

Report on the Exarchate Assembly

Preparatory Work

Preparation: As a preliminary step, following the decision of the Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church the following titles were created:

1. **President:** His Excellency the Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebius, Bishop of the Exarchate
2. **Convener:** Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter Kochery, Proto-Syncellus of the Exarchate
3. **General Secretary:** Rev. Fr. Saji Mukkoottumannil

As a result of several meetings and email communications, we decided upon the following in the month of April 2011:

- the list of participants, including those people to be specially invited
- the schedule of the Assembly and the place of gathering (venue)
- the people to present the papers

Initially, all the basic information was sent out in the form of a brochure (Appendix 1). For the effective functioning of the Assembly, various committees were formed. The following is a list of these committees and their various chairpersons:

Registration	: Fr. Mathew Perumbillikunnel, Mr. Mohan Varghese
Logistics	: Fr. Sunny Kavuvila
Liturgy	: Fr. Joseph Nedumankuzhiyil
Adoration	: Fr. Mathai Mannoovadakethil
Accommodation	: Fr. Joy Mankulam
Food	: Fr. Thomas Malayil
Social Time	: Fr. Job Kalluvilayil
VIP Reception	: Fr. Jacob John, Mr. Gheevarghese Thankachan
Time Keeper	: Fr. Daiju Kuriakose
Seminary Contact	: Fr. Augustine Mangalath
Medical	: Sr. Arpitha SIC, Sr. Agnes DM.
Transportation	: Mr. Varughese Zachariah (Valsan)

The list of participants:

- The President, the Convener, and the General Secretary
- The other *ex officio* members, namely, the Chancellor, the secretaries of the Presbyteral and Pastoral Councils, and all the parish vicars
- Four representatives of the diocesan priests working outside the Exarchate
- One representative of the religious priests
- Four representatives of the women religious
- Thirty representatives from the parishes, selected on the basis of 1 representative for every 20 members in each parish. Of these thirty, one third of the participants were women and another one third were youth
- The Bishop also nominated two seminarians and four lay faithful

The Venue: The Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, New York, was selected as the venue for the Assembly.

The Program

Registration: The Assembly started at 9:00 AM on June 22, 2011, with registration of the participants at the foyer of the Seminary. A total of fifty-five people participated at the 2-day Assembly. Registered members received their name tags and a folder, which included a pen, writing pad, presenters' materials, schedule, instructions and an evaluation form. Color-coded stickers were affixed to the name tag to identify their groups for the group discussions. All participants were instructed to wear the name tag visibly during the entire Assembly.

Msgr. Peter Vaccari, Rector of the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception warmly welcomed the Assembly participants to the Seminary. The Seminary was kind enough to provide us with their chapel, refectory, and various halls for our gatherings. In addition, to the use of the refectory for major meals, refreshments were also arranged in the assembly hall. The seminary staff cooperated well with our needs and the program. Father Augustine Mangalath, Chancellor and Finance Officer, and Bro. Lintu Markose functioned as a connecting link between the organizers of the Assembly and the Seminary.

Inauguration: The Assembly was officially inaugurated at 10:10 AM on June 22, by singing the hymn, "Here I am Lord". Two Scripture passages were read: Isaiah 6:1-8 (read by Ms. Sheba Ninan, Houston) and I Corinthians 9:15-29 (by Mr. John P. Varghese, New Jersey). After the Kauma Prayer, Fr. Francis Assisi Samuel, O.I.C., said a Prayer to the Holy Spirit. Fr. Saji Mukkootumannil was the Master of Ceremonies for the Inaugural Session

After a brief introduction and welcome, by the Proto-Syncellus, Rt. Rev. Msgr Peter Kochery, the Exarchate Assembly was officially inaugurated with the traditional lighting of the lamp (*nilavilakku*). The Inaugural Address was given by His Excellency the Most Rev. Bishop William Murphy, Diocese of Rockville Centre. In this address, Bishop Murphy emphasized the Church's role in evangelization and its true relationship to human advancement (development). Thereafter, His Excellency the Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Eusebius, Bishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Exarchate, presented Bishop Murphy with a small token of thanksgiving and

appreciation. The Rector of the Seminary, Msgr. Peter I. Vaccari, spoke briefly, welcoming the participants of the Exarchate Assembly to the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception. The Presidential Address of Bishop Mar Eusebius followed. In his message, he spoke about the Church's mission in this world, stressing the unique missionary task of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in the United States, and identifying several key challenges to this ecclesial mission. The inaugural session concluded with the blessing by the bishop.

Liturgy: The Exarchate Assembly gave utmost importance to the spiritual dimension. Fr. Joseph Nedumankuzhiyil coordinated the liturgical celebrations throughout the Assembly. Concelebrated Holy Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament were integral part of the Assembly. Fr. Mathai Mannoorvadakkethil led Eucharistic Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Assembly Sessions: The Assembly Sessions began with an ice breaker, namely, all participants (including the bishop, priests and lay members) introduced themselves. A representative from each parish was asked to present a small report of the parish in the following format:

Our (name) parish was established in the year __ __ __ __. This parish has been gifted with __ __ __ __. Our parish has been doing outstanding missionary activities such as __ __ __ __. Our parish is planning to do __ __ __ __ in the future.

These reports were presented at different intervals as time permitted

Presentation of topics: On June 22, 2011 at 1.30 p.m. Fr. Mathew Charthakuzhiyil presented the main paper of the Assembly: "The Missionary Role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church" (Appendix IV). Fr. Charthakuzhiyil sought to establish a theological framework for subsequent discussion. Rev. Fr. Sunny Mathew, Mr. George James, Dr. Jocelyn Edathil responded to this paper from the perspective of a parish priest, a lay person and a youth member, respectively.

Father George Oonnoony presented the second major paper, "The Pastoral and Canonical Implications of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Exarchate" (Appendix VI). In this presentation, Fr. Oonnoony emphasized the canonical and pastoral dimensions of the Malankara Church's work in the United States of America.

Group Discussions: All participants were divided into five groups: Mar Baselios, Mar Gregorios, Mar Theophilos, Mar Athanasios, and Mar Ephraem. They gathered in the assigned meeting rooms based on color. Upon gathering, they were asked to select a facilitator and a scribe from among the participants. The facilitator moderated the discussion, and the scribes took notes. They gathered three times: 2:30 PM and 7 PM on June 22, and 10 AM on June 23.

During this time, Assembly participants discussed the questions given by the presenters. In addition, each group was also asked to chart a missionary plan for the exarchate for the next five years. Each scribe presented a summary of their group's discussion at the General discussion at 11 AM on June 23. (Appendix VII)

Social Time: The social time was entrusted to the MCYM participants. They presented a discussion in the form of a TV talk show. They had already sorted some questions, collected several responses via email, and prepared the discussion in advance and assigned several people

to respond to each questions. They came up with several practical suggestions for the missionary future of the Exarchate in the United States. (Appendix VIII)

General Discussion: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter Kochery moderated this session. Rev. Fr. Mathai Mannoorvadakkethil, Mr. Alex John, Mrs. Thresiamma Nadavallil, and Mr. Aloysius John presented their evaluation of the Assembly. All of them shared their appreciation and proposed to continue the momentum by developing follow-up programs and implementing the proposed plans. Each scribe presented a short summary of the group discussions. The final part of this session was opened to all. There was active interaction from most of the participants.

Concluding Session: In this session, Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebius offered his final comments, especially his desire to implement a five year plan. Bishop Eusebius also asked the Exarchate Assembly to elect representatives for the Ecclesial Assembly on September 21-23, 2011, in Trivandrum, India. Mr. George James, Mr. Gijo George (youth representative) and Mrs. Thresiamma Nadavallil (female representative) and Mr. Mr. Francis Thazhamon (representing the region of Canada) were elected from the Exarchate to participate in the Church Assembly. This is in addition to the *ex-officio* members. Fr. Saji Mukkootumannil and Bishop Mar Eusebius expressed their gratitude to all who were instrumental in making this assembly a success.

The final program was a “Sending-out Rite”. While playing, “Go Out and Tell the Good News,” Bishop Mar Eusebius handed lighted candles to each participant, who processed in two lines behind the bible carried by the Proto-Syncellus. After the procession reached the Chapel, the Bishop read out a passage from the Gospel of Matthew. People requested the blessing of the Bishop by singing “*Sloosok Aman*”. After the Bishop’s blessings, they kissed the hand-cross of the Bishop, singing “*Krolohoon Moraan*”.

Due to time constraints, the two day program ran with a firm schedule. Punctuality was strictly enforced, and regulated by a time-keeper. Video recording and typed minutes were used for reporting purposes. All presenters were asked to submit an electronic copy of their report to the secretary. Isaiah 6: 8 “Lord, here am I, send me” was the scripture verse for the Assembly. Hence “Here I am, Lord” became the theme song for the Assembly. It was repeatedly sung at the beginning and during various intervals. All participants were asked to return an evaluation sheet completed at the end of the program. Thirty sheets were returned (Appendix IX).

Resolutions

In the collective reflections on the missionary program of the Exarchate, the following items emerged as the most important and urgent:

- Spiritual strengthening of our people on a personal, family and parish level through regular and serious family prayer and mature family relations, through active involvement in the parish activities and through meaningful liturgical celebrations in the parish community;
- Finding ways for serious youth involvement in the parishes and equipping them for the same. Helping our youth to channelize their talents and potentiality for the growth of our Church. Organizing training program for youth and for the catechism teachers. Counseling facilities for our children, youth and even for our families.
- Reaching out to all the Malankara Catholic Faithful in America who have not yet become part of any of our parish communities and also those who were once members and now are staying away. Preparing the community to undertake concrete missionary activities *Ad-Gentes*, especially among the Spanish-speaking people of this country.
- Equipping the Exarchate with the necessary infra-structural facilities for carrying out its missionary responsibilities; so also providing the parish communities with the required infra-structural needs.

The special responsibility of the participants of the Assembly:

The participants of the Assembly were encouraged to relive the basic missionary and ecclesial experience of the Assembly and to realize the convictions of the Assembly in their respective parishes and mission fields. As a means to do this, the following steps were proposed:

- Share the experience with the parish community; parish priests were asked to arrange a day in the parish for this purpose;
- Give leadership to the special evangelizing mission of one's parish;
- Try to strengthen the faith formation program of the parish;
- Lay special emphasis on the Apostolate to the youth and children;
- Try to win back the parishioners who are keeping themselves away from the parish;
- Try to find out the unidentified members and make them part of our ecclesial fellowship;
- Form a task force to provide support to newcomers and also to those who have difficulties of health, finance, job, residence, etc;
- Promote family visits to keep close contact with all the parishioners;
- Arrange a meeting of the Assembly members in one year for evaluation and further reflection.

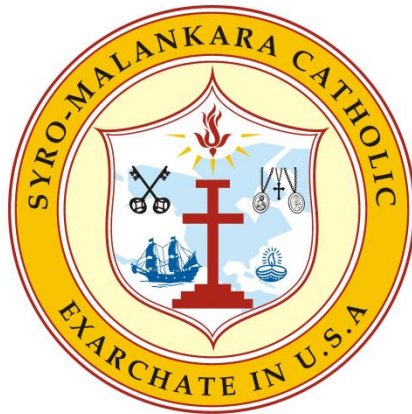
Conclusion

The Assembly turned out to be a true Pentecost experience for all the participants. All members participated in the Assembly with utmost seriousness and proper spiritual disposition. Every participant in the Assembly found it to be a deeply moving experience. The input, the sharing, the reflections, discussions, etc. helped us to be deeply conscious of our missionary vocation in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and our duty to live up to it seriously. The Assembly experience stirred us to rededicate ourselves to this divine mission. It created in us an urge to revitalize ourselves. It helped us to become proud of our specific ecclesial identity and of our missionary vocation. It gave us an additional sense of purpose in our ecclesial life. The whole experience of the Assembly was deeply spiritual and very serious. We left the Assembly venue with a renewed sense of being a Church and with a deepened conviction concerning our missionary call.

Appendix I:	Brochure
Appendix II:	Inaugural Address
Appendix III:	Presidential Address
Appendix IV:	Plenary Session I (Rev. Fr. Mathew Charthakuzhiyil)
Appendix V:	Paper Responses
Appendix VI:	Plenary Session II (Rev. Dr. George Oonnoony)
Appendix VII:	Summary of Group Discussions
Appendix VIII:	Summary of Youth Recommendations
Appendix IX:	Summary of Evaluation

Appendix I: Exarchate Assembly Brochure

Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
Apostolic Exarchate in the USA



The Exarchate Assembly

**“The Malankara Church:
The Proclaimer of Good News”**

22 & 23 June, 2011
(Wednesday and Thursday)

Seminary of the Immaculate
Conception
Huntington, NY

What and Why of the Malankara Assembly

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Assembly (SMCCA) is a representative organ of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and is a consultative body to address matters of major importance of the Church. It assists the Major Archbishop-Catholicos and the Holy Episcopal Synod of our Church to harmonize and vitalize the forms and methods of apostolate as well as ecclesiastical discipline, adapting them to the current circumstances of time with the goal of achieving the common good of the Church (CCEO c. 140).

The Assembly is organized at two levels: The First stage is organized at the level of each Eparchy or Exarchate and it expresses the vitality of the Eparchy/Exarchate (CCEO cc. 235-242). This gathering of an extremely representative nature is envisaged to be a collective sharing and celebration of the concrete ecclesial life in the Eparchy/Exarchate in its full dynamism with a view to further enriching it and making it relevant to the times.

The next and the final level of the Assembly is organized by the Holy Synod for the entire Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. This very important and Solemn Convocation takes place from 21st to 23rd September 2011 at the Catholicate Center, Trivandrum, Kerala.

