MISSION</b>
<b>Sacrament of Baptism</b>	
Illumined by the unfading Light	- Illumine others with the light of faith
Became son of God	- Give glory to the Father as his true son/ daughter
Sealed to eternal life	- Do not fear anybody except God
Became heir of the family of God	- Keep up the honor of the divine family
Name inscribed in the book of life	- Live with confidence in God who saves
Participation in the body and blood Of Jesus	- Maintain the communion with Jesus in life
Light of the only begotten Son of God is reflected on his face	- Reflect that light to all around.
Liberated from idolatry	- Give priority to God above all
Has become the Temple of God	- Maintain holiness befitting the Temple of God
Confirmed on the Foundation of Apostles	- Keep fidelity to truths of the Church
Implanted in garden of the Church	- Bear abundant fruits and thus glorify God
Liberated from the bond of sin	- Do not return to same sin and habits of sin
Liberated from the slavery of Satan	- Live with freedom of the children of God
Filled with the gifts of the H. Spirit	- Use the gifts for the edification of the Church
Has obtained the breath of life	- Maintain the image and likeness of God
Has received the garment of eternity	- Do not lose the sanctity of that garment
Entered into communion with the Mesiha (Christ)	- A branch must remain united with plant to produce fruits
Has become a soldier for Christ	- Fight for the rights of Christianity
<b>Sacrament of Myron</b>	
He is sealed with seal and mark of the Holy Spirit	- Produce in one's life the fruits of the Spirit

Filled with the Odor of Christ - Spread the good Odor of Christ to people around

**(Instructions at end of the Sacrament)**

- Do not be afraid of the devil and its forces.
- Should radiate light like a bright Star
- Should abide in the Word of Life
- Should retreat from the actions of the “Old Man” in oneself.
- Should take life as a pilgrimage to eternal life

Each sacramental gift entails an obligation or mission. What is said of Baptism and Myron could be extended also to other Sacraments. It is beyond the scope of this booklet to go into the analysis of each sacrament.

**B. Witnessing in Samaria**

As it was described earlier, the Samaritans were originally Jews, but on account of certain historical circumstances, they fell away from unity with the folk, and adopted different practices of faith. They had a mutual distrust and hostility as becomes evident from the response of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 9) and the bad experience which Jesus and disciples had when they passed through a Samaritan village (Lk 9: 54). But Jesus appreciated and praised the goodness in them.

Samaria for the Malankara Catholic Church is the Entire Community of Saint Thomas Christians, who were once united with us, but unfortunately separated from Catholic communion, not on account of their mistakes. So we do not consider them as aliens, but we are hopeful of becoming one Community again, at a time fixed by God. Till then we have to pray, and get converted and grow in the Spirit. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of unity. “For, God is not a God of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor 14: 33).

**1. Christian Unity an Essential Condition for Evangelization**

Although the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and Malankara Orthodox Syrian Churches have valid Sacraments and valid Priesthood, they essentially lack the full communion with the Successor of Peter, the Pope of Rome. He is the one divinely constituted by Christ to be the Head of the Disciples. Unless and until they come in full communion with the See of Rome, the Universal Church remains wounded, and the separate churches lack the “fullness” of the Ecclesiality which Christ intended.

Division among Christians is a scandal before the world and constitute the greatest obstacle to evangelization.

“The unity of all divided humanity is the will of God. For this reason he sent his Son, so that by dying and rising for us he might bestow on us the Spirit of love. On the eve of his sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus himself prayed to the Father for his disciples and for all those who believe in him, that they might be one, a living communion. This is the basis not only of the duty, but also of the responsibility before God and his plan, which falls to those who through Baptism become members of the Body of Christ, a Body in which the fullness of reconciliation and communion must be made present. How is it possible to remain divided, if we have been “buried” through

Baptism in the Lord's death, in the very act by which God, through the death of his Son, has broken down the walls of division? Division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature"( Ut Unum Sint, no. 6).

To work for Christian Unity is indirectly to work for the Missions. Ultimately, Ecumenism and Missions have the same goal, namely to bring scattered sheep to the one sheepfold of Christ. To be fully united with him is the basis of our salvation.

## **2. Is Reunion of Individuals against Ecumenism?**

There are some interested parties who propagate such ideas. Some churches also accuse the Malankara Church of "sheep stealing".

Nobody should allure members of other churches with material benefits or force them. But if an individual, after sufficient study and prayer, decides to leave his Church and join another Church, the freedom of his conscience is to be respected above all.

