

**FIRST EPARCHIAL ASSEMBLY
NOVEMBER 09-12, 2023**



LINEAMENTA

BE A MISSION AND BUILD THE CHURCH

**EPARCHIAL CURIA
SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF MISSISSAUGA
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BE A MISSION AND BUILD THE CHURCH

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CIRCULAR
EPARCHIAL ASSEMBLY 2023
LINEAMENTA

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

As we are preparing for the first Eparchial Assembly let's thank God for providing us this ineffable gift, a significant milestone in our faith journey. The theme of the Assembly, "**Be a Mission and Build the Church**", had been selected in 2019 itself after a wide range of consultations and discussions in all the Mass Centers, Missions, and Parishes as well as in all the essential Organs and Departments of the Eparchy. I place on record that our Expert Committee has made an in-depth study on the theme, with due consideration on its theological and pastoral implications, and prepared the *Lineamenta*. I am extremely delighted to present this document to the People of God.

I encourage everybody to study this document attentively, discuss actively in the appropriate forums and propose valuable suggestions. I hope and pray that each Parish/Mission Assembly, be a process of true sharing, patient listening, and bringing clear and constructive suggestions to the Eparchy for our forward faith journey. As "we are God's co-workers" (1Cor 3:9), let's work together for God's Kingdom. Thus, let each one of us Be a Mission!

May God bless you all abundantly!

Yours lovingly in Christ,



Mar Jose Kalluvilil

Bishop, Eparchy of Mississauga



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Eparchy of Mississauga is convening the first-ever Eparchial Assembly on November 09-12, 2023, to evaluate its previous year's growth prayerfully and critically and to formulate a future pastoral plan to ensure its strides in the pathways of God. Originally planned for October 16-18, 2020, the Eparchial assembly had to be rescheduled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Eparchial assembly is convened to empower the faithful community of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga to journey together in our call to mission.

Jesus' commissioning of the disciples immediately after his resurrection to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28: 19) marked the beginning of a vast initiative to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Starting with the Apostles themselves, Christian missionaries travelled West across the Mediterranean and beyond, East into Syria and Mesopotamia, South into Africa, North into the Slavic lands, and far into the depths of Asia, giving rise to Latin and Eastern Churches. Among the twenty-three Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, four are major archiepiscopal Churches. The Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church was raised to this status by Saintly Pope John Paul II on December 16, 1992, enhancing the second position after the Ukrainian Major Archiepiscopal Church in its number of faithful. The Syro-Malabar Church, in its manner of living the faith, has a unique liturgical, theological, spiritual, and disciplinary heritage, differentiated by the culture and circumstances of the people.

The massive migration of the Syro-Malabar faithful to various countries across the world has become a remarkable feature today. The immigration of the Syro-Malabar faithful started in the 1960s to this vast and widespread country, Canada and the Syro-Malabar priests working in the Roman Catholic dioceses took care of the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar Catholics. With a great missionary zeal, the faithful tried to live and propagate their faith under the eminent leadership of the Pastors designated from time to time for its growth. The remarkable spiritual leadership provided by Bishop Mar Jacob Angadiath, then bishop of the Eparchy of Chicago as the Permanent Apostolic Visitor to Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada from 2009 to 2015 is another milestone in the history of Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada. Desiring to protect and promote the spiritual riches of this Church in Canada, on August 6, 2015, His Holiness Pope Francis, by the Apostolic Constitution, "*Spiritualem ubertatem.*", erected an Apostolic Exarchate for the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada and appointed Very Reverend Dr. Jose Kalluvelil as its first Apostolic Exarch. Ever since the erection of the Exarchate, the faith journey of the people

was envisioned with the main objectives to form, fortify and evangelize the people of God and provide them with all the necessary pastoral care.

The Apostolic Exarchate for the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada was elevated to the rank of Eparchy with the title of “Mississauga” by His Holiness Pope Francis on December 22, 2018. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga, instituted as part of God’s plan, is now in its eighth year of establishment since its status of an Exarchate. Approximately 30,000 faithful across Canada from 18 parishes, 28 Missions and 8 Holy Mass centers in the Eparchy are pastorally guided by the bishop and 20 priests. Nine religious sisters from three Congregations also assist in various Eparchial ministries.