Program

Wednesday, June 22, 2011
9:00 am: Registration/Coffee
10:00 am: Inaugural Session

Song
Prayer
Welcome – Msgr. Peter Kochery
Inaugural Address – His Excellency Most Rev. William Murphy
Presidential Address – His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Eusebius

11:30 am: Ice-breakers
12:10 pm: Noon Prayers
12:30 pm: Lunch
1:30 pm: Paper Presentation – Rev. Fr. Mathew Charthakuzhiyil
2:30 pm: Discussion in Groups
3:30 pm: Tea Break
4:00 pm: Responses:
i) Rev. Fr. Sunny Mathew
ii) Mr. George James
iii) Dr. Jocelyn Edathil
5:00 pm: Break
5:15 pm: Evening Prayers
6:00 pm: Dinner
7:00 pm: Discussion in Groups
8:00 pm: Adoration
9:00 pm: Social Time
10:00 pm: To Bed

Thursday, June 23, 2011
6:00 am: Rising
6:30 am: Morning Prayers & Holy Mass
8:00 am: Breakfast
9:00 am: Paper Presentation – Rev. Fr. George Onnoony
10:00 am: Discussion in Groups
10:45 am: Coffee Break
11:00 am: General Discussion
12:15 pm: Noon Prayers
12:30 pm: Lunch
1:15 pm: Concluding Session
2:00 pm: Good bye

Practical guidelines from the Holy Episcopal Synod regarding the Sessions

1. Participants must be grouped in an ideal number so that they could discuss the questions given to them by the General Assembly in a fruitful manner.
2. The secretaries of various groups will have to present their report in the common session. This should be moderated by the proto-syncellus or a priest of the similar rank.
3. There has to be a zero hour session where the general aspirations and problems of the faithful could be addressed.
4. All are expected to follow strict discipline.
5. No sharing may last for more than 3 minutes and personal remarks should be strictly avoided.
6. There must be a brief statement highlighting the salient points of the Assembly.
7. A detailed report must be presented to the General Secretary of SMCCA immediately after the Exarchate Assembly

A brief report must be presented in the SMCCA and a person must be designated for this.

The Participants

1. President: His Excellency Most Rev. Thomas Mar Eusebius, Bishop of the Exarchate

2. Convener: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter Kochery, Syncellus of the Exarchate
3. General Secretary: Rev. Fr. Saji Mukkoottumannil

a) Ex. Officio Members

4. Chancellor: Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Mangalath
5. Secretary, Presbyteral Council: Rev. Fr. Joseph Nedumankuzhiyil
6. Secretary, Pastoral Council: Mr. Geevarghese Thankachan

Other Participants

b) Vicars

7. Rev. Fr. Joy Mankulam
8. Rev. Fr. Mathai Mannoovadakkethil
9. Rev. Fr. Job Kalluvilayil
10. Rev. Fr. Mathew Perumpallikunnil
11. Rev. Fr. Sunny Mathew
12. Rev. Fr. John Kuriakose
13. Rev. Fr. Thomas Malayil

c) Representatives of the Malankara Priests the USA, working outside the Exarchate

14. Rev. Fr. George Oonnoony
15. Rev. Fr. Shaji Manikulam

d) Religious Representatives

16. Rev. Fr. Francis Assisi OIC
17. Rev. Sr. Arpitha SIC
18. Rev. Sr. Slooso SIC
19. Rev. Sr. Agnes DM
20. Rev. Sr. Anjali DM

e) Parish Representatives

21. Ms. Alisa Abraham (Chicago)
22. Mr. Clement Cherian (Chicago)
23. Mr. Koshy Abraham (Chicago)
24. Mr. Francis K. George (Dallas)

25. Mr. Roy A. Varghese (Dallas)
26. Ms. Anusha John (Dallas)
27. Mrs. Gracy Mathew (Detroit)
28. Mr. Thomas Alummoottil George (Houston)
29. Mrs. Mariamma R. Thomas (Houston)
30. Ms. Sheeba Ninan (Houston)
31. Mr. Alexander John (Long Island)
32. Mrs. Jasmine Thomas (Long Island)
33. Mr. Jijo George (Long Island)
34. Mr. Aloysius John (Los Angeles)
35. Mr. George James (New Jersey)
36. Mr. John P. Varghese (New Jersey)
37. Mr. Thomas John (New Rochelle)
38. Mrs. Annamma Thomas (New Rochelle)
39. Mr. Joey Abraham (New Rochelle)
40. Mr. Alex John (Philadelphia)
41. Mrs. Marykutty Jacob (Philadelphia)
42. Ms. Jocelyn Edathil (Philadelphia)
43. Mr. Mahan Varghese (Queens)
44. Mrs. Laisamma Varughese (Queens)
45. Mr. Samson Zachariah (Queens)
46. Mr. Varghese Abraham (Rockland)
47. Mr. Athul Thomas (Rockland)
48. Mr. Babu Thazhamon (Toronto)
49. Mr. Mathew Kuthiravattam (Toronto)
50. Mr. Benny Rajan (Washington DC)
51. Mrs. Elisabeth Kalampanayil (Washington DC)

f) Seminarians

52. Bro. Lintu Markose
53. Bro. Jobin Thomas

g) Nominated Members

54. Mr. John Panicker
55. Mr. Varughese Zacharia (Valson)
56. Mrs. Tresiamma Nadavallil

Appendix II: Inaugural Address

The New Evangelization: The Challenge of the Twenty-First Century

Most Rev. William Murphy, Bishop, Diocese of Rockville Centre

In the decade immediately following the Second Vatican Council, the Church and the Churches throughout the world went through a time of change, turbulence and re-thinking. New ideas, changed activities, fresh challenges that spanned the gamut from profound to superficial were the order of the day.

During that period, ecumenical and interreligious relations sprouted, grew, bearing both fruit and thistles. One aspect of the Church's life that was hotly contested and the topic of much discussion and debate was the call to evangelize, the commitment to preach Jesus Christ to those who do not know him. In the WCC for example at both the General Assembly at Uppsala in 1969 and the Missionary Congress in Bangkok of 1972, a debate raged about whether or not Christianity should place a moratorium on evangelization and the efforts to baptize non-Christians, bringing into the Christian world men and women of other faiths who might be attracted to the person of Jesus and the message of Christianity. Many, including significant thinkers from Asia as well as Europe and North America, charged that Christianity was a western religion and was part of the whole colonialist expansion of Europe into Africa and Asia. Therefore we must give up our colonialist pretensions and leave these ancient cultures with their own traditional religions.

In the aftermath of the Council the Catholic Church was not immune from these influences. At the Synod of 1971, voices were raised with a similar challenge from within the Catholic perspective. Do we not have to repent of our association with the conquistadores in Latin America and our association with French and Portuguese colonizers in Asia? Are not all the great religions of equal value? Can we truly say that Jesus is the only savior? Raymond Pannikar stayed inside the lines but raised many questions about Christianity and other religions especially Hinduism. Ballasuryia and Pieris in Asia were two who raised issues similar to what Paul Knitter and others did in the west.

Paul VI called for a synod on evangelization in 1974. Here these questions were raised and debated. The Holy Father and many bishops had reached a conclusion after the Synod of 1971 that it was unwise for the Synod to attempt to write its own message at the termination of the synodal debates. Instead the Synod fathers were informed that they would be invited to submit Propositions to the Holy Father who then would prepare a post-synodal apostolic exhortation. He would use the propositions of the Synod father and be helped by a committee of synod fathers who would advise him. The result was the publication in 1975 of *Evangelii nuntiandi* which I believe to be one of the most important and enduring documents of Paul's pontificate.

To those who question the validity or the centrality of proclaiming Jesus Christ in a world that is a religiously pluralist or to an age that has grown indifferent, Paul VI is unequivocal and clear:

As the kernel and center of His Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that opposes 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. All of this is begun during the life of Christ and definitively accomplished by his death and Resurrection. But it must be patiently carried out during the course of history, in order to be realized fully on the day of the final coming of Christ whose date is known to no one but the Father. (EN 9)

He patiently and insightfully addresses what evangelization is in terms of its content, method, beneficiaries, workers and its true and engaging life-giving spirit. In a section that corrects a mistaken notion of evangelization from the 1971 Synod document on *Justice in the world*, the Holy Father explains the correct relationship between evangelization and human advancement, rejecting certain misguided forms of liberation but promoting the “profound links” between evangelization and human advancement on three levels, anthropological, theological and the ‘eminently evangelical’ (cf. EN 30)

Finally he makes a great challenge to all of us which remains as valid today as it was in 1975 and as it has always been valid: *We know that, through the grace of God, men can be saved without explicit knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ, but can we be saved if we do not preach him?*

This is a vision of evangelization for the whole Church and for every member of the Body of Christ. It is faithful to the vision of the Second Vatican Council in the documents on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, on the missionary life of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, and on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*. The reason for this is because both the Council and the Pope, who presided over it and brought it to a successful conclusion, are being faithful to the constant tradition of a Church which proclaims Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today and forever, a Lord whose final mandate to his Church is “to go forth 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 that I commanded you. And behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age”. (Mt 28:19f).

To my mind, this is one of the great legacies of a great Pontiff. But just as “one sows and another reaps”, so one pope’s insights can go only so far but can be the seed ground and inspiration to foster another pontiff’s vision with a renewal and a strength which as men and women of faith we know is a gift from God. Blessed John Paul II took this last and great gift of Paul VI to the Church and transformed it into one of the key building blocks of his 26 year pontificate. Son of the Church of Poland, marked by life under two totalitarian regimes, he knew from faith and experience that there is only one answer to the human heart, only one person who can free us from the tyrannies of the world, whether they be political, social, economic or whether they be tyrannies of the flesh or the spirit of darkness. That one answer is a person, Jesus Christ.

“Be not afraid. Open the doors to Christ. Open your hearts to receive Him. Put out into the deep.” When he visited India, he gave great homage to the forces, religious and other, that have shaped Indian identity and Indian culture. But he did not hesitate to affirm that the ultimate answer to the human quest for meaning and the desires of the deepest aspirations of the human heart can never be truly sated by any of the great religions, many of whom were born in the Indian sense of the absolute, the almighty, the ultimate. The human heart and the human quest for meaning is satisfied in the end only by the encounter with Jesus Christ.

Blessed John Paul vindicated the validity of the missionary endeavor from St. Francis Xavier on because it was a faithful imitation of Sts. Peter and Paul and was carried on in the name of the one who has sent and continues to send us all, Jesus the Christ. In his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, the Pope developed the insights of Paul VI. Even more in his missionary

and apostolic visits around the world, he became the epitome of the Pauline vocation to preach Christ crucified to one and all because “in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek but we are all one in Christ Jesus”.

And that brings us to the new evangelization. A few years ago, I wrote some articles on the new evangelization. One of the priests of the diocese, a good man but one who believes that the 1970s mark the highwater of Church life, observed that the term was vague and the content opaque. He was not interested. Yet I would like to make two points to you for your own reflection, one about new evangelization and a second about you, the leaders of the Syro Malankare Church in the United States.

First the new evangelization is not at all what my priest friend thinks it is. Here is a program which is the fruit of a vision. The program is found in Blessed John Paul’s apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. Published by the Holy Father on January 6, 2001, I have made this letter the program for my pastoral leadership of the Diocese of Rockville Centre. When the first Diocesan Pastoral Council was established here in 2006, that letter was made the *Magna Charta* of the pastoral life of our diocese. In it Pope John Paul spells out all the various elements of what makes a vibrant local church. He issues a challenge and an invitation. The challenge is to respond affirmatively to what Christ expects of us as his disciples and as His Body on earth, the Church which is a community of communion. As a vision he shows us what the Church can be and is called to be by her founder who from the cross knew who we are and offered his life so that we might become what He alone can enable us to be through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Here are the elements of a life giving Church called into existence by Jesus Christ, a Church of worship of the Triune God, a Church which finds her identity in the Eucharist and expresses her life through the sacramental *oikonomia*. This is a Church that is kerygmatic, catechetical, koinonic, diaconal and, above all, Eucharistic. That is why she is a Church that lives in Christ, is formed by His message and the constant teaching of the Magisterium, passes that on to the next generation and fulfills his command to go out into the world by a witness of life and love, word and action, through which we witness Christ “that the world might believe”.

The new evangelization in that sense is the same as always because Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. But Blessed John Paul calls the new evangelization a renewal and transformation of that original and perennial call of Christ to proclaim him to the world “in a new key”.

While there is no new Gospel, no new Magisterium, the truth of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed in every age and in every place with a renewed sense of its vigor and dynamism. A friend of mine when asked “what’s new?” likes to respond by saying “Jesus Christ is risen”. And he is right! The wondrous truth that “Jesus Christ is Lord” is the only news that is always new, the only news that is always good! In today’s world, we, as disciples of Christ and as His Body, the Church, have been called by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI to “start afresh from the Gospel” and to let the Word of God and the message of Christ so inflame our hearts and direct our actions that we become as filled with the Spirit and as eager to proclaim as did Peter and Paul as recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict reminds us that “the entire People of God has been sent and it is the task of all the disciples of Christ to proclaim the Lord”. (VD 94). The sterling witness of the missionaries remains not just a sign of the life of the Spirit in the Church. It is also a direction for our lives. Each one of us here shares in the mission to evangelize. The mission will be fulfilled in different ways depending on our respective roles and capabilities. (cf. VD 94) But it is a mission that is universal because it is bound up with the universal vocation we all share to strive and attain the holiness which is our most basic vocation. The call to holiness, to be “holy as our heavenly Father is holy”, “to walk worthily in the vocation to which we have been called”, leaves us no choice but to echo what Peter said that first Pentecost: “We are the witnesses, we and the Holy Spirit”.

From Paul VI through John Paul II to Benedict XVI, the contemporary call for a new evangelization confirms that we must always exercise a “mission ad gentes” of bringing the Gospel to all those who have not heard it and all those who have not understood its power to liberate, its message that saves. But in today’s world, we must be ever attentive to the fact that many of our own “have been baptized but insufficiently evangelized”, many share in the sacraments and the Eucharist but are indifferent to the call to witness their faith by their daily lives. With a renewed spirit, a deeper sense of unity in the Church, an overcoming of inertia, we must show the face of Christ to the world in ways that the world can be startled by his beauty, fascinated by his message of life and love, transformed by his offer of forgiveness and reconciliation, experience his power of liberation from sin and rejoice in the freedom of truly living who we are, sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Christ.