It has recently become more evident through the Apostolic Constitution "Anglicanorum Coetibus", that reunion of separated individuals and communities is not only permissible, but highly commendable, because they get the fullness of the means of eternal salvation.

"This single Church of Christ, which we profess in the Creed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic "subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside her visible confines. Since these are gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity."[Lumen Gentium, 8]

In the light of these ecclesiological principles, this Apostolic Constitution provides the general normative structure for regulating the institution and life of Personal Ordinariates for those Anglican faithful who desire to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church in a corporate manner" (Anglicanorum Coetibus, Nov. 4, 2009).

So the Reunion of separated brethren to Catholic Church is not against the Principles of Ecumenism, but highlights the need of full communion with the Successor of Peter for the fullness of their respective churches and therefore their own salvation. To unite scattered children of God and to seek the lost is a condition sine qua non of our own salvation:

"Those who are incorporated in the Catholic Church ought to sense their privilege and for that very reason their greater obligation of bearing witness to the faith and to the Christian life as a service to their brothers and sisters and as a fitting response to God. They should be ever mindful that "they owe their distinguished status not to their merits but to Christ's special grace"; and **if they fail to respond to this grace in thought, word and deed, not only will they not be saved, they will be judged more severely"** (Lumen Gentium, 14)

## **C. WITNESSING TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**

### **(Preaching to the Non-Christians)**

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that wherever the Apostles went, they searched for a Jewish Synagogue, so that they could preach Christ as fulfillment of the prophecies in the

Scriptures. But it was Jews who opposed and persecuted them most. So the Apostles took a different turn, as we read in Acts 13: 46: “Then Paul and Barnabas boldly declared: ‘We had to speak God’s word to you first, but since you reject it and consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are now going to turn to the gentiles’ “.

From that time onwards we notice the focus of the Apostles’ activity turning towards the gentiles, although it did not mean a rupture from the Jewish community. It was the earnest desire of Paul to preach Christ to the farthest corners of the earth. He wanted every human person on the planet earth should believe in Jesus and be saved through his blood. This desire became a passion, for which Paul lived, worked, suffered and died.

### **Evangelization to the Non-Christians, our First Priority**

Announcement of the Kingdom to those who those who never heard of it is our first priority. But in India, especially in the Northern States, Christianity is identified with the Western Colonial Powers and modern capitalists, so that people are easily prejudiced against Christianity. Christian Missionaries are accused of destroying the ancient culture of India and its value system. Christianity has taken its origin in Asia, and has to maintain its oriental character, while preaching to the non-Christians in India. So we believe that the Oriental form of worship and life is the most suited for Indian culture.

Before proceeding, we have to clarify certain positions with regard to preaching to the Non-Christians:

#### **a) What the Mission Work is not?**

As there are many misunderstandings about and allegations against Christian Missionaries, let us make it clear: -

- It is not widening of any Christian Empire
- It is not the purpose of Christian mission to dodge out or destroy other religions.
- It is not destroying the culture or ethos of any nation.
- It is not social work, although the service to the poor fits in with the mission scope

#### **b) Impediments to Mission**

##### **External Forces:**

- Political Power
- Atheistic Movements
- Fundamentalism
- Secularization
- Anti-Conversion Bill
- Consumerism
- Poverty & Ignorance
- Casteism

### **Internal Forces:**

- Ignorance about one's personal responsibility of evangelization
- No religious motivation from the Church
- Inertia coming from Laxity
- Self-Complacency of Christians with their religious duties.
- Compromise with the world and shame to testify Jesus
- General thinking that it is not duty of the laity, but of Priests and Religious
- Lack of concern for the eternal salvation of other people
- The Mass Media belonging to the Church are not sufficiently utilized for evangelization.

### **c) Why should we evangelize?**

The inevitability of evangelization is expressed by St. Paul with the following words: "Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel" (I Cor 9:16). Our obligation to preach the Gospel may be summarized under the following points:

#### **1. The Saving Plan of God.**

"This is good and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle..." (I Tim 2: 4-7). It is absolutely necessary to know the plan of God about our lives, in order to be saved.

Evangelization is not optional but a 'must'. As St. Peter says: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Pet 2:9)

#### **2. Those who have "heard, seen, observed and touched" (I Jn 1:1) should testify.**

St. Peter said to the Rulers and High Priests: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4: 20). The first-hand knowledge of Jesus was gained by the Apostles through their constant living together with Jesus, the personal acquaintance which they had with him, People who make a deep experience will vent out their feelings. So the wonder of experiencing the Messiah cannot be hidden.

