
By the grace of God and by the approval of the Holy See
From the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church
Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos
Blessings to the Metropolitan Archbishop, all Metropolitan, Bishops,
Priests, Deacons, Religious and the Faithful



Prot. No. CPL 5/2008

78th Reunion Day

Praise be to the Holy Triune God Self-existent, Almighty, Eternal and Consubstantial!

Most Rev. Bishops, Rt. Rev. Corepiscopoi and Rambans, Reverend Priests, Deacons, Religious and beloved Faithful in Our Lord,

Gathered together by the Holy Spirit and nurtured by the Word of God and the Divine Eucharist, the Church which shines forth in the world as the People of God and as the Bride of Christ, accepts from time to time diverse means based on the Word of God and Sacraments for the renewal of her inner life. In the year 2008 the Church has adopted two important means for this renewal. We observe this year as "the Year of the Word of God". Through the topic "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church", chosen for the Synod of Bishops convened in Rome in October 2008 the Church tries to fathom the meaning of the Word of God that speaks to us. We understand that the mystery of Christ and the Church exists at the centre of the Word of God. The Church has always venerated the Sacred Scriptures as the inspired Word of God just as she venerates the Holy

Body of the Lord. As the Word of God gives life to the Church all the services of the Church are nourished through the Word of God. The Word of God is intrinsically united to the liturgy, prayers and sacraments and especially of the Holy *Qurbano*. The service and the formation of the People of God are affected through the Word of God.

Together with the Year of the Word of God, Pope Benedict XVI has declared the year from 29 June 2008 as the Year of the Apostle Paul. We saw that God speaks to us through the Bible, the Word of God. From the fourteen letters of the New Testament, we know that God chose St. Paul to speak most powerfully to the World. He is the greatest missionary the Christian world ever saw. No one can surpass St. Paul in his work as a missionary and in his knowledge of Christ.

It is in the midst of these two important observances that the Malankara Catholic Church is celebrating the 78th Reunion Day. We know that the Reunion Movement is the good fruit of the life founded on the Word of God. It is worth remembering at this time, that it is in "prayerful dialogue with God, Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos realized that only through deep communion with the Lord could they know his will and have the strength to follow it" (Message of Pope John Paul II for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Reunion Movement).

The Malankara Church that entered into communion with the Catholic Church ascended the stair of success through the committed and steadfast hard work of the sons and daughters of this Church. The Christian Faithful are "those who, incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal function in their own manner; they are called, in accordance with the condition proper to each, to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world" (CCEO c 7 §1). It is a glorious tradition of the Laity of the Malankara Church that they fully and practically participate in the life of the Church. "The ancient Apostolic Church of St. Thomas Christians, the Malankara Church, rooted in the ecclesial tradition and discipline that developed in Malankara, is known for its custom of the participation of the laity in the daily life of the Church without prejudice to the preeminent role of the ministerial priesthood"

(Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Pedro Lopez Quintana in his message for the 77th Reunion Day Celebrations).

With the elevation of the Malankara Catholic Church as a Major Archiepiscopal Church, some reverend priests who rendered arduous ministry in the different fields of service of the Church were honoured bestowing on them the titles of Corepiscopo and Ramban. In a similar way, the Holy Episcopal Synod convoked from 15 to 17 July 2008, as per the tradition of our Church, decided to honour the members of the Laity who participate in the building up of the Church with immense sacrifice and exemplary service at the ecclesial and eparchial levels. After the titles bestowed on the Laity by the Pope, the title "*Malankara Sabhâ Ratnam*" (the Gem / Jewel of the Malankara Church) will be the highest title of honour in the Malankara Catholic Church. Thereafter, the title *Bâr Îtho Brîro* (ܒܪܝܐ ܝܬܘܐ ܒܪܝܪܘܐ) ,the Great Son of the Church or *Barz Îtho Brîrtho* (ܒܪܝܐ ܝܬܘܐ ܒܪܝܪܘܐ) , the Great Daughter of the Church will be the next title of honour in our Church. These titles will be bestowed on the Laity by the Major Archbishop-Catholicos of the Malankara Catholic Church at appropriate times in consultation with the Eparchial Bishops.

The Holy Episcopal Synod has also authorised our Metropolitans to make arrangements to honour the outstanding members of the Laity of the Eparchies. Accordingly, the highest title of honour in the Eparchy will be *Bâr Îtho Sârîro* (ܒܪܝܐ ܝܬܘܐ ܣܪܝܪܘܐ) , the Good Son of the Church or *Barz Îtho Sârîrtho* (ܒܪܝܐ ܝܬܘܐ ܣܪܝܪܘܐ) , the Good Daughter of the Church. Next to this, the title of *Bâr Îtho Kâsîro* (ܒܪܝܐ ܝܬܘܐ ܟܫܝܪܘܐ) , the Diligent Son of the Church or *Barz Îtho Kâsîrtho* (ܒܪܝܐ ܝܬܘܐ ܟܫܝܪܘܐ) , the Diligent Daughter of the Church could be bestowed upon the Laity of the Eparchy. Our Metropolitans will honour our Laity bestowing on them these titles at appropriate times. Proper costumes and medals shall be assigned to these titles.

It goes without saying that the titles of honour bestowed in the Church are in recognition of the meritorious service rendered to the Church. More than deciding on the controversial issue "who is the greatest among us?" (Lk 9:46), it is to be understood as a sign of "being the servant of all" (Mk

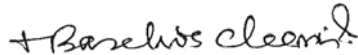
9:35) and an invitation to be so. The bestowal of a title, accepting one as the servant of all, as the representative of all, is a testimony to the truth that all who are engaged in building up the Church are recognised and honoured.

Preparations are progressing to celebrate the 78th anniversary of the Reunion Movement on 18, 19 and 20 September 2008 at Ranni in the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla. The details of the celebrations will be intimated to all from the Archieparchy. I invite all Bishops, Priests, Religious and the Faithful to participate in the celebration and strengthen our ecclesial communion.

I wish that this year's Reunion Day celebrations help us all to be one, "just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1Cor 12:12-13) As the Father and Head of the Malankara Catholic Church I will represent our Church in the Synod convoked by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI in Rome from 5 to 26 October 2008. I will also participate in the liturgical celebration in St. Peter's Basilica in which Blessed Alphonsa will be declared a Saint in the Church. All of you shall specially pray for the divine conduct of the Synod.

May all these be fulfilled through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and all the Saints, especially of our Father and Apostle St. Thomas and the College of Apostles. Amen.

Your humble servant in the Lord,



25.8.2008
Catholicate Centre
Pattom

Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos,
Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Our Father in Heaven...

N.B. :This pastoral letter should be read in all our churches, mission centres and centres of worship during the Holy Qurbono next Sunday.