I make my own the words of Pope Benedict, “Our own times then must be increasingly marked by a new hearing of God’s word and a new evangelization. (VD 122) And “the need for a new evangelization...must be valiantly reaffirmed, in the certainty that God’s word is effective”. (VD 96)

Some of you know that I was born and grew up in Boston. Until the Holy Father sent me to be bishop of this Diocese, I was a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston which is the fourth largest diocese in the USA. (The fifth largest is Rockville Centre!) When I look at you gathered here today, clerical and lay leaders of this Exarchy of the Syro Malankara Church, I am reminded of the passage in the history of the Boston Archdiocese which chronicles the establishment of the Boston Diocese in 1808. It tells us that after the first Mass was celebrated by the new bishop, Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus, the bishop proudly stood at the door of his new cathedral “surrounded by his clergy, both of them”.

While your roots go back to Thomas the Apostle, as you all well know, the modern establishment of your Church in 1930 consisted of the Archbishop Mar Ivanios with a bishop, a priest, a deacon and a layman. But if you look at their picture, you say of yourselves what I do of my church or origin: how much has God blessed this Church with a growth and expansion in India and beyond. Now more than 500,000 strong, the very growth of your Church is in itself a call to make your own the spirit and the substance of the new evangelization. You would not be here today in such numbers if your Church, from her very beginnings, did not have within her a profound sense of your mission to evangelize and to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to those who are near and to those who are far. God has truly blessed this Church. He wants you to expand and grow. He calls you and sends you to be a beacon in India and in every culture and land where you have the opportunity to proclaim that Jesus is Lord.

Timidity was never a trait of Mar Ivanios. Neither was it a trait of Peter or of Paul or of Thomas. It must never characterize your life and your witness here in the United States of America. This society of ours has many positive characteristics. This nation has been blessed in many ways. But this American culture and today’s American peoples, both the established and the new, have a tremendous need to know God, to be evangelized and converted, to be re-introduced to Jesus and be renewed in faith and hope and love. That can be done only by witnesses like you who have accepted the vocation to be disciples of Jesus Christ. It can only be effective if we let the Word of God dwell in our hearts and guide our thoughts and words and

action. It will be successful to the extent that we let the Holy Spirit make us apostles of Jesus' love for all humankind. It means to start afresh from the Gospel, to set out into the deep with confidence that the One who sends us is the Savior of the world and he will accompany on this most exciting of all journeys, the spiritual journey of the disciple of God's own son.

It is my strong conviction that your coming to this country and your putting down roots in this American culture is a blessed and wondrous gift that God wants. He has brought it about. The spirit of faith and love that has born such fruit already in these past 80 years, I pray, will continue to grow and increase among you to the Glory of God and to the salvation of all who hear God's Word from your lips and see his Son's disciples in your lives.

With gratitude to your major archbishop, Mar Cleemis, and with great affection for your bishop, my dear brother, Mar Eusebius, I pledge you my fraternal support and my brotherly love. We will make our journey together with Christ and his mother at our side. Here is how Blessed John Paul concluded his letter *NMI* ten years ago, words I make my own to you today.

On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom I have entrusted the Third Millennium. I have often invoked her as the 'star of the new evangelization'. Now I point to Mary once again as the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps. Once more, echoing the words of Jesus himself and giving voice to the filial affection of the whole Church, I say to her, 'Woman, behold your children'. (NMI 58)

Thank you and May God bless the Syro Malankara Church

Appendix III: The Presidential Address

The Missionary Obligation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in America

Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Eusebius

Introduction

Let me start this Presidential Address by expressing our most profound joy and gratitude at the gracious presence with us, of one the best friends and supporters of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in America, namely His Excellency the Most Rev. William Murphy. Your Excellency, in fact I miserably run out of words to express how deeply we, as a Church feel indebted to Your Excellency and to the Diocese of Rockville Center. We are an ecclesial entity that sincerely tries to live and witness to the fundamental values of the Gospel in this country through an ancient and vibrant ecclesial tradition that we have been fortunate to inherit. But at the same time we are constrained by a number of limitations in fulfilling our mission here – our numerical limitations, infra-structural limitations, institutional limitations, so on and so forth. But all these experiences of limitations are far surpassed by the confidence that you instill in us by the generous support that you extend to us as a benevolent neighbor and by the affection and love that you pour on us as a wonderful brother in Christ. Your Excellency, the Exarchate has in you a genuine supporter and promoter of our ecclesial mission here and I personally find a wonderful brother and friend in you, whom I can approach any time. We consider it to be a clear sign of God's providence for our Church and a great privilege to have the center of our Exarchate in your gracious neighborhood. I would like to place on record your generous acts of Christian charity towards us and ecclesial solidarity with us - to name a few among them, permitting us to use one of your Church facilities as our pro-Cathedral, without which the Exarchate would not have been a reality so soon, fully sponsoring the theological studies of two of our seminarians. And I know that you want to do more for this Little Folk. This representative body of our Church in America thanks Your Excellency from the depth of our hearts. We are specially thankful to Your Excellency today for taking time out of your busy schedule to come here and to enrich us with a wonderful message. We look forward to more such association and collaboration with Your Excellency.

I. The Background

Six years have passed since the elevation of the Syro- Malankara Catholic Church to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church. Our ecclesial history hitherto testifies to the fact that ours is an ecclesial community that has been so lovingly and miraculously cared for and nourished by God. But the love and providence that we experience as an ecclesial community demand from our part a corresponding ecclesial response. We have to become ever more conscious of our ecclesial mission in this world and act upon it. Consequently, the 10th Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church decided to conduct the first Malankara Catholic Assembly in the month of September, 2011 in Trivandrum. The theme of the Assembly is ‘The Malankara Catholic Church, the Proclaimer of the Good News’. The Assembly is meant to reflect collectively on our most urgent ecclesial responsibilities as a missionary Church and to evolve concrete plans of action for the effective realization of that mission. It was also decided to convene diocesan, exarchial and religious Assemblies, as a preparation for the Church Assembly and also with a view to revamping the missionary enterprises of each Diocese, Exarchate and Religious Community in the Malankara Church.

Consequently, we in America have set two days apart from our extremely busy schedule in order to reflect collectively and seriously on the specific missionary vocation of our Church in this great continent. The movement spearheaded by the greatest ecclesial visionary of the past century Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios in 1930 was essentially a missionary movement. As we know, the humble movement started with just five people eight decades ago is today an autonomous Church in the universal Catholic communion, fully living all its ecclesial vitality and missionary potentiality, the clearest and latest manifestation of which is the erection of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Apostolic Exarchate in the United States of America. The missionary thrust of our Church, especially our mission *Ad Gentes*, has been so predominant and fruitful that today almost one fourth of the total Faithful of the Malankara Catholic Church has resulted from our direct preaching of the Gospel and one whole Diocese is the fruit of this mission. So mission is something that pertains to the very essence of our Christian and Malankara existence.

I would like to share with you at the beginning of this historical assembly of our Church in America, some stray thoughts of mine about how this fundamental mission thrust of the Malankara Catholic Church is to be applied in the diverse and complex American context. I

should confess that my sharing definitely lacks the support from the wealth of experience that I needed to have to make this presentation, and also from scientific research, as this has never been the topic of my specialized study. I only wish to make some personal reflections hoping that they would lead to further study and serious reflection by our Church members here.

II. **Our Mission is the Continuation of God's Mission**

Human history is a mission-history. It starts with the creation. The creation may be understood as the sharing of God's infinite love. God's goodness and love overflows so abundantly that it manifests itself in creation. Of all created beings, the human person is the best expression of this love. God is constantly active in history in order to lead the human person to the peak of this love-experience. It is this love-experience that we call the experience of salvation. Thus human history and history of salvation are identical. God continually invites the creation to experience this love and to be enriched by it. The subhuman beings respond to this invitation, though automatically, just by being what they are and by acting according to their God-given nature, in their God-given environment. They thereby manifest God's love. But the human person has to do this through the responsible use of his/her freedom. Hence the possibility of sin, moving away from God's love.

In human history, whenever humanity so moved away from God's love, God intervened, mostly by sending His prophets to remind people of God's unconditional love and to invite them back to the experience of this love. The prophets were missionaries, people sent with a message and a mission from God for His people – the message of God's unconditional love. The most definitive missionary intervention of God in human history certainly was the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus was the greatest missionary of all times. His words, deeds and the whole life manifested in the most sublime way the heavenly Father's unconditional, forgiving love. As Pope Benedict XVI says, Jesus is the love of God in its most radical form (see *Deus Caritas Est*, 12). The whole aim of incarnation was to enable humanity to experience this love in all its intensity.

The Church was born in this mission context. The Church is the continuation of this mission of Jesus Christ. That is why the second Vatican Council says, 'the Church by its very nature is missionary' (Mission Work, 2). Its very existence is a missionary existence. It exists in order to make available to humanity the experience of God's boundless love; in order to give rise to communities that experience, share and witness to this love. The Church is at the service of

the Kingdom of God. The Church exists in order to lead humanity to the dignity and freedom of the children of God. Therefore there is only one justification for our ecclesial existence, namely, the mission. As St. Paul says, "For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor* 9:16). To be a member of the Church necessarily means someone specially called and sent by God. We are called to experience the unconditional love of God in and through our family and our ecclesial community and at the same time we are sent to share this love with our brothers and sisters so that this love becomes the central experience of their life. This activity is what is known as evangelization.

III. Mission in the Malankara Catholic Church

As far as the Malankara Catholic Church is concerned, mission or the act of evangelization involves a twin task. The first one is what we traditionally call 'the reunion attempts', namely our obligation to bring back all our Christian brothers and sisters of the ancient Malankara tradition, wherever they are, into the experience of a unity that is universal, an experience which is the core of our Kingdom experience. In the American context a necessary preliminary to this aspect of our mission is to maintain and nourish the best relationships with our sister Churches in the Malankara tradition. This has to be done on all levels, namely, of the hierarchy, priests and the lay Faithful. The second aspect is our mission *Ad Gentes*, namely, inviting all our brothers and sisters into the beauty of the God experience that we were enabled to have in Jesus Christ.

i. Our Ecclesial Identity in America

How could we fulfill this fundamental ecclesial mission of our faith, especially in the American context? In order to understand our ecclesial mission here, first we must clearly be aware of our ecclesial identity here. Our ecclesial identity as Malankara Catholics in America enjoys the enrichment of the values of three fine traditions of the world. Our cultural identity is constituted of the perennial values of the ancient Indian culture. Our spiritual identity traces its origin to the original Eastern Antiochean God-experience of the Apostles. We are called to live and witness this identity in the free, multifaceted socio-cultural context of America through a beautiful and balanced conflux of the good of all these three traditions. It is only in and through this symbiosis can we hope to fulfill our mission duty here. When the ancient cultural values of our Indian heritage and the spiritual values of our Syrian Christian patrimony are allowed to take

concrete expression in this amazingly open American society, we will be making our own ecclesial contribution in this country.

ii. The Task of Strengthening our Faith

The first and most important step in our missionary task in America is to strengthen our own faith, to deepen our own God experience in Jesus Christ. This has to be done on three levels, that is, on the personal level, on the level of our families and in our ecclesial communities. This could be understood as a re-evangelization of ourselves. In other words, our primary focus has to be on deepening our spiritual and ecclesial life personally, in families and in our parish communities.

a. A personal Conversion

The first level concerns a personal conversion, a radical prioritization of our life style and our value system in favor of the Gospel values. We should allow our personal life to be permeated, captured by the love of God and the values of the Gospel. This takes the form of a firm conviction and consequently we will be able to relativize everything in our life except God. In the sublimely free and at the same time, over-secularized, consumerist society in which we live, this is very crucial. While personalizing and interiorizing the Christian value of true freedom that is available in this society, while being positively open to all the cultures and traditions around us, we must at the same time be aware that there are so many things in this culture that constantly tempt us to be immersed in the worldly and to be oblivious of the other-worldly. Keeping a safe distance from these dangers and allowing ourselves to be guided by the Gospel values is basic to this experience of conversion. Our personal presence in this society must testify to a life enhanced by the Gospel values. Unless we undergo this personal conversion, we are not capable of fulfilling our missionary vocation.

b. Malankara Families

Secondly, our faith has to be strengthened in our families. Family is a basic context of God experience and the prime agent of evangelization. It is the God Experience that we acquire in and through our family, family relations and the faith commitment of the family that sustains us all through our life. As we know, family is a fundamental value in the cultures that we have inherited. The moment the family relations become weak, faith in the family members will suffer. Our culture is known for its readiness to suffer to any extent in order to keep the family bond intact and to maintain its warmth. In the onslaught of modernism and self-centered

technological development, we must be on our guard that the relation within the family and the family's relation to God are not affected. In a culture that resists any sort of suffering, we must teach our children the value of sacrifice for the sake of love, for the sake of the family.

So also, we have to make a very concerted effort to instill in our families, in each family member the fine values of our culture which sustained our fore-fathers and each one of us in our life's journey so far. Without closing ourselves to the good of the culture in which we live, we must at the same time try to cultivate some of our specifically Indian, Malankara values in our families and consciously pass them on to our children. Our culture is known for its fundamental religiosity and spiritual orientation. Our culture promotes a basic prayerfulness in the family which is to be sustained through regular family prayers. We are taught to respect the elders, to be hospitable to all, including strangers, to consider our guests in the place of God. Our fore-fathers instructed us to be generous, to be ready to share what we have with others, to be genuinely concerned about others, etc.. As Malankara Catholics in America it is our specific mission to witness to these values through our life and thereby enrich the culture in which we live. Parents must make it a point to teach our children Malayalam, as language is the home of any culture. Special emphasis must be laid on the importance of family prayers. Our own experience tells us how important regular family prayer is for the sustenance of the family. In our hectic life style, often prompted by the stress and schedule of work and other demands of everyday living, it is possible that prayer in the family is sidelined. The fact is that in the modern hyperactive society, there is nothing that helps to keep the family together except our regular practice of praying together in the family. It is the time when all the joys and struggles of the day are offered to God for Him to sanctify them, it is the time when all problems and misunderstandings among the family members are sorted out and the family bond is renewed. This practice of our culture must continue to strengthen our families in America.