John narrates the first missionary venture of a Samaritan woman. "So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? They went out of the city and were coming to him" (Jn 4: 28-30). In this context "Going out of the city" means leaving their pagan beliefs and conduct, and "coming to Christ" means becoming his disciples.

So also the Malankara Catholics, who experienced the joy of living in full communion with the Catholic Church, should share that joy with our non-Catholic brethren. The joy of the shepherd is in finding the lost sheep and bringing it back to the true sheepfold (Lk 15: 6) and "I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).

### **3. Communion with God and Communion with Believers is necessary condition for our eternal bliss.**

The ultimate purpose of evangelization is fellowship: “We proclaim to you the eternal life...so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete” (I Jn 1: 3)

### **4. If we do not fulfill our duty of evangelization, we will be punished**

In 2 Kings chapter 7 narrates a relevant story: During the great famine in Elisha’s period, four lepers discover large provisions of food, gold, silver and clothing in a deserted Assyrian Camp. Their first instinct is to enjoy them and hide them. Then comes the second thought: “We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news; if we are silent and wait till the morning light, punishment will overtake us; now therefore come, let us go and tell the king’s household” (v.9).

We will be punished if the fruits of the passion and death of Christ go futile in case of Millions of people on this earth.

### **5. It is the fundamental right of every human being to know and to possess Christ**

Every human child born on this planet earth, has the basic right to know the purpose of his birth and life, to possess Christ and to be possessed by him (Phil 3:12). The world community of non-Christians are telling us “We wish to see Jesus” (Jn 12: 21). They are telling like Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68). The growing number of unbelievers in the world is a shame on the present believers and an additional reason, why we should act with immediacy.

### **6. The Emergency of Evangelization**

Jesus has compared this world to a field which is ready for harvest: “Lift up your eyes and see how the fields are already white for harvest” (Jn 4:35). If we wait too long for reaping, the entire crop will go waste, and we will be punished by the Lord of the fields.

### **4. What are the Qualities of Good Missionary?**

#### **a) Interest in the life of other People**

When we read the Gospel, we come across so many instances, when we Jesus took personal interest in the life-problems of people: e.g. Andrew, Peter, James, John, people who affected with various diseases and possessed by devils, the paralytic, the Samaritan woman, etc.

#### **b) Capacity to have feeling for Other People’s Need (Empathy)**

Jesus performed the miracles of cure, mostly not on demand of the people concerned, but on his own initiative, and on the basis of the warmth of relationships which he maintained. The Marriage Feast of Cana, the friendship with the family of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, the visit in the House of Zacheus, the banquet at the house of Simon, etc.

#### **c) Capacity to intervene in the problems of People**

People feel obliged to those people who stand with them in moments of a grief, calamity or great need. Moved with tears Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus and raised him at the implicit request of his sisters. Jesus moved to pity at seeing large crowd of people without food, at the Paralytic who laid there begging for 38 years, at the pathetic condition of an old woman who was bent for 18 years, etc.

#### **d) Capacity to build bridges between People**

The Kingdom of compared to a net in which all kinds of fish are caught and a tree on which all kinds of birds perch. In the Indian context, people are segregated along the lines of caste, creed

and economic status. The duty of the Church is to unite all these people into one family, building bridges which connect their hearts and minds. Remember, how strenuous it was for the Apostles to coalesce the Jewish Christians, the Greeks and Gentiles into one Church of Christ.

**e) Missionary is one who challenges people to experience the power of the Gospel**

The power of the Gospel and vitality of the Holy Spirit should inspire, motivate and transform the lives of people, and infuse the Society with the values of the Gospel. It is not merely charitable activities that count, but also instilling of lasting values like sincerity, commitment, sense of self-sacrifice, justice and will to work in harmony and co-operation with others; all these contribute both to material and mental growth.

**f) Missionary is not always one who keeps giving**

Hearing of the Word of God and celebration of Eucharist create a Christian community. Once the community has attained certain maturity and stability, the Missionary should try to assess the internal power of the community and make it self-reliant.

**g) Missionary is one who is concerned about the poor and downtrodden in the society**

From the history of the Church we learn that it was always not the rich and powerful, but the poor in the society, who have received the Gospel with enthusiasm and transmitted its message with joy. So a Missionary should be especially considerate about the poor and weak sections of the society.

