

St. Mary, Queen of Peace

Syro-Malankara Catholic Eparchy of the USA and Canada

Dr. Philipos Mar Stephanos

Bishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Eparchy of the USA and Canada

"THY KINGDOM COME"

Pastoral letter, Mar Stephanos. 01/2017.

Dear Rev. Fathers and Rev. Sisters and Faithful in Jesus Christ,

Cordial greetings and prayerful blessings to you all. It is with profound joy that I, as the newly installed bishop of the Eparchy of St. Mary Queen of Peace, of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in USA and Canada, write this first letter to you. By the Grace of God, based on the recommendation of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, Holy Father Pope Francis appointed me on July 27, 2017 and I was formally installed on October 28, 2017. I am grateful to the Provident God and to the Holy Mother Church, especially to the Head and Father of our Church, Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos who presided over my installation.

On this occasion, I thank the entire laity, religious, and the priests who participated in one way or other in my installation function on October 28, 2017. I also thank the pastoral council members and all other groups and individuals who took so much of sacrifice to make the installation day a memorable one. Those who travelled from near and far, inland and abroad are to be specially and gratefully remembered. May God reward all people of good will.

I consider my assignment here in US and Canada as a call and mission from God as that of the call of Abraham our Father in Faith. The Lord said to Abraham: "Get out of your country and from your kindred, and from the father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Hence, here I am in the lands of immigrants, freedom and democracy. God has placed me in a post-modern scenario and multicultural context. On this occasion I submit myself to the will of God and dedicate myself to fulfill God's plan and mission in the Church and society.

As I assume the office as the second bishop, I am overwhelmed with joy to express my sincere gratitude to all the pioneer pastors, lay leaders, and faithful whose prayers and sacrifices brought us to this stage of growth in the journey of faith in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The space constraints do not permit me to mention the names of all the people who planted and nurtured the Malankara Community in US and Canada. Nevertheless, I recall with gratitude Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios and Most Rev. Benedict Mar Gregorios of blessed memory who are remembered as great pioneer-shepherds in this part of the world. The first Apostolic Visitor, Most Rev. Isaac Mar Cleemis and his successor Most Rev. Joseph Mar Thomas are to be acknowledged with sincere appreciation.

I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my predecessor and the first Eparch of our Eparchy, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebius, for his exceptional and

dedicated episcopal leadership. His Excellency has served our Diocese with divine wisdom and genuine devotion. His contributions in organizing our ecclesial communities; in fostering coherency and integration among our laity, religious, and clergy; in creating basic facilities and infrastructures essential for the pastoral needs; in translating and making available our liturgical and catechetical texts; in establishing the new Eparchy, Cathedral, Chancery, and new parish churches; in creating basic legal foundations and by-laws; in bringing about economic stability; in promoting vocations to religious life and priesthood; and many more contributions are to be acknowledged with sincere gratitude. Besides, his personal qualities of episcopal integrity, nobility, erudition, clarity, and brevity in communications are indeed exemplary. May God reward His Excellency for his manifold services and bless him in his new ministry in the new diocese of Parassala in India.

As I assume the Episcopal Office and ministry, I wish to communicate a few important appointments, decisions, information, and proposals to you all.

1. The current Eparchial Curia members will continue to serve in our eparchy, namely; Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter Kochery, Vicar General; Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Mangalath, Chancellor and Finance Officer; Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Ayyaneth, Vicar of the Cathedral parish and Secretary to the Bishop and Rev. Fr. Jerry Mathew, Secretary to the Curia.
2. The existing Pastoral Council will continue its term of service until 2018. This decision is taken because this team has been planning and preparing for the forthcoming Malankara Convention to be held in August 2-5, 2018. For the effectiveness and smoothness of the Convention, it is better that the same Council continue to function. If needed, this Council could be empowered with new personnel.
3. It is proposed that theme of the forth-coming Convention shall be the same theme of the next Synod of Bishops to be held in Rome in October 2018: "Young people, the Faith, and Vocational discernment". You are welcome to suggest any other theme, if more relevant. But it shall be submitted to me with detailed explanations before Christmas 2017.
4. Suggestions are welcome to prepare an annual pastoral plan for our Eparchy. They should reach the Eparchial Chancery before Christmas 2017.
5. Next Pastoral Council will be conducted on Saturday, January 13, 2018 in our Chancery, New York.
6. The Rev. Directors and other office bearers of the various apostolates, commissions, departments, organizations, and movements shall continue and make active and effective their ministries.
7. I intend to make pastoral visits to all our parishes, families, and hostels or residences of the members of our parishes. Rev. Parish priests are requested to intimate your convenient dates to Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter Kochery who will coordinate my pastoral visit. The purpose of the visit is to have a direct experience of our parishes, missions, and families.
8. Sincere congratulations to the parishioners of our St. Thomas Syro-Malankara Church at New Jersey for their dedicated participation in buying a former Byzantine Catholic Church and renovating it beautifully. I was privileged to rededicate this church on November 11, 2017. Special congratulations to Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter Kochery for his marvelous leadership in this dream project.

9. Our DM Sisters are blessed with a new convent house in Yonkers and it was dedicated on November 19, 2017. Prayerful felicitations to the DM sisters.
10. I attended the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) held from 12-16th November in Baltimore. About three hundred Bishops participated. It was a special experience and the deliberations were excellent. The Conference affirmed the need to renew the country in the power of Christian message. It resolved that the Catholic church commit itself to promote a culture of life, and to campaign against racism and anti-immigration policies.
11. On this occasion, I am convinced that our Syro-Malankara Church need to awaken as individuals, families, and parishes. It is our mission to accompany our children in their faith and character formation through Malankara Catholic Children League (MCCL). Prime importance is to be given to Catechism. Our youth need to be shaped by authentic Catholic values. Malankara Catholic Youth Movement (MCYM) could be very significant forum for youth fellowship, animation, and development. Our senior adults through Malankara Catholic Association (MCA) can do wonders to empower our families. They can engage themselves in very significant social and cultural apostolate. Evangelization in the church and society should be a passion of our women and men. Our liturgical and spiritual patrimony and traditions are to be handed over to our future generations in a creative and meaningful manner. We need to engage in a holistic way in the pastoral and spiritual mission of the church in the same spirit of the early church. I solicit your fervent prayers and actions to promote vocations to priestly and religious life.
12. We are in the threshold of the Season of Advent. Let us prepare our hearts and minds to be purified and blessed by the Love of God the Father, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Let us remain united in love and prayer,

In Jesus Christ,



**Bishop Philipos Mar Stephanos,
November 23, 2017.**

Eparchial Chancery, 1500 De Paul Street, Elmont, NY 11003.

This pastoral letter is to be read in all our churches/communities on Sunday, November 26, 2017