A word must be said in this context about the value of large families. Most of us who came from India, belonged to large families. And we are the living testimonies of the positive values of being part of a large family. We learned the basic lessons of love, sharing, sacrifice, co-operation, etc. in and through our sharing life with so many of our brothers and sisters living, suffering and growing under the same roof. When we turn back on those experiences today, we realize how deeply this togetherness enriched our own personalities and how far those experiences helped us to broaden the horizon of our hearts. We should not deprive our children

of a great benefit that we were permitted to enjoy, thanks to the faith and large-heartedness of our parents. God joined man and woman through the sacrament of matrimony in order to give rise to families, in order to give birth to children. Children must be received as the biggest gift of God to humanity. Large families must be considered at least by Christian couples as a great value. We should not be blindfolded by the egoistic concept and objectives of nuclear families. Most of the so called Christian countries in the West are in the real danger of losing their identity. We must be aware of the alarming fact that Christians are fast becoming a thin minority in the world.

c. Our Parish Communities

Thirdly our ecclesial communities, namely our parishes have to be strengthened if our mission has to be meaningful here. As Christians the most sublime context of faith and God experience is the Church. It is as if we live our faith in its integrity only in the community of believers. Therefore a strong sense of belonging to the Church through our parish communities and the constant celebration of our faith within the parish communities are crucial to our fundamental Christian mission. In fact this sense of belonging to the Church is a value that we have inherited as Malankara Catholics. Our Church is what it is today primarily due to the fact that thousands of our fore-fathers took pride in belonging to the Church, in suffering for the Church and made the Church their home. We have to strengthen our communities spiritually, liturgically and with sufficient infrastructural facilities. A parish community that lives and celebrates the faith meaningfully in a unity of heart and mind of all its members is the most powerful means of evangelization and the most conspicuous expression of the Kingdom of God. As it is said about the early Christian community, “And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Act. 2:47).

In the American context, our parish communities are not only places for celebrating liturgies. Primarily they are so. But, they also have to be places, where the deepest aspirations of all our people as an ecclesial community, sharing the same cultural complexities, find meaningful expressions and answers. They have to be venues of serious faith and value formation of our people, of both the elder and younger generations. The parish community must turn out to be a second home to our believers. Therefore the task of the parish priest and of those giving leadership in these communities is of much more crucial importance than for e.g. that of a parish in India.

Ensuring that every one of our Faithful has the possibility to live and celebrate his/her faith within the context of a parish community is our responsibility as a Church. In our context, this would mean that we make every effort to identify all our people living in America and bring all of them into the active ecclesial life of our community. Consequently we have to begin new communities wherever it is needed and is possible and arrange for the pastoral care of our people according to our ecclesial traditions. Efforts must be made to motivate and convince our people of the inevitability and obligation of being part of a Malankara Catholic community in order to live the faith meaningfully that we have inherited as a Church. This effort is our collective responsibility as a Church, not just of the Bishop or of the priests alone.

IV. Our Specific Challenges

In carrying out our mission objective in America we are confronted with certain hurdles that are specific to us as Malankara Catholics in America. These hurdles have to be carefully overcome if our existence and mission as a Church have to be meaningful here.

i) Generation Gap

First of all our Church here, our parish communities consist of people with two different mind sets and wealth of experience. The first group of people were born and brought up in India and they had a good part of their formative experiences in India. As they migrated to America, their fundamental life attitudes were already formed and set. They reflect one type of life orientation and ecclesial integration. Their aspirations and needs have to be taken seriously. This is one of our mission priorities. These first generation Faithful are those who suffered the most for founding and building up our Church here. In the midst of all their initial struggles of making themselves feel at home in a totally new land, they showed the readiness to sacrifice their time, energy and money for establishing our ecclesial communities here. In these communities they experienced the values and warmth of a culture which formed them and which they were, as it were, missing now. It is the natural right of these people and our ecclesial responsibility to ensure that our parish communities continue to be such a home for them.

On the other hand, there is another fast growing group of our Faithful, namely the second and third generation Malankarites whose life perspective, ecclesial understanding, etc. are substantially different from those of their parents and grandparents. This group deserves our special attention. Our missionary and pastoral challenge emerges precisely from the fact that

there is bound to be conflict of interests and perspectives between these two groups. How could we strike a healthy balance between these two in our pastoral perception, preferences and projects?

ii) Pastoral Care of our Children and the Youth

The missionary context of our Church in America demands from us that we take the reality of our children and youth with utmost seriousness and concern, as the future of our Church in America depends largely on their spiritual profundity, ecclesial belongingness and involvement. Therefore we have to lay special emphasis on their proper ecclesial integration and spiritual growth. Our Church in America cannot afford to lose any of them. Unfortunately, we have failed to keep many of our first generation youth close to the Church. This cannot continue to happen. May be, we need to adopt a different pastoral approach in dealing with our youth and children.

We are privileged to have a wonderful young section in our Church here. The strength of this group is their authenticity, sincerity, love of God and respect for human values and the excellent educational standards that they are privileged to acquire. As a Church, we have to understand the specific cultural milieu in which our young people live and grow and respond creatively to their needs. This requires that we become pastorally equipped for the same. We have to promote vocations to priesthood and religious life from among them. At the same time lay missionaries have to emerge from among them who understand their mentality, aspirations and struggles and who can give them the guidance and orientation they need. Our liturgical celebrations, parish activities and common functions must be conducted in such a way that our children and young people can take active and meaningful part in them. They should never feel an outsider. Accordingly meaningfully adapted English rendering of the liturgical texts of all our sacraments, feast days and common prayers must be made available to them. A relevant program of catechetical training has to be designed and effectively executed.

iii) Conflict of Values

Another challenge emerges from the conflict of values. Fusing together the values of three distinct cultures is no easy task. Values of different cultures could look contradictory. One could even at times be at a loss as to what is right and what is wrong. So it is very important to fix the values that have a perennial nature and which are fundamentally akin to the Gospel truths. This has to be done with utmost care and sensitiveness. Apparent values and anti-Christian

values have to be rejected. The good of the perennial values of the Indian and Malankara traditions has to be sufficiently highlighted. This is very important in our task of assisting the value formation of our children and our youth. For example, against the powerful sway of the modern egocentric culture, we should try to instill in our children and young people a spirit of sharing what we have with our needy brothers and sisters and also for the works of the Church, a value which is fundamentally Christian and which is so predominant in our Malankara and Indian traditions. It would not be out of place to ask in this context, ‘Are our second and third generation Faithful as generous as our first generation when it comes to donations to support the needs of our Church?’ The Malankara Catholic Church in America depends totally on the donations from its Faithful for its sustenance and the developmental activities.

All these are attempts at re-evangelizing ourselves in order to strengthen the missionary potential of our Church in America. But apart from these attempts, we must at the same time, explore possibilities of actual mission involvement. As an Ecclesial community with a specific identity, we need to be open to new missionary openings. For example, a Malankara Catholic Spanish mission could be one of our future possibilities, as a large number of our Spanish speaking brothers and sisters are sadly ending up in extreme pentacostal groups. For this we need to start training sufficient personnel. As an inalienable dimension of our mission we need to venture into various fields of authentic Christian witnessing such as the social, educational, health care apostolates for concrete acts of Christian charity. In the American context, this can be hoped to realize with the help, expertise and experience of our own people here. All these are part of our ecclesial dream.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by drawing inspiration from the example of the first disciples of Jesus. In fact Jesus’ first mission command seemed well nigh impossible – a small group of 11 young men from the country side, asked to go to the four corners of the world and to preach the Gospel and to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. These men were bundles of limitations – limitations such as illiteracy, they had no linguistic skills. In those days when the means of transportation were very limited, what did it mean for them to go to the four corners of the world and to preach the gospel! Yet it realized. The gospel was preached in all corners of the world, by them and their successors. This is the work of the H. Spirit. Today when we face hurdles in our mission work, we should be inspired by this example. Jesus offered them the gift

of the Holy Spirit and his abiding presence with them. This is our strength, this is our hope. I would like to quote from a speech of Pope Paul VI. He says, “Convinced of Christ: yes, I feel the need to proclaim him, I cannot keep silent. I am sent by him, by Christ himself, to do this. I am an apostle, I am a witness. The more distant the goal, the more difficult my mission the more pressing is the love that urges me to it.” (His speech during his visit to Manila).

I wish to thank you for your patient listening. I thank you in a special way for having taken the time and trouble to be part of this important ecclesial experience. May the time that we spend here enrich each of us deeply so that we may go back with renewed spirits and convictions to our respective mission fields. May this assembly be a true experience of the first Pentacost for us, as our dear Vicar General Msgr. Peter Kochery rightly mentioned in his welcome speech. May God bless this Assembly, each one of us and our Church in America abundantly. May we closely experience here the presence of Mother Mary, who closely accompanied and strengthened the Apostles in their mission deliberations and commissioning.

Let us try to spend these two days here in all the seriousness that they deserve. Our Church in America and our mother Church look forward to these two days. Our disposition, our prayers, our reflections, our sharing, our interventions and interactions and our deliberations should have a serious effect on the shape of our Church here tomorrow. We have only one concern here, namely the good of our Church and our missionary efficacy. Everything that we do here should have this one goal in mind. We do this in the best spirit of Christian charity and understanding. I am sure, no personal interest will interfere with this objective of the Assembly. May the Holy Spirit fill each one of us with His light and wisdom. Thank you.

Appendix IV: Plenary Session I

The Missionary Role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church:

A Brief Study on the Missionary Nature of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, on the Basis of the Recent Teachings of the Church in Evangelization and New Evangelization, in view of the First General Assembly of the Malankara Catholic Church

Father Mathew Charthakuzhiyil

Introduction

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, NAB)

The perennial question of Christian evangelization is how Christians ought to preach an unchanging Truth in an ever-changing world. At the heart of evangelization, or as the *Lineamenta* for the upcoming 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops puts it, “the centre of proclamation” is Jesus Christ.¹ As the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us, Christ remains the same “yesterday, today, and forever”. However, in the words of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, the cultural, political, and social revolutions of the twentieth century have created unique and “unexpected conditions for believers and require special attention in proclaiming the Gospel, to give an account for our faith in situations which are different from the past”.² Yet, however complex our task may seem as a result of these developments, the mission of the Church remains the same as on the day of the Great Commission. “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 that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20). Thus, by her very nature, her constitution, and the identity given to her by her Spouse, the Church is missionary. According to Pope Paul VI, evangelization is the God-given vocation of the Church. In his 1975 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, he writes, “...evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the

¹ Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, “The New Evangelization For the Transmission of the Christian Faith” no. 2.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html.

² Pope Benedict XVI, “The Gospel and the Drama of Fragmentation: Papal Address at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization,” *Osservatore Romano* (31 May 2011).

Church. This task and mission are particularly urgent because of the expansive, penetrating changes in present-day society. In fact, evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church; her utmost identity. She exists in order to evangelize...”³

It is only within this context of the universal Church’s vocation to evangelization that the particular missionary role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church can be understood. Before addressing the theme of the first Assembly of this *ecclesia sui iuris*, to be held on September 21-23, at the Catholicate Center in Pattom, Trivandrum, it is necessary to first examine the Scriptural and theological foundations of evangelization and the new evangelization. For this we rely primarily on the teachings of the post-conciliar Magisterium, especially the apostolic ministry of Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. After presenting the theological foundations, we will proceed to study the unique missionary role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, relying on her history and rich liturgical, theological and spiritual patrimony.⁴ We begin with a consideration of evangelization.

Evangelization

Especially since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a renewed emphasis on evangelization, so much so that it has become, in recent times, a central and common theme. With such emphasis it is possible to lose sight of its essential meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to consider briefly the etymology of the word “evangelization”.

The English word, “evangelization” is related to the Hebrew term, בשר (*basar*), and the Greek term εὐαγγελίζω (*evangelizō*), which means “to announce the good news” or “to bring the good news of salvation” (cf. Is 52:7; 61:1).⁵ The definition of evangelization proposed by the late eminent American Catholic theologian, Avery Cardinal Dulles, supplements these scriptural definitions of evangelization. For Dulles, evangelization refers to “everything that brings human life and the world under the sway of God’s Word.”⁶

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI defines evangelization as “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming

³ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), no. 14: AAS 68 (1976) 13.

⁴ Since this presentation is addressed to representatives and members of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Exarchate in the United States, a basic knowledge of the Malankara Church history, Indian origin, Eastern ethos, and liturgical and theological heritage is presupposed. It is beyond the scope of the present work to treat these foundational topics except insofar as they relate to the theme.

⁵ Cf. Archdiocese of Chicago, *Spreading the Holy Fire: A Plan and Study Guide for Catholics Evangelizing in the Archdiocese of Chicago* (Chicago: Archdiocesan Office for Evangelization, 2002), 7.

⁶ Avery Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009) 5.

humanity from within and making it new”.⁷ As stressed in magisterial teaching, including the writings of Pope Paul VI, the essence of evangelization is the proclamation and encounter with Jesus Christ. Hence, the Bishops of the United States write, “evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. At its essence are the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both the works of the Spirit of God”.⁸

Pope Benedict XVI, in the first part of *Jesus of Nazareth*, explains the deeper meaning of the word *evangelion*, which goes beyond its usual translation as ‘good news’.⁹ The Holy Father says that this term is found in the vocabulary of the Roman emperors who presented themselves as the lords, saviors and redeemers of the world. Their messages were *evangelion* (in Greek, or in Latin *evangelium*), regardless of the nature of the content: “The idea was that what comes from the emperor is a saving message, that it is not just a piece of news, but a change of the world for the better.”¹⁰ But when it comes to Jesus what the emperors illegitimately claimed really occurred. It is not just informative speech but performative—“a message endowed with plenary authority, a message that is not just talk, but reality.”¹¹ The message is the person of Jesus Christ, who is not just information, “but action, efficacious power that enters into the world to save and transform.”¹² Giving this message to the world is imparting the person of Christ into every reality, transforming them in Christ.

From what has been said above, it is clear that evangelization is not only a central theme of post-conciliar theology, but is integral to the will and mission of Christ. Having thus examined the etymology of the term, we proceed now to examine its theological basis and its urgency in the present context.

The Theological Basis of Evangelization and its Urgency Today

“If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!” (1 Cor 9:16).

⁷ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 18.

⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2002), no. 10.

⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth*. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 46-47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

Evangelization has a theological foundation and the vocation to evangelize has a divine origin. It does not arise from a purely human need, nor is it the creation or product of the Church in this or that age. Rather, “in proclaiming and transmitting the faith, the Church imitates God who communicates himself through the gift of his Son to humanity, who lives in Trinitarian communion and who pours out the Holy Spirit so as to carry on a dialogue with humanity.”¹³ Thus, the Church, in evangelizing, imitates and mirrors both the divine communion and the divine communication. The role of the Holy Spirit is underlined here and hence be never forgotten. From the Acts of the Apostles, it is evident that the Apostles allowed themselves to be transformed radically by the work Holy Spirit to lead a life of holiness to preach the Gospel. New Evangelization must also be led by the “new Pentecost” we all need to experience.

The Church’s commitment and vocation to evangelization can be understood only within this context. If the Church is called to be faithful to the mission entrusted to her by Christ, that is, if the Church is communion and called to be in communion, how can she ignore her call to make disciples of all nations (cf. Mt 28:18ff)? Pope Paul VI describes this responsibility in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

“It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God’s mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame - what St. Paul called ‘blushing for the Gospel’ - or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God, who wishes the seed to bear fruit through the voice of the ministers of the Gospel; and it will depend on us whether this grows into trees and produces its full fruit.”¹⁴

Thus, the urgency of this task, of this vocation, is not restricted to the twenty-first century. It is the Church’s mission and vocation in every age. Through evangelization the Church rediscovers her vocation as *Ecclesia mater*, as Mother Church, “who begets children for the Lord by transmitting the faith to them and teaching them the love which generates and nourishes her children.”¹⁵

Thus, it is clear that the Church has been sent out and given a mandate to evangelize the world. According to Paul VI, this observation should awaken in us two convictions:¹⁶

¹³ Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, no. 2.

¹⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* no. 80.

¹⁵ Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, no. 2.

¹⁶ Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* no. 60.

- 1) It is a deeply ecclesial act rather than an isolated individual one: “This presupposes that he acts not in virtue of a mission which he attributes to himself or by a personal inspiration, but in union with the mission of the Church and in her name.”
- 2) The evangelizer received his mandate from the Lord, “...no evangelizer is the absolute master of his evangelizing action, with a discretionary power to carry it out in accordance with individualistic criteria and perspectives; he acts in communion with the Church and her pastors.”

Neither the divine origin of the vocation to evangelize nor its profound ecclesial character can be denied.

What is denied or minimized, however, is the urgency of this vocation in the present hour. As noted in the *Lineamenta* for the upcoming Synod on the New Evangelization, “we are living in a particularly significant, historic moment of change, of tension and of a loss of equilibrium and points of reference. These times are increasingly forcing us to live immersed in the present and in passing things which make it increasingly difficult for us to listen, to transmit an appreciation for the past and to share values on which to build the future for new generations.”¹⁷ In the present hour, the Church, her members, and her vocation to evangelize all are challenged in new and untold ways. In the face of secularization, globalization, moral relativism, and the disintegration of Christian identity, the Church appears to be irrelevant. Yet, it is precisely at this weak moment that the Church must rise and give the strongest witness to Christ. In the Letter to the Romans, Apostle Paul writes that all creation is yearning for God (cf. Rom 8:22). There is abundant evidence that our world, our time, and our people are yearning to receive *again and anew* the message of life and salvation. Pope John Paul II makes reference to this urgency in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, saying that the mission of Christ the Redeemer is still only beginning. He writes, “In the name of the whole Church, I sense an urgent duty to repeat this cry of St. Paul. From the beginning of my Pontificate I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern. My direct contact with peoples who do not know Christ has convinced me even more of the urgency of missionary activity, a subject to which I am devoting the present encyclical.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, no. 3.

¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* [On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, (7 Dec 1990)], no. 1.

Thus, the primary goal of evangelization is to lead others to an encounter and friendship with Christ and achieving a state of holiness which is in union with God. This primary goal is achieved in three ways. First, Catholic evangelization seeks to form Catholics to be evangelizers, that is, to bring about in all Catholics such enthusiasm for their faith that in living their faith, they freely share it with others.¹⁹ The first task of evangelization, the first step in the ongoing and gradual process, is the reception and encounter with the Word. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”²⁰ The task of the members of Church is to first deepen our own encounter and friendship with Christ. It is only after this can we only bring others to that same experience.

The second step is to invite all people to Jesus, so that they may join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.²¹ In the *Lineamenta* for the First Malankara Catholic Church Assembly, these first two steps are summarized as three phases in evangelization: i) start from Jerusalem; ii) go through Samaria; iii) reach the ends of the earth.²² The third step is to foster and promote gospel values so that the transformation through the saving power of Christ may continue.²³ Evangelization demands that Christians be zealous in their faith and invite others to share this enthusiasm, contributing to the formation and fostering of a culture and Church that are completely defined by life-giving values. This entails a bold ecclesial commitment to self-sacrifice for the sake of the gospel.

The First Evangelization

Evangelization thus demands that all men and women be evangelized. The most obvious aspect of evangelization is the mission *ad gentes*, the mission “to the nations”. Surprising as it may seem, even today there are many who live outside purview of the saving message of Christ. Yet, the Gospel of Christ must be preached to all human beings, since it transcends the barriers of race, gender, nationality and socio-economic condition. Everyone, including those of non-

¹⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples* no. 46.

²⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* [On Christian Love], (25 Dec 2005), no. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

²¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples* no. 53. Here again, ecumenism and evangelization are linked together.

²² Abraham Mar Julios, *Lineamenta* “From Experience to Testimony: Thematic Guidelines for Study and Discussion”, Introduction, Methodology.

²³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples* no. 56.

Christian traditions, cultures, and religions have a right to hear the Word and to experience Christ.

Pastoral Sollicitude

Since the Church is inseparably connected to Christ, joining the Church is not an option for salvation but a necessity. Thus, the Council Fathers teach in *Lumen Gentium*, “Therefore, those could not be saved who refuse either to enter the church, or to remain in it, while knowing that it was founded by God through Christ as required for salvation.”²⁴ Catholic evangelization, therefore, includes ecumenism. As St. Paul writes in his letter to the Christians of Ephesus, Christ comes “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10, RSV; cf. Jn 12:32), so too does the Church, as Christ’s Body (1 Cor 12:21ff.; Eph 3:23; 5:23), continue that same mission.²⁵ As the renowned English Dominican theologian, Aidan Nichols, describes it, “a principal goal of the economy of salvation is the undoing of human divisions – divisions within the human family, and division between the human family and its Maker, these two types of division being seen as mutually implicated, one leading to the other.”²⁶ Similarly, *Lumen Gentium*, the Council Fathers teach: “... equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, [the Church] receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King.”²⁷ It is not surprising then that the Church is referred as “a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”²⁸ The unity of the Church, therefore, proceeds from the way in which the Church is constituted. The primary question of Catholic ecumenism, and thus Catholic evangelization, then, is not how unity can be achieved, but rather how Christ established it.²⁹

²⁴ *Lumen Gentium* no. 14.

²⁵ Edward F. Hanahoe, “Catholic Ecumenism.” (STD diss., Catholic University of America, 1953) 47.

²⁶ Aidan Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism*, 2nd edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 28.

²⁷ *Lumen Gentium* no. 5.

²⁸ *Lumen Gentium* no. 1.

²⁹ Hanahoe, “Catholic Ecumenism” 76. Cf. Lintu Markose, “Pilgrimage of Communion: The Ecumenical Vocation of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church in the 21st Century” (MA thesis, Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, 2011) 9.

Finally, evangelization involves the ongoing conversion of the members of the Church. Catholic evangelization is thus directed to Catholics themselves too! For Father Robert Rivers, an American Paulist priest and theologian, evangelization must challenge “all baptized persons to a conversion to Christ, by living their faith fully, sharing it freely, and living these gospel values in the world.”³⁰ Christianity, faith, and salvation, moreover, in the view of then-Cardinal Ratzinger, involve a *metanoia*, “the conversion from an I-involvement to a relationship of trust and to being included in a relationality that precedes the human being; a relationality that touches the human being so much that it changes the horizon of meaning of his or her own existence.”³¹ The Church and her members are always in need of constant renewal. In *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, Cardinal Ratzinger contrasts true and false reform. In his view, false reform seeks to move “from the paternalistic Church to the community Church; no one must any longer remain a passive receiver of the gift of Christian existence. Rather all should be active agents of it.”³² The difficulty with such positions, however, is that “a church based on human resolutions becomes a merely human church. It is reduced to the level of the makeable, of the obvious, of opinion. Opinion replaces faith.”³³ False reform, therefore, does not take into account the vertical dimension of communion or the relationship between God and mankind. True reform, on the other hand, “does not consist in constantly remodeling ‘our’ Church according to our taste, or in inventing her ourselves, but in ceaselessly clearing away our subsidiary constructions to let in the pure light that comes from above and that is also the dawning of pure freedom.”³⁴ Ratzinger compares true reform to a painter or sculptor uncovering or releasing the noble form already present.³⁵ Reform then is “ever-renewed *ablatio* – removal, whose purpose is to allow the *nobilis forma*, the countenance of the bride, and with it the Bridegroom himself, the living Lord, to appear. Such *ablatio*, such, ‘negative theology’, is a path to something wholly positive.”^{36,37}

³⁰ Robert Rivers, *From Maintenance to Mission* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 18.

³¹ Lieven Boeve, “Christ, Humanity, and Salvation” in *The Ratzinger Reader*, ed. Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion (London: T & T Clark, 2010) 53; Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005) nos. 11, 14-16.

³² Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, trans. Adrian Walker, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 137.

³³ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion* 139.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁵ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion* 141; cf. Gerard Mannion “Understanding the Church: Fundamental Ecclesiology” in *The Ratzinger Reader*, ed. Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion (London: T & T Clark, 2010) 86.

³⁶ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion* 142.

³⁷ The preceding paragraph is drawn with express permission from Markose, “Pilgrimage of Communion” 29-30.

The implications of this emphasis on the need for conversion and growth are great for evangelization, and even greater for society as a whole. Additionally, it helps us to better understand the context in which the new evangelization has sprung up. Having thus examined the theological dimensions of evangelization, and having highlighted the urgency of the present hour with regard to the need for evangelization, we now introduce the theme of the new evangelization before proceeding to the role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

The New Evangelization

To this point we have considered the dominical nature of the Church's missionary mandate. Likewise, we have considered its various dimensions and foundations. We proceed now to begin to answer the question posed at the beginning, namely, "how ought Christians to preach an unchanging Truth in an ever-changing world?" As already mentioned, the content of evangelization in the 21st century remains the salvific life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, much the same as in the first century. The method and means of expressing this core content, however, is dependent on the time, place, and culture to which the Gospel is presented. Pope Benedict XVI observes, (in *Ubicumque et Semper*, which established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization), that the advances in science and technology and other developments have consequences in the religious life of man:

If on the one hand humanity has derived undeniable benefits from these changes, and the Church has drawn from them further incentives for bearing witness to the hope that is within her (cf. 1 Pt 3:15), on the other hand there has been a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred, which has even called into question foundations once deemed unshakeable such as faith in a provident creator God, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, and a common understanding of basic human experiences: i.e., birth, death, life in a family, and reference to a natural moral law.³⁸

It is not surprising then that Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, and now Pope Benedict XVI, have repeatedly called for and worked to promote a new evangelization.

The expression "new evangelization" originates with Pope Paul VI, who in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* spoke of "a fresh forward impulse, capable of creating within a Church still more

³⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter in the Form of a Motu Proprio *Ubicumque et Semper* [Establishing the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization (21 Sept 2010)] par. 2. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921_ubicumque-et-semper_en.html.

firmly rooted in the undying power and strength of Pentecost a new period of evangelization.”³⁹ This theme was developed during the pontificate of Blessed John Paul II. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, for example, he addresses the need for the new evangelization: “...there is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a ‘new evangelization’ or a ‘re-evangelization.’”⁴⁰ Moreover, in the same encyclical he highlights some challenges faced by traditionally Christian countries, including de-Christianization, secularization, and the proliferation of religions and religious sects.⁴¹ The new evangelization is not the preaching of a new gospel or the “trimming away from the gospel everything that seems difficult for the contemporary mindset to accept.”⁴² Rather, the new evangelization is new in its ardor, methods and expression.⁴³ In other words, the contemporary “drama of fragmentation” has given shape to a vision of life which is in contrast with the faith; to respond, the Church is called to renew her, vigor, enthusiasm and courage in proclamation of the Gospel.⁴⁴

The exclusion of God from people’s lives, the indifference toward the Christian faith, and the abandonment of Gospel values are all readily evident. The new evangelization seeks to express the Gospel message in dialogue with the challenges of contemporary society and cultures. “In facing these challenges, the Church does not give up or retreat into herself; instead, she undertakes a project to revitalize herself. She makes the Person of Jesus Christ and a personal encounter with him central to her thinking, knowing that he will give his Spirit and provide the force to announce and proclaim the Gospel in new ways which can speak to today’s cultures. Thus, the new evangelization is effective only to the extent in which it participates in the aforementioned *ablatis*, allowing God to renew and reveal the true and noble form of the Church. The *Lineamenta* for next year’s Synod on the New Evangelization identifies six sectors

³⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* no.1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 33.

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 32.

⁴² National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *New Evangelization, Human Development, Christian Culture: Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops*, Santo Domingo, 12-18 October 1992, translated by Phillip Berryman (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Office of Pub. and Promotion Services, 1993) no. 47.

⁴³ Pope John Paul II, Speech to the CELAM Assembly in Port-au-Prince (9 Mar 1983), in *Pope John Paul II to CELAM: The Task of Latin American Bishop*, *Origins* 12 (1983), 659-661.