**h) A Missionary should not despise or underestimate other religions and cultures**

The seeds of God's Word are dispersed in all major religions, and a ray of the "Light which enlightens all men", Jesus Christ, is reflected in them. (NA 2). The Church does not reject anything which is truthful and holy in other religions. So it is the duty of the Church to keep and foster all the spiritual, moral and cultural values present in those religions.

**i) Testimony of Life more important than Ideology**

It is not the principles of Christianity, but the lives of people who put principles into their lives, are going to influence the minds of people. One should not give much weight to theological opinions which go on changing, but to the unchangeable values of the Gospel. The Catechumens and New Christians have to be taught on essentials of Christianity, along with witnessing of life.

**j) A Missionary should not be ashamed to proclaim that Jesus is the Savior**

There are some modern theologians who say that in our dialogue with Non-Christians we should not present Jesus as unique Savior, and he brought us a unique revelation, once for all. Paul admonished his disciple Timothy: "Do not be ashamed then of testifying to the Lord, nor of me his prisoner..." (2 Tim 1: 8)

**k) A Missionary should make use of every opportunity**

A missionary should preach whether the situation is opportune or inopportune" There is no special place or time for evangelization. One should start evangelizing his own home, and then go out to others. It can be to children, youth, colleagues, prisoners, sick people, people who have never heard of Christ. It can be during your work, during travels, during great trials and tribulations. Each one should evangelize, as the Spirit guides (Acts 8: 29-38).

### **l) A Missionary should start out from an Encounter with God.**

Think of all the great people of the Salvation History: Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, Paul, etc. They all started out at the behest of God, following a theophany. As assets they had the presence of God in their lives, the commission of God and the power of the Spirit of God.

### **m) Evangelization comparable to Eucharistic Sacrifice**

This is a peculiar vision found only in St. Paul. Note the Eucharistic language:

“...I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:15-16).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SPECIAL CALL OF THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH**

#### **1. Assets of the Malankara Catholic Church for Evangelization**

The Syro-Malankara Church, is one of the smallest individual churches in Catholic Communion, but we are one of the most vibrant churches, which made giant strides in the last eighty years in the field of Mission Work, Education, Health Care and Charitable Works. It is politically and socially active in the Society. We have to remember the Apostolic heritage of this Church, originating from Antioch the first Center of Christianity. The Petrine and Pauline heritage of Antioch is beautifully blended with the Apostolic traditions of Saint Thomas in Malankara. We have one of the most beautiful Liturgies in the world, very rich Patristic Literature, deep Spirituality and Asceticism, and a well-defined Church Law. We have educated and cultured Laity, numerous Priests and Religious Congregations. Several thousands of people have migrated to other States, Countries and Continents, which offer great opportunities for evangelization. Politically the Indian Constitution and Governments allow the practice and propagation of religion, and many poor sections of Scheduled Castes and Tribes are still looking for missionaries to make a change in their spiritual and cultural life. The great Culture of India is not in contradiction to the Gospel, but very much attuned to it, provided the Church is presented in its Oriental and Asian character. The modern facilities of travel and communications are also a plus point for evangelization. Are we aware of these assets and gifts which are showered on us by the good Lord? It is time to deliberate whether we are doing justice to our task of evangelization within and without the boundaries of our Church.

#### **2. The Right and Obligation of Malankara Church for Evangelization**

Every Individual Church has its god-given right and obligation to proclaim the Word or the Gospel that it has received and is enshrined in the faith-traditions. Evangelization is a necessity laid upon every member of the Church as St. Paul says, “If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel” (I Cor 9:16). This necessity is not only by virtue of the commission by the Lord but also

by virtue of experiencing the Word or Gospel that is embodied in the Acts of Apostles as every member of the Church proclaimed the Word according to the given opportunity (Ac 4:34; 8:4).

### **3. An anomalous Mission Situation in India**

The Second Vatican Council in its Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches states, “Individual Churches, whether of the East or of the West ... are of equal dignity so that none of them is superior to the others by reason of rite. They enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the Gospel to the whole world (Cf. Mk 16:15) under the guidance of the Roman pontiff” (OE 3). The second Vatican Council rejected the theory of those who claimed a sort of precedence of the Roman rite over the others, and the strange situation of Oriental Missionaries being forced to adopt Roman Rite to undertake missionary apostolate in some territories of India.

### **4. All Age Groups and People of all professions can be Missionaries**

**Couples** – Prisca and Aquila were the first Missionaries in Rome before Peter and Paul arrived in Rome: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks” (Rom 16: 3).