⁴⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, Plenary Address.

which call for the new evangelization.⁴⁵ The new evangelization calls for dialogue with these sectors, that is, for dialogue with society and cultures. “The new evangelization calls us to engage in dialogue with these sectors, not remaining confined to our communities and our institutions, but accepting the challenge to take part in these phenomena so as to speak and bear witness in these sectors, from the inside. This is the form of Christian *martyria* in today’s world, engaging in dialogue even with the recent forms of a militant atheism or an extreme secularism, whose purpose is to eliminate the subject of God from human life.”⁴⁶

To conclude the treatment of the new evangelization, it is appropriate to refer once more to the *Lineamenta* for the Synod on the New Evangelization. “No part of the Church is exempt from this project. The Christian Churches of ancient origin must deal with the problem of many who have abandoned the practice of the faith; the younger Churches, through the process of inculturation, must continually take measures allowing them to bring the Gospel to everyday life, a process which not only purifies and elevates culture, but, above all, opens culture to the newness of the Gospel. Generally speaking, every Christian community must rededicate itself to its programme of pastoral care which seems to become more difficult and in danger of falling into a routine, and thus little able to communicate its original aims and goals.”⁴⁷ The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, therefore, is not exempt from this task of evangelization and new evangelization and indeed has a unique and particular missionary role.

The Missionary Role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

Ample consideration has been given thus far to establishing an adequate understanding of evangelization and new evangelization in order to create a foundation and framework around which the missionary role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church could be discussed.

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, as a Major Archiepiscopal *sui iuris* Church in the Catholic communion of the Malankara Syrian tradition, has a unique role to play in the evangelization work of the Universal Church. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church shares the patrimony and liturgical traditions of the other Churches of the Malankara Syrian tradition, while

⁴⁵ The six sectors calling for the new evangelization are 1) culture; 2) migration and globalization; 3) social communications; 4) economy; 5) scientific and technological research; and, 6) civic and political life. It is beyond the scope of the present work to treat each of these individually. Refer instead to Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, no. 6.

⁴⁶ Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, no. 7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 10.

enjoying the fullness of the Catholic Communion.⁴⁸ She is at the same time Malankara Syrian and Catholic; which means that she is not Orthodox, Latin, or Syro-Malabar. Though related to these, she is utterly different and, as such, her missionary role is unique.

Let us now consider various aspects of the missionary role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Ever since the historic re-union of 1930, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is relentlessly engaged in the evangelization work of the Church. Missionary work was not an essential element within the life of the Syrian Churches in India. In a way, the Syrian Churches did a disservice to the people of India when they failed to proclaim Christ to the entire nation. In the Indian context, the Malankara Catholic Church has a special role in the evangelization of those who have not heard the Gospel and in those who have not yet entered the Church. It should be noted here that the Eparchy of Marthandom is the direct result of the mission work of the Malankara Catholic Church. Now this “experiment” should be expanded to the other parts of India and to the rest of the world to the maximum extent possible.

In the context of the Exarchate, moreover, greater care and study is needed to understand the great vocation of the Malankara Church in North America. The Exarchate in particular has the role of “confessor between East and West”. Within her own members, there is a meeting of East and West, so how can she not seek to bridge the gap between these two cultures? Our discussion in the Assembly should lead to the formulation of possible recommendations in this area.

Another aspect of the missionary role of Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is ecumenical.⁴⁹ Here it is fitting to introduce the principle of catholicity, since this principle provides greater insight not only into the way in which Christ constituted unity in the Church but also her missionary mandate.⁵⁰ In the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, the Council Fathers speak of the diversity which exists in the unity of the Catholic Church:

The Holy Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government and who, combining together into various groups which are held together by a hierarchy, form separate Churches or

⁴⁸ Cf. Markose, “Pilgrimage of Communion” 36, 56.

⁴⁹ The discussion of the ecumenical role of the Malankara Catholic Church is taken directly from the following: Markose, “Pilgrimage of Communion” 14-16, 58f. It is used with the express and explicit consent of the author.

⁵⁰ Charles Journet, *Theology of the Church*, trans. Victor Szczurek and Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004 [French Original, 1958]), 313.

Rites. Between these there exists an admirable bond of union, such that the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place.⁵¹

St. Paul alludes to the diversity in union in his Body of Christ metaphor (1 Cor 12), where the diversity of gifts is necessary for the building up of the Church. The diversity of Eastern Catholic Churches is the strongest witness to the universality or catholicity of the Catholic Church, the one Church of Christ.⁵² The same faith is expressed in a diversity of liturgical traditions and cultures through these Churches. This diversity in unity allows the Catholic Church to preach the Gospel to all nations. “The Eastern Churches are preserved because of what they represent to the Church as a whole. While the faith itself cannot be subject to change, all kinds of differences are possible and even desirable in the ordinary details of Christian life, looked at from a social standpoint. Ecclesiastical unity is not and never can be a matter of rigid uniformity. The Catholic faith is not a theorem having no relevance to life.”⁵³ Thus, the Eastern Catholic Churches witness to the value of authentic diversity in Catholic unity.

The Eastern Catholic Churches have a unique role in evangelization and ecumenism distinct from the Latin Church and even the Bishop of Rome. According to the Melkite Patriarch, Maximos IV Sayegh (d. 1967), “...the Eastern Catholic Churches represent a powerful and indispensable means for the establishment of Christian unity, but only if they maintain, and are helped to maintain, a two-fold and equal loyalty toward Catholicism and the East. If they are wanting in either regard, they can only harm the cause of unification.”⁵⁴ The unique role of the Eastern Catholic Churches arises from their unique relationship to the separated Churches and their place in the Catholic communion. As N. Edelby, a Melkite bishop, describes it, “None are in fact better placed to understand and love the communities that resist union than those who have been bold enough, because they love them, to go a little way ahead of them on the road

⁵¹ *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* no. 2.

⁵² Refer Leo XIII, Encyclical *Orientalium Dignitas*. [On the Churches of the East (30 November 1884)], in *Leonis XIII Acta*, vol. XIV, pp. 201-202; Second Vatican Council, Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (21 November 1964, nos. 1, 3, 5-6, in Flannery, Austin, ed. *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (new rev. ed.). Northport: Costello Publishing, 1996.

⁵³ Neophytos Edelby, “Our Vocation as Eastern Christians” in Sayegh, Maximos IV, ed. *The Eastern Churches and Catholic Unity*, trans. John Dingle (Freiburg: Herder, 1963) 42.

⁵⁴ Maximos IV Sayegh. “The Eastern Role in Christian Reunion” in Sayegh, Maximos IV, ed. *The Eastern Churches and Catholic Unity*, trans. John Dingle (Freiburg: Herder, 1963) 47. Cf. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* no. 24.

which they too must take in due course if they are to find Christ in all his fullness.”⁵⁵ Within the Catholic communion, these Eastern Catholic Churches witness to authentic diversity lived out in the unity of the Catholic Church. As Cyril Mar Baselios (d. 2007), wrote, “it is the actual presence of the Western and Eastern Catholic Churches in the big Catholic communion, presided over by the Bishop of the Apostolic See of Rome, that made this truth of catholicity a real ecclesial experience.”⁵⁶ No one is better poised to understand the separated Malankara Syrian Christians. No one is better poised to explain and witness the beauty of communion. No one is better poised to create a favorable atmosphere for return to the universal communion.⁵⁷

The Malankara Catholic Church must continue to maintain contact with her Orthodox brethren. Patriarch Maximos of the Melkite Church identifies two areas, fidelity to patrimony and cooperation, in which the Eastern Catholics must continue to grow and exercise greater prudence and charity.⁵⁸ As a *sui iuris* Catholic Church, the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church must remain faithful to her liturgical, spiritual, and disciplinary patrimony. As Patriarch Maximos makes clear,

The [continued] existence of the Eastern Catholic churches is not a trap we set for the Orthodox... We must be convinced that Christianity can never accomplish its mission in the world unless it is Catholic; that is, universal not only in law but also in actual fact.⁵⁹

Thus, the effectiveness of the Malankara Church’s missionary endeavors depends on the extent to which the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church remains faithful to her patrimony and heritage. In this way, she witnesses to authentic catholicity, authentic diversity, in the Catholic communion, which at the same time enriches the Catholic Church and provides a strong witness to her separated brethren.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Edelby, “Our Vocation as Eastern Christians” 36.

⁵⁶ Cyril Mar Baselios, “The Malankara Catholic Church: Its Ecumenical Role” 131, in *Emerging Trends in Malankara Catholic Theology: Vision and Contributions of Cyril Mar Baselios*, ed. Issac Thottunkal (Rome: Mar Thoma Yogam, 1995).

⁵⁷ Edelby, “Our Vocation as Eastern Christians” 34.

⁵⁸ Cf. Sayegh, “Eastern Role in Christian Reunion” 55-56.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁰ Mar Baselios, “Ecumenical Role” 146ff.; cf. Sayegh, “Eastern Role in Christian Reunion” 61: “We have, therefore, a two-fold mission to accomplish within the Catholic Church. We must fight to ensure that Latinism and Catholicism are not synonymous, that Catholicism remains open to every culture, every spirit, and every form of organization compatible with the unity of faith and love. At the same time, by our example, we must enable the Orthodox Church to recognize that a union with the great Church of the West, with the See of Peter, can be achieved without their being compelled to give up Orthodoxy or any of the spiritual treasures of the apostolic and patristic East which is open towards the future no less than towards the past.”

Practical Application

Our discussion has centered on establishing a theoretical framework in which to understand the concepts of evangelization and new evangelization and to understand the missionary role of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. To assist in the practical application and realization of the Malankara Catholic Church's missionary vocation, the following three ideas are suggested:

First, a program of doctrinal formation for the whole Church is needed since pastoral strategy requires a sound doctrinal foundation and a solid faith formation. This program of doctrinal formation would be for all members of the Church, including bishops, priests and religious, and the faithful.

- 1) For the bishops: Current administrative and pastoral demands often prevent bishops from finding time for serious study and reflection. For their enrichment, it would be beneficial if they could come together twice annually to study the recent teachings of the Church under the direction of experts in the theological fields. These meetings should be an opportunity to engage in serious theological discussion. In this way, bishops would be better able to fulfill their teaching office. This could be conducted in conjunction with the Synodal Gatherings or other Major ecclesial events where all the bishops of the Church come together.
- 2) For priests and religious: Although there are a variety of ongoing formation programs for priests and religious already in place, their effectiveness is minimized by their administrative and pastoral commitments. A monthly gathering for discussing study material which is prepared for the ongoing formation of priests and religious would be an ideal way to foster continued education on the teachings of the Church. Moreover, days of recollection should be conducted on an eparchial or exarchial level with this purpose in mind. This formation could be based on priests' year of ordination, for greater participation and fruitfulness. Religious, too, should find a way to come together to continue their theological formation.
- 3) For the lay faithful: There have been significant improvements in the formation of laity after Vatican II. The contributions of the laity to the growth and development of the Church cannot be emphasized enough, but there ought to be great lay involvement and participation. One of the primary emphases of the New Evangelization is the witness of holiness in conversions and the transformation of society. The primary and ultimate means of evangelization is not the eloquence of words, but the faithful and holy witness of Christian life. Through their participation in the world, the laity have a unique role which bishops and priests do not share. The Second Vatican Council speaks of the noble vocation of the laity in this way: "Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and

circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. ⁶¹Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself ‘according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal’.” The laity should be accorded proper formation that through them, the Church can fulfill her evangelical mission and make a distinct contribution in the social, political, and cultural spheres. Proper pastoral and catechetical care should be given to the families.

In addition to the program of doctrinal formation, a program of spiritual formation is also necessary since nothing is effective without prayer. Though listed second, this program of spiritual formation is no way secondary or inferior to the program of doctrinal formation. For Syro-Malankara Catholics, Christian spirituality is ecclesial in nature and is deeply rooted in the Liturgy. What it means to be Christian is intimately tied to the Liturgy. The expression of adoration in the Liturgy becomes an expression of not only how we understand God but also ourselves. Fr. Givergis Panicker Karichal, in his book, *The Holy Qurbano in the Syro-Malankara Church* explains that the mission of the Christian begins where sacramental celebration ends.⁶² “The dismissal at the end of each Mass is *a charge* given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values.”⁶³ Not surprisingly, then, the Council Fathers teach that “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”⁶⁴ but it is the source and summit of the Church’s activity.⁶⁵ One of the strengths of Malankara Christians is family prayer. The daily gathering of the family for prayer in the evening and in the morning orients and shapes each day and this is something unique to the Syrian Tradition in India. Wherever the Malankarites have migrated they have taken this tradition with them and attempts should be made to preserve this sacred tradition even when there are several elements working against it. In the North American context we need to adopt a culturally and linguistically successful strategy to disseminate the hidden depth of our liturgical tradition to the younger generation.

The liturgy also makes present and anticipates the divinization or *theosis* of humanity. “From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a font, grace is poured

⁶¹ *Lumen Gentium* no. 33.

⁶² Cf. Givergis Panicker Karichal, *The Holy Qurbano in the Syro-Malankara Church* (Kottayam, India: SEERI, 1999) 69-70.

⁶³ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, no. 24.

⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [On the Sacred Liturgy (24 Nov 1964) no. 9, in Austin Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (new rev. ed.) (Northport: Costello Publishing, 1996).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 10.

forth upon us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way.”⁶⁶ St. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.” (Phil 3:20). This eschatological orientation ought to have direct bearing on our life: how we understand our pilgrimage, how we understand our relationship to God, how we understand the Liturgy itself, and even how we live our lives. Integral to this program of spiritual formation is liturgical catechesis, as this will foster and promote not only knowledge of our rich liturgical and spiritual traditions, but will also encourage better and conscious participation.

The following is a list of possible practical ideas for the future missionary work of the Malankara Catholic Church in general. Many of these suggestions might already be operative in the mission field. Some of the reflections might not work for all situations and it is up to the leadership of the Church to identify what is best for each one, based on the need and circumstance.

- ❖ As a result of the General Assembly, the Synod could come up with a document which outlines a plan for evangelization and new evangelization which would be applicable to the entire Church. Each parish, institution, religious community, and organization could come up with its own plan of evangelization based on this proposed document. This document, moreover, would include both short-term and long-term plans. The Church in North America should make a study based on a survey addressing all the challenges of evangelization and new evangelization needs of the Malankarites in North America. A collective effort should be made to implement suggestions which could be applied in our situation after prayer, discussion and proper approval from authorities.
- ❖ The Church in North America should make a study based on a survey addressing all the challenges of evangelization and new evangelization needs of the Malankarites in North America. A collective effort should be made to implement suggestions which could be applied in our situation after prayer, discussion and proper approval from authorities.
- ❖ Each eparchy or exarchate could have an office or department which would develop new programs and also provide helpful educational materials for evangelization. Regular monitoring and guidance from such a department will accelerate our

⁶⁶ Ibid.