**Women** – Ordinary women from Galilee, who followed Jesus on his missionary trip, contributed their wealth for the expenses of Jesus and his Apostles and serving them: “There were also many women there looking on who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him...” (Mt 27: 55)

**Widows** – Lydia, who seems to have been a rich widow, offered hospitality to Apostles in her home: “One who heard us was a woman name Lydia, from the city of Thytira, a seller of purple goods, who opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay”. And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16: 14-16). Helping a Missionary is also mission work.

**Young people** – John the Baptist, John the Apostle, Saul of Tarsus, Stephen, Mark, Timothy and Titus, were all young people when they committed their lives for the Kingdom of God. Helping children and youth to grow with missionary awareness is a great contribution to evangelization.

**Children** – We have the story of Jewish girl, slave in the house of Na’aman, the Syrian Commander-in-Chief. Her testimony of the Lord resulted in the cure of Na’aman and his conversion to the God of Israel: “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel” (2 Kings 5: 15).

**The Sick** – Think of St. Terese of Lisieux or Saint Alphonsa, who contributed power to Missionaries from their sick bed, through their suffering and prayers.

### **5. MISSIONARY VISION OF SERVANT OF GOD ARCHBISHOP MAR IVANIOS**

The Pioneer of our Church, Metropolitan Mar Ivanios was a great visionary, who dreamt about winning India for Christ. The lethargic condition of the Syrian Orthodox church pained his heart. It was a church without any significant missionary endeavor. So he wrote and spoke inspiring words to awaken his church from slumber.

**a) On Missionary Commitment of the Malankara Community**

Archbishop Mar Ivanios, lamenting on the laxity of the erstwhile Syrian Malankara Orthodox Church in its basic duty of evangelization, wrote in Girideepam:

“The Malankara Syrian Community, which takes pride of its foundation by Apostle Thomas, and of the antiquity of about twenty centuries, has not done anything of its duties of evangelization, and it has to be considered a grave omission...So the Malankara Syrian Community will be held accountable for the disbelief and spiritual ignorance of people of the Indian Subcontinent. We will have no excuses for their retarded spiritual growth...So now we have to work with renewed energy to make up for our failures of the past”.

**b) On Missionary Duty of Parish Priests**

“There is a close relationship between the spiritual life of the members of a Church and its evangelizing activity. So also the missionary interest and earnestness of a Church depends on its faith and love of God. It is clear sign of failure in mission duties, if a Church does not feel sorry about love of God growing cold and of the power of sin increasing in the world. When a Church grows weak and there is no urge to speak of the salvation through Christ to its members and strangers, then it is evident sign of decadence of that Church. It is the duty of the pastors of souls to kindle the missionary zeal and create awareness among the members of their duties. A Church, which constantly tries to attract the Non-Christian sections and communities to Christ’s kingdom, will constantly make progress in spiritual life. A community which evangelizes out God’s love will through their missionary work grow in piety.”

“Almost all churches in the world are enthusiastic to fulfill their missionary obligations...While all others are doing their duties, why is our church so reluctant to take up this challenge? Is it because our church leaders are lazy and our people inactive? Anyway this can be remedied by the awareness that all priests are instruments in the hands of God. If our parish priests try to enliven the activity of the vivifying Spirit among the faithful, God will make such endeavor fruitful. A truly devoted priest can make his people devout. Thus there will be many people who will sacrifice their lives for the love of Christ”.

(Suriyani Suviseshakan, 1085 Medam Lakkam)

**c. Religious and Evangelization**

“Only a religious society formed out of selected people, who have adopted the service of God as the principle of their life, and those who are advanced on the path of holiness, can achieve progress for the Syrian Community and make the evangelization effective. Only one who stands on the top can pull out one who is in the pit. Preaching is not only through words and speeches, but also through virtuous deeds and charitable activities. Virtuous deeds originate only from the virtuous. A virtuous life is more important than virtuous deeds. If we want to turn the worldly people to God, we require missionaries with true devotion and love of God. Possessing God is better than Serving God” (Girideepam, p. 60)

**6. Report the Missionary Achievements of your Eparchy or Religious Congregation**

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of preparing these Guidelines was to reawaken in the Syro-Malankara Church the awareness of being an Apostolic Church with a special mandate in the Universal Church. The awareness is generated through the word of God and rekindled with the Spirit of God. Our rich Liturgy and the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Church provide constant motivation for dedicating ourselves as a church to the mission task.