- evangelization efforts. This department could take up the challenge of disseminating the ideas of the new documents of the Church to the people.
- ❖ Our secular institutions should also be a means of evangelization even when the scope of direct evangelization through them is limited. The people who are engaged in giving leadership in this area can become evangelizers by witnessing the gospel of Christ in their everyday life and hence become agents of conversion: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”⁶⁷ Institutions should be a means for evangelization since much time, energy, and money are invested in these institutions.
 - ❖ Economically-viable parishes ought to come forward to adopt parishes in the mission areas rather than creating big projects for themselves. Religiously-educated and spiritually-mature people from our communities can provide leadership in prayer meetings and teach adult classes in the poorer missions. Skilled and educated people can provide their knowledge and advice to start small scale industries to raise their economic status. These parishes could offer scholarships to students from poor parishes who show excellence in educational skills.
 - ❖ All celebrations, especially parish festivals, must be conducted with a sense of evangelizing the parish community and to be witnessing to all who come to experience it. Meaningful celebrations always lead to conversion of hearts and minds.
 - ❖ Furthermore, Institutions and parishes should write their mission statement in relation to our commitment to evangelization.
 - ❖ Greater concentration must be given in forming the family after the Holy Family, since each family is the corner stone of the Church which underlines our concept of family as the domestic church.⁶⁸
 - ❖ Modern communication systems should effectively be used as they are great tools for evangelization. We should explore the possibility of utilizing internet through blogs and social networking, television, radio, newspapers and magazines to spread the Good News. The skills of the laity, if properly utilized, would greatly benefit the Church in this area.
 - ❖ Our bishops’ houses, rectories, convents, formation houses are houses of prayer. We should also encourage and provide the regular employees of these institutions and houses to pray together as they also need to be evangelized through us. Regular adoration, rosaries, sharing of the word of God and other devotional practices could be helpful in growing in the spiritual life in these places.
 - ❖ Priests, religious, and spiritually enriched and educated lay people should conduct adult Bible classes and other spiritual formation classes in parishes on a regular basis besides the annual retreats and pious organizations’ gatherings.

⁶⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

⁶⁸ Refer *Lumen Gentium* no. 11.

- ❖ Each parish and institution should have a library (depending on the need and viability), to provide religious books and to foster reading habits.
- ❖ Forums for dialogue should be initiated from parish to diocese levels with people of other religious faith since we live in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. We should encourage the study of other religions not only to have a respect for all cultures but also to preach our faith and belief in an effective way. Conversion occurs out of dialogue and mutual respect.
- ❖ Faithful should be properly instructed and educated through classes and other literary materials to face the challenges posed by Pentecostal and other non-denominational churches.
- ❖ Different prayer groups should be formed to visit the sick, homebound and elderly to meet their spiritual needs. Parish priests should be informed about the need of bringing the sacraments to such people through their help in larger parishes.
- ❖ Evangelization calls for working for the poor as it might take us closer to Christ: "...the poor are those to whom the mission is first addressed, and their evangelization is par excellence the sign and proof of the mission of Jesus."⁶⁹ We should adopt special programs to address the needs of the poor.
- ❖ Accountability and transparency in financial and mission related works might stand as a mark of credibility for all who are involved with mission work.

Conclusion

When the Church carries out the work of Christ in an explicit evangelizing mission, it will remedy much of the upheaval we face and will assist the Church in its mission to continue to be light to the nations.⁷⁰ Evangelization, the preaching of the good news of salvation and the Gospel of Christ, is an ecclesial act rooted in the Trinitarian communion and communication. It is the fundamental duty of the Church, a task given to her by Christ (Mt 28:19ff.), one which she cannot ignore or overlook. As the fundamental duty of the Church, every Christian, by virtue of their baptism, is called to evangelize, each according to their state in life and vocation:

For those of us who practice and live our Catholic faith, it is a call to ongoing growth and renewed conversion. For those who have accepted it only in name, it is a call to re-evangelization. For those who have stopped practicing their faith, it is a call to reconciliation. For children, it is a call to be formed into disciples through the family's faith life and religious education. For other Christians, it is an invitation to know the fullness of our message. For those who

⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* no. 60

⁷⁰ Cf. Robert Rivers, "Evangelization in the Contemporary Catholic Church" 57, in *Evangelizing America*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004).

have no faith, it is a call to conversion to know Christ Jesus and thus experience a change to new life with Christ and his Church.⁷¹

As we have noted earlier, because of her unique position within the Malankara Syrian Tradition and in the Catholic communion, and as a result of her origin and development in India, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church has a unique missionary role. No one else is better poised to convince our separated brethren of the fullness and beauty of the Catholic communion.⁷²

To answer the question posed at the beginning of this presentation in light of this discussion. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church preaches the unchanging Truth in an ever-changing world by remaining faithful to her ancient patrimony while engaging the surrounding cultures in authentic dialogue, and by remaining open to God, allowing Him to reveal the noble form of the Church.

“Hence, we Christians must start from Christ, from contemplation of Him who has revealed to us in his mystery, the complete fulfillment of the human vocation and its meaning. We need to become docile disciples, to learn from Him, in following him, the dignity and fullness of life. We likewise need to be consumed by missionary zeal, to bring to the heart of the culture of our time that unifying and full meaning of human life that neither science, nor politics, nor economics, nor the media can provide.”⁷³

Even if transient things fall, Christ will remain constant, because He is the same, “yesterday, today, and forever.”

⁷¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples* no. 27.

⁷² Markose, “Pilgrimage of Communion” 36.

⁷³ Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (Conference of Latin American Bishops), *Concluding Document of the Fifth General Conference of Latin American Bishops* (May 13-31, 2007), no. 41, Aparacedia, Brazil, 2007, http://www.nccbuscc.org/latinamerica/english/aparecida_Ingles.pdf (May 31, 2011).

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Appendix V: Paper Responses

The Response of Father Sunny Mathew Kavuvila to Father Mathew's Paper

Thank you, Father Thomas Malayil, for your good words of introduction. As he introduced me here, my duty is to respond to Fr. Mathew's paper, and I will highlight certain points that caught my attention. This is a loud reflection, and hence, there will be many questions. That does not mean that I have ready-made answers for them; nor does it mean that they are simple affirmations on my part. It is only an attempt to introduce us to a collective reflection.

First of all, let me say that Father Mathew's paper is a well-studied and well thought-out paper. Of course, this is his specialization and he must be at his best as he deals with this subject. He has put in his intellectual acumen, his experience of the American *sitz im Leben*, that means the American life context, his love for the Church and above all his spiritual convictions.

One word about his methodology: He has made use of the method of deduction. He begins with the universals and then comes to the particulars. That means the point of departure for the paper is a very summary statement about evangelization beautifully summarized by Avery Dulles, whom Fr. Mathew quotes in p. 3. From this universal proposition, he proceeds to see the role of the individual Churches and that of the Malankara Church in particular. Coming to the quote from Avery Dulles, "Evangelization is bringing the whole of human life and the whole of universe under the sway of God's word". We all know the age old wisdom, summarized in the Latin saying, *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, for the greater glory of God. It is from there, that we actually begin our missionary work.

Trinity is the model for the Church. She imitates and mirrors both the divine communion and the divine communication. Thus, evangelization has its origin in the most Holy Trinity. It is not only a Christological necessity, but a Trinitarian necessity for the Church. If the whole universe is the result of the overwhelming love of God, and if God dwells in the heart of human beings, then genuine human being cannot but evangelize. It is an anthropological necessity too. It is unfortunate to tell before you that there are even priests who believe that there is no need of evangelization, which they would like to call as conversion. Once I had an argument with a person who dumped all evangelization efforts of the Church as efforts with ulterior motives of

conversion. And he held that conversion is a characteristic of all Semitic religions, which is the cause of real trouble for the peace of the world.

Here the question is what the person understands with the word evangelization. If we can understand it as Fr. Mathew presents it, along the line of thought of Avery Dulles, then we will be on the right track. Evangelization is not the characteristic of Semitic religions, but that of a true man/woman of God.

In Tamil there is beautiful saying,

It is not strange that in the booklet published by the Catholicate Centre, proclamation of the Gospel comes only in the fourth place after, receiving the Word, living the Word, and celebrating the Word. Mar Ivanious Thirumeni would say, deification of oneself, or possessing God is much more important than the service for God.

To come back to the point of Fr. Mathew, evangelization is bringing first of all the personal life under the sway of God. And when one is under the divine influence, he cannot but be opened towards others. Unless we are so selfish, how can we keep such an important, such a joyful message only for ourselves? God is never turned towards himself or closed in himself. He overflows, overflows in his love. The person who is really under the sway of God can also never be closed in himself. He must overflow with the divine mandate of reconciling everything in Christ.

When I say that evangelization is the overflow of divine experience, what do I mean concretely? Let me put three general points:

1. Our faith unlocks the gates of heaven. Do we really believe it? There are certain non-denominational Christians, or even Jahweh witnesses who ask, are you saved? How many of us can answer with inner conviction that I am a saved person. We stumble, and he takes the advantage of it. Instead, we should be persons who are really convinced of the effect of our catholic faith. After our Sunday worship, do we talk of its positive aspect at least to one person in our office, at home, or to our friend? When one person, who belongs to our community, does not come to the Church, does our heart really ache? Do we feel that we are incomplete in some way?
2. Our hope gives light to a world in darkness. Let me quote from an article which I recently read, "If there were ever a time when sinners needed conversion, if there

were ever a time when captives needed to be set free and mountains of pain and depression removed, if there were ever a time when the human race needed sanctification and salvation, if there were ever a time when the whole world needed to hear and follow Christ's teaching on love, mercy, and forgiveness, that time is now."⁷⁴ In such a world of darkness, are we able to present Jesus as the true light? And do we understand the emergency of doing it?

3. Our love brings healing to the brokenhearted.

Perhaps, another important aspect that I love in Father Mathew's paper is the inner connection between ecumenism and missionary movement. In fact, when these two aspects do not determine the basic nature of a Church, that Church is not Church at all. Our Lord said to Peter, turn back and confirm your brethren in faith. Then to the same group of Apostles headed by Peter, he said, go to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nation. The first one is ecumenism and the second one is mission work. They go together and one cannot exist without the other in its true meaning. Mar Ivanios Tirumeni was one of the few persons at that time who understood this inner relationship between ecumenism and evangelization. And that is why, immediately after the reunion, he started thinking about mission work among the non-Christians, and for that purpose, he entitled Msgr. Kuzhinjalil to found a congregation. The Diocese of Marthandam is the best credential for the Malankara Catholic Church for its ability to successfully undertake the mandate of evangelization.

One aspect which the paper does not sufficiently clarify is this. What is the special role of our Exarchate in the evangelization of American society? Do we have any such role in this society? It is said that the Malankara Catholic Church has the vocation to be intermediary between the west and the east. Does it include only the cultural level; or can we say the same with regard to our liturgy too? This is an important point for reflection, especially if we begin Spanish missions of which His Excellency spoke in his address. In that case, are we doing the same error which the Portuguese did in India, importing a liturgy alien to the people? Who are the beneficiaries of our mission work in this respect? If it can be done, how? In substance, what is our specific role in the evangelization of America? In this area, I find the paper deficient.

Can we restrict our mission work to people of Indian-Malankara origin and to their future generations? In that case, is not our mission work one sided, without the necessary *ad extra*

⁷⁴ Tom Forrest, p. 54.

dimension? Is it enough to let the Latin Church do the mission work, and we keep going on with our own people?

Father Mathew spoke about a plan of action. Yes, we need to chalk out a plan of action for our exarchate evangelization. In this process, we have to identify the primary groups who would benefit from our evangelization. For instance, the National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States adopted by the Bishops Conference of the United States identifies five such groups.

1. Practicing Catholics, who are called to a renewal in faith and ongoing conversion.
2. Inactive and alienated Catholics, who are called to reconciliation.
3. Children, who are called to be formed as disciples through the efforts of their parents and religious educators.
4. Christians from other traditions, who are called to the fullness of Christ's message.
5. Those who have no faith in Jesus, who are called to know Christ through Church.

How do we address the needs of these groups? Our success in evangelization will depend on how effectively we can cater to the needs of these groups.

In chalking out this plan of action we need to consider the typical characteristics of American culture and work habit. It is a culture which has its own convictions.

1. Variety is the spice of life.
2. Hire older people to hire younger people for less money.
3. Judge a worker's worth based on production, not seniority or other considerations.
4. If left alone, people will do the right thing. That is why, pastors hesitate to ask someone, why he did not come to the Church the previous Sunday.
5. New is better: In such a culture how do we present the newness of a liturgy which boasts of its original purity?

I will not dare to say that these convictions are all true or false. For that reason, I cannot simply say that we have to accept them or reject them. It is up to us as a Church to assimilate if there are good, or to evangelize and change them if they are false.

Finally, let me say that at least some of you may remind me, these are things easier said, than done. This is because we forget that the ministry of the Word of God was never been an

easy business. Let us look at the effect of the very first sermon, the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul made.

Acts 13:44-52.

The ministry of the Word of God produces curiosity - people want to hear more, and more people want to hear. At the same time, it produces criticism. It produces conversion. But it produces conflict too. Newton's law that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction is valid with regard to the word of God as well.

But Luke writes: "The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

See, how happy the disciples are! They are happy because they are convinced that they are on the winning side. Hence, they believed it with conviction and proclaimed it with confidence. Let that be a conclusion for this Response – Are you a Christian? Are you a Catholic? Believe in what you believe with conviction, and proclaim what you believe with confidence. You are on the winning side.

The Response of Mr. George K. James

Father Mathew Charthakuzhiyil presented an excellent and scholarly study on evangelization. I truly applaud him for his well researched and eminent presentation. That document effectively elicited our knowledge on evangelization.

I examined the document on Evangelization published on behalf of our Holy Synod; it is well written, informative and an authentic document. Well quoted phrases from eminent fathers and theologians are present throughout the document.

I wanted to propose a different approach for undertaking evangelization in the United States. This approach is based on biblical perceptive as well as from a historically proven practical experience.

Someone asked a wiseman as to who was the very first Management Consultant. The answer was Jethro, Moses's father-in-law. In the book of Exodus Chapter 18, verses 14 through 26 we read about the encounter Moses had with his father-in-law, Jethro.

Exodus, Chapter 18 – Verses 14 - 26

The next day Moses sat in judgment for the people, who waited about him from morning until evening. When his father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he inquired, "What sort of thing is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone while all the people have to stand about you from morning till evening?" Moses answered his father-in-law, "The people come to me to consult God. Whenever they have a disagreement, they come to me to have me settle the matter between them and make known to them God's decisions and regulations." "You are not acting wisely," his father-in-law replied. "You will surely wear yourself out, and not only yourself but also these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now, listen to me, and I will give you some advice, that God may be with you. Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to him whatever they have to say. Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing them how they are to live and what they are to do. But you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and set them as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let these men render decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. More important cases they should refer to you, but all the lesser cases they can settle themselves. Thus, your burden will be lightened, since they will bear it with you. If you do this, when God gives you orders you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." Moses followed the advice of his father-in-law and did all that he had suggested. He picked out able men from all Israel and put them in charge of the people as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. They rendered decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. The more difficult cases they referred to Moses, but all the lesser cases they settled themselves.

What beautiful advice! Present day management consultants provide similar advice and earn a lot of money for it.

In our parishes, on Sundays, Achens talk. On Committee meetings and General Body meetings people talk. For many reasons, discussions are not primarily centered on innovative or creative ideas. In a given year some of our achievements in parish level are a *Pally Perunal*, a picnic, several prayer meetings or some other celebrations, of course there are a few exceptions to this. Please don't think that I am criticizing any one, and I am not being pessimistic here or disparaging what we have accomplished thus far.

We need to change our course of action for us to be a relevant and vibrant church in the United States.

Today, I am proposing a slightly different course of action. I wanted to challenge ourselves in what we can do as a community. To take a greater role, representing Christ and spreading the good news within the local communities we live. I am proposing that we achieve this through our actions. That is exactly what Jesus did in his public ministry—He was a teacher, He taught us how to pray He gave us the beautiful and touching Sermon on the Mount. He was a healer, He healed many sick people. He resurrected dead people. He was a provider, He provided for the hungry. Jesus interacted with people not merely with words but with indelible actions.

St. Thomas did not come to India to preach to Christians. He came not knowing the outcome, but he was fervent in his faith. He was not familiar with the land, its people, its language or culture. But he was successful in spreading the good news. Yes it cost him his life. Mother Teresa was an Albanian nun who came to India, not familiar with the language, or the culture of the Indians. Despite that over 45 years she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying while guiding expansion of the Missionary's of Charities first through out India, and then in other countries.

This is the model I wanted to propose for us to undertake for our evangelization ministry. We must focus on two major factors:

- We need to ensure active participation of our youths in all aspects of our activities.
- We need to have a goal for establishing institutions that will cater the needs of all people.

Our task in these endeavors is seemingly less daunting than what St. Thomas or for that matter what mother Teresa had done. I briefly reviewed the 2010 United States census. It is very illuminating in many ways. There are a lot of needy people out there who need our help. I examined the Spanish demographics, its growth and its assimilation into the so called melting pot. I chose the Spanish community because many aspects of our life have commonality with theirs. Predominantly, they are Catholics and they have similar family ties as we do. Many of the Spanish Catholics after coming here tend to leave Catholic faith to embrace born again religions. While these are hard working emigrants like us, they are not sufficiently advancing in economic prosperity due to lack of skills and education. Mortality rate among them are higher than that of Asians or the Whites.

We have more than sufficient professionals among us to provide varied services to people who need our help.

As Jethro advised Moses to train and appoint officers, Malankara Catholic Church should follow similar advice. We need to appoint Deacons and officers and train them in order to spread the good news and to serve.

- Appoint Deacons. Deaconite was maintained in Eastern Churches since the early apostolic times. It must be noted that the first Christian martyr was St. Stephen, who was a deacon. Deacons would fervently minister local communities.
- Assemble a group of young professionals from us and train them to offer varied community services. We have many MBA and PHD degree holders who are ready to volunteer. Appoint them and utilize their skills to perform research to conduct need analysis to ascertain the needs of the people in our communities. They should also tap various resources in order to obtain government and private grants which will enable us to carry out the activities outlined here. These groups of faithful will serve as missionaries of Malankara Church in the US.

Some areas I want to mention where we can help are:

- a. Education: Training school children in Science, Math and Language- We have many teachers among us.
- b. Mentoring: Youths are very much in need of men and women who can provide emotional help, friendship and guidance.
- c. Health Care: Provide basic health care needs – We have many Nurses and Doctors among us.
- d. Other Community Services: visiting hospitals, nursing homes, listening and counseling elderly people. Provide transportation to elderly people to purchase groceries or help them pick up their medications.
- e. Legal Aides: Provide basic legal help - We have many lawyers among us.

Some one might think that in order to work among the Spanish community we need to learn the language. Sure we do. Remember St. Thomas did not know the language when he went to India so also mother Teresa. The language of love is universal. One would wonder how we can do all these. The answer is in front of us.

What is the strength of a Christian? Faith, isn't it? With faith we can move mountains, right.

Let us examine the gifts of Holy Spirit:

1 Corinthians, Chapter 12- Verses 4-11

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

The services I mentioned above are all clearly spelled out in these verses. All we need to do is just follow the Spirit.

In conclusion I propose three initiatives that we will need to adopt from this point on for undertaking the evangelization ministry:

1. To offer gift of service to the needy local communities
2. To be honest and true to our Catholic Church teachings
3. To have faith that the Holy Spirit will guide us

Thanks you and God bless us.

George K. James
14 Best Street
Westwood, NJ 07675

The Response of Dr. Jocelyn Edathil (Representing Women and the Youth)

Your Excellency Thomas Mar Eusebius Thirumeni, Dear Malankara Achens, Sisters and Lay Faithful:

We gather today in the exarchate assembly to meditate upon the themes of the First Malankara Assembly most especially upon evangelization. Most importantly, we assemble to meditate upon how we will be able to allow our exarchate to be the conduit of Christ's love and spread this good news of His love to all.

The Heart of a Missionary

For what is the heart of a missionary? The heart of a missionary is a heart of love.

A missionary is filled with Christ's love and once filled, is no longer able to contain this love and it overflows to the world. We gather to attempt to fulfill Christ's command to "go into all nations and proclaim the good news." Truly the boundaries of the exarchate are the ends of the world. The patron saints of missionaries are St Francis Xavier who went to India and St Therese of Lisieux who realized her "Vocation is Love!"

We have an URGENT mission. We are under a command of love by our Savior.

Our mission is to satiate the thirst of Jesus for souls. Unfortunately, we are often bogged down with mundane matters and we lose sight of the eternal mission of every soul. We are called to love and change the world.

This is the call of every Christian.

Experience in America

As we reflect upon our unique Malankara Catholic experience in the US, we should remember our context. We are eastern, Indian, American and immigrant.

We are a church of immigrants in this land and we should remember that it was the immigrant who came to this country who brought the vitality of the Catholic faith to these shores. We have only to look at our Catholic brothers and sisters in this land to see they brought only their faith and the clothes on their back to this world with such hopes and aspirations! This new world was populated with a hope of spreading the Gospel. We can appreciate the labors of the Jesuits who came and worked so hard for the spread of Christianity of this land. And then this colony that was so English and anti-Catholic began to open its doors to the Irish, the German, French, Italians and many other Catholics. They truly had nothing when they came but they built up the American church! We can relate in many ways. The US is the Holy experiment: the biblical image of "every tribe, tongue and nation."

We are American. However, now we live in an American society which is in some ways “post-Christian.” We need a Re-evangelization. We need to be re-introduced the real Jesus. We are flooded with atheist and secular ideas. Christianity especially Catholicism is persecuted.

We are Indian. We come from a non-Christian civilization of India to a largely Christian nation of the US. We are so blessed to live in a country with the majority of people professing Christ. What a privilege! We are therefore in a unique position and poised to “contribute something positive to this American culture” as Eusebius Thirumeni challenges us to do.

We are Eastern. So often, Eastern Churches take up most of its energy in trying to preserve its traditions and unable to evangelize effectively. The Syro- Malankara Catholic Church is the exception to the rule...in India with Marthandom diocese as the crown jewel of missionary effort. But the exception to the rule unfortunately is in India but not yet in the US. “We are of the same race, language, mentality, and even liturgy as our Orthodox brothers. We are brothers in the full sense of the word. Union could be only a family reconciliation for us, not a humiliating submission or an avowal of guilt.” The Eastern Churches have open arms to heal preexisting divisions. We in the Malankara Catholic church are eagerly awaiting the Jacobite/Orthodox reunions which will surely come.

This was the dream of Mar Ivanios and we should be filled with the same zeal he had for this mission.

Youth

As youth, we are young, idealistic, full of vitality and vigor. Full of energy and enthusiasm. We are seeking the truth. However, we are fighting for our identity, lost in a world of relativism, in a world that has lost its honor. We desire glory and fulfillment. We want to be inspired by heroes but we are surrounded by role models that continue to fall short. We have more and less time that ever in human history. We are technically obsessed and have a short attentions span. So we are attracted to the things of this world and have no patience to be awed by the things of the next world.

As an Malankara Catholic Youth, we are again poised in a pivotal moment in our Church’s and exarchate’s history. We say yes or we bail. We can commit to our faith traditions and rich heritage or we abandon our church in this country as so many Eastern Catholics have done in the past.

We have many practical considerations. We do not understand the language, We are lost in this culture which at times seems more foreign than familiar. We are not respected in our churches. We are the idealist surrounded by the reality of church politics, fights, petty arguments and poor role models in our churches. We see alcoholism and depression not addressed. We have questions and feel we have no where to go. We are filled up with programs, cultural events, church feasts without feeling like we know why.

However, when we are convinced, evangelized, renewed, we are the most potent agents of evangelization! The most effective means of evangelization is the truth that the faith is caught

not taught. The most powerful theme is the common experience of the one who says: “I had a friend who told me about Jesus...and that friend showed me Jesus.”

After we ourselves are evangelized, THEN we can turn and ask “Where is my friend?” He *used* to come to Malankara but now he doesn’t. It’s the evangelized heart which begins to long for Community, which is the body of Jesus. It’s this community which ardently desires the return of our childhood friends to pray next to us in our pews as they always had. It is this heart which stays in Malankara when no one our age is left. It is this heart which spends their weekends in church and stays up nights thinking about how to build up the Malankara exarchate in the US. Our energy and enthusiasm to Malankara is then boundless. This is the church I dream of, filled of like minded individuals who are working toward building up the exarchate in the US.

Women

As women, we can reflect upon receiving the call the evangelization in a particular way. In Bl. John Paul II’s Encyclical on the Dignity and vocation of women, he highlights the central theme of Motherhood for all women.

Women have the central role in the life of the family and therefore also in the life of family prayer. She is an amazing force in the spirituality of the family unit. However, in our current situation, being a woman in the Malankara exarchate poses many challenges. Raising children, financial obligations, marital strife all cause stress which all too often produces feelings of depression, isolation and fear. We bear children, bear sorrow, and bear burdens in our heart. Yet, we also bear the good news of Christ! we must recall that the good news of the Resurrection was shared first to women and then shared first by a woman. And it was the Yes! of Mother Mary that allowed the gospel to be proclaimed. We are called to be spiritual mothers to all around us through our lives of prayer and service. Often this is done in the Franciscan way of “Preach always if necessary, use words” But our love for Jesus impels us to speak up in church as well to be active participants in the way Christ desires.

Suggestions/Ideas

We are called to evangelize yet there are many practical obstacles. We spent too much energy maintaining, sustaining and not in growing. We worry about status, Money, Children, Future, Personal concerns. There is often no time to think how can we can serve. Our hearts should ask: “What can I do for others.?” We need to learn how to turn away from “me” and we focus to outward orientation.

Jerusalem

As we have been meditating upon how to “start from Jerusalem,” here are some practical suggestions. Use the language of love, for this is universal. We need to deepen our prayer life/spirituality. Examine role for committed prayers and personal commitments to pray. Commit to family prayer. For our parishes, we may offer one day evangelization workshops led by teams trained for such a task.

For our youth in the exarchate especially focusing on the MCYM of the exarchate, we have a large role. Some practical considerations include college/campus ministry to retain our youth after college, foster personal relationships among youth, be accountable to each other for our spiritual life and parish participation. We should start official or unofficial pairing between older and younger youth to foster stronger bonds. This will also allow for the natural youth to youth evangelization which happens when people of Christ come together as a worshipping community. These will build up a community of love. We need to cultivate a culture of service by encouraging service projects and local outreach,

For our women and Mother's Forum, we also need to develop strong relationships and break barriers. The safe focus on personal prayer, holiness and service should be allowed to grow. A special charism of women is prayer and we have initiated fasting prayers once per month in our parishes. We can encourage these monthly gatherings that allow for the fostering of love and allows the jealousy, gossip and insincerity that sometimes arises in small communities. We should also seek out opportunities to talk to younger women and youth so we may become spiritual mothers to them by our actions, prayers and words.

Samaría

We as Malankara Catholics have a special charism toward our separated Malankara brethren. We in the US have a close association with the Malankara Orthodox, Jacobite, and Marthoma churches. It is the reunion of all Malankara that we must strive toward. Filled with the understanding that the Catholic church has the fullness of faith and at the same time having open and loving dialogue with them will surely facilitate mass reunion. Although we are small, we have a powerful presence in the US and among our own American coworkers, neighbors and fellow students. It is also to them that we are called to serve.

Whole world

In the initial stages of the exarchate, we should begin to dream big dreams toward for our church. I hope we can begin to dream of starting schools, hospitals, day cares, senior centers, tutoring, and projects for the poor. Historically in this country, schools were the engine of the Catholic church in the States. Also, Catholic hospitals where many of our own members work can be purchased and run for the sake of evangelization and ministry.

Let us all allow these days to be a fruitful meditation on evangelization and work toward effective strategies toward this dream

Thank you.

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