Each Eparchy and Religious Congregation should adapt these Guidelines to their particular mission situation and charisma. Each of our ecclesial units should examine their conscience and ask themselves “what went wrong in our mission perspectives and orientation”. In the Parable of the Vineyard in Mathew chapter 20, the Householder asks the laborers “Why do you stand here idle all day”? (v.6). What is the reason for the lethargy in the Church/Religious Congregation?

In discussions and group prayers the Holy Spirit will remind us of the most essential duty of evangelization. Let us end this Lineamenta listening to the admonition of Saint Paul: “It is now the hour for you to wake up from sleep. For, salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11). ‘Sleep’ is a state of tepidity and negligence. There is no time to waste, when there is a call for evangelization, but we must stimulate our energies and increase our fervor. Let the Church Assembly be a ‘Wake up Call’ for the entire Malankara Catholic Church!

### **Pope Benedict XVI:**

**“There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know and to speak to others of our friendship with him”.** (Homily at the Inauguration of his Petrine Ministry, AAS 97 (2005), p. 711.

### **Some Questions for Discussions**

1. What has caused present lethargy in the Church, with regard to Mission Work?
2. Is Reunion of Non-Catholics seen and appreciated as Evangelization?
3. Has the “salt is in us become insipid”?
4. Is the fear of fundamentalists and extremist groups holding us back from our missionary task?
5. Is our Liturgy a motivating force for Mission Work? Is it adapted to the Indian Culture, and to the cultures in the countries of immigration of our faithful, in order to be efficient means of evangelization?
6. Have our Religious lost the meaning of their foundation?
7. Which were the goals in the mind of Mar Ivanios when he founded the Bethany Congregations and the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary?
8. Have the Religious become “worldly” in their orientation and life-style?
9. Is our Course of Catechism able to instill in mind of a Malankara Child the awareness of being a Missionary?
10. Have our Pious Associations a missionary Orientation?

11. Are our Diocesan Priests true shepherds going after the “lost sheep” or have they become “hired servants” who abandon the sheep at the time of trials?
12. How much of attention, time and money is spent by the Diocesan Ordinaries for developing Missions for the non-believers?
13. Do our Seminarians need a different exposure to real Mission Work? (Experience of poverty, deprivation against a comfortable life in seminary where everything is provided)
14. Are the Immigrations of Malankara Faithful to different countries motivated only by economic concerns? Or are they also utilized as God-given opportunities for evangelization, to propagate our faith and good Indian value system of Family and Social life?
15. How much of cultural adaptation is being made in our Liturgy in various countries of migration?
16. Is our church music appealing to younger generation?
17. Should our Church have a Missionary Institute, where we teach Mission theology, cultures and languages of other peoples?
18. Should we promote “lay missionaries” as in non-presbyterian Churches, who have no priests? What about the role of Permanent Deacons in the Missions?
19. What was the missionary vision of Mar Ivanios?
20. What were the missionary techniques used by great Missionaries in Malankara Church in the past?
21. Does the Malankara Church need an Evangelization?
22. Can our Families become “Domestic Churches” which foster evangelism? Do families give sufficient impulse to children and youth to offer their lives for Christ?

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**PRAYER FOR THE SUCCESS  
OF THE  
SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH ASSEMBLY**

O! Heavenly Father, we praise Your Name and thank you for calling the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, and setting it as a sign of unity and a beacon of salvation for the whole world. We, as a Church, now acknowledge that our eternal life consists “*in knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*” (Jn 17: 3). As you sent your Son, he sent his Apostles commanding them “*to make disciples of all the nations*” (Mt 28:19). We believe that the continued presence of our Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit are the foundations of the evangelisation ministry of the Church.

As Christians, baptized and anointed with the Holy Myron in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are aware that we are sent out to the farthest corners of the earth to bear testimony to the economy of salvation and to preach the Good News of redemption through Christ. Enkindle in us the fire of evangelization as in the Apostles that “*we cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4: 28).

Send your Spirit anew upon our Church as in a new Pentecost, and fill us with the missionary enthusiasm of the Fathers of our Church, the Servant of God Mar Ivanios and all the great missionaries of our Church. We beseech your blessings on the gatherings and deliberations of our Church Assembly. Let it inspire and make active all the members of our Church, scattered in all parts of this world.

O! Heavenly Father, may our Church Assembly, be for the greater glory of your Holy Name and for the growth of our Church. With the prayers of Mary, the Mother of the Church and of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India, we make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.