The Eparchial Assembly in Canonical Perspective

Throughout history, the entire people of God have been periodically summoned to reflect on and discuss new directions in Church life. Gatherings such as the Eparchial assembly enable the faithful's selected representatives to address Eparchial apostolic needs and problems. Yet the Eparchial Bishop has been the ultimate legislative or policy setting, decision-maker in such settings. The II Vatican Council did not explicitly address such Eparchial assemblies but seemingly reflect the conciliar call to revitalize the Church’s regional structures considering a communion-based ecclesiology¹.

The Eparchial assembly is to be convoked whenever, in the judgement of the Eparchial Bishop and after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, the circumstances recommend it². The convocation of the Eparchial assembly is the discretion of the Eparchial Bishop, assisted by the pastoral wisdom, especially of the presbyterate. The Eparchial Bishop presides over it personally or through another, he can transfer, prorogue, suspend, or dissolve it with proportionate reason³. The Eparchial assembly assists the bishop in matters that regard the special needs of the Eparchy or its benefits⁴. Among the specific purposes of the assembly, one might note (1) adaptation of the Eastern Code and the Particular law of the Church *sui iuris* to the Eparchy’s distinctive pastoral needs; (2) examining pastoral concerns of the Eparchy; (3) promoting Eparchial pastoral

¹*Christus Dominus*, n. 36; Cf. Thomas J. Green, “The Eparchial Assembly,” in J. D. Faris. et al., eds. *A Practical Commentary to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. Vol. I (Montréal, 2019), 505.

² CCEO. c. 236.

³ CCEO. c. 237 § 1.

⁴ CCEO. c. 235.

initiatives; and (4) addressing possible doctrinal errors or questionable pastoral practices⁵. The participants to attend the Eparchial Assembly are decided as per the law and the Eparchial Bishop in his discretion makes sure that all sectors of the Eparchy are duly represented as per the context of each Eparchy⁶. One participant may not normally send proxies. In case of any impediment precludes the attendance of a participant, the matter is to be notified to the bishop in advance, so that he may be able to replace the absent invitee with another who could significantly contribute to the assembly experience⁷. Without prejudice to the right of any of the Christian faithful to suggest the subjects to be dealt with at the Eparchial assembly, it is solely for the Eparchial Bishop to determine the topics to be dealt with in the assembly. Several commissions can be appointed to prepare the topics to be dealt with in the assembly. In a timely manner, the subjects to be discussed should be distributed to the participants in such a way as to have a fruitful and free discussion on the topics⁸. The commissions have a central role in collecting data, reflecting on the issues, and drafting working papers for distribution to assembly participants in advance of their formal deliberations. The Eparchial Bishop as the sole legislator can sign and promulgate the decisions of the assembly as law for his Eparchy. The text of the laws, declarations and decrees promulgated are to be communicated to the higher authority as mentioned in CCEO. c. 242, such as Patriarch or Major Archbishop within a certain time frame; yet neither his approval nor his acknowledgement of such materials is necessary⁹.

The Theme of the Eparchial Assembly

The theme of the Eparchial Assembly is selected as **“Be a Mission and Build the Church”**, which closely resembles the theme of the Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Assembly, scheduled for August 2024, “Mission and Life of Syro-Malabar Church in Response to the Needs of the Time”.

The expert committee for the Eparchial Assembly held multiple meetings and collaborated to determine the best course of action. Through deliberations and considering valuable suggestions received, the Committee decided to choose the theme **“Be a Mission and Build the Church”** for the *lineamenta*. The Expert Committee for the Eparchial Assembly presents this *lineamenta* to

⁵ Thomas J. Green, “The Eparchial Assembly,” in J. D. Faris. et al., eds. *A Practical Commentary to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. Vol. I (Montréal, 2019), 507.

⁶ CCEO. c. 238.

⁷ Thomas J. Green, “The Eparchial Assembly,” in J. D. Faris. et al., eds. *A Practical Commentary to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. Vol. I (Montréal, 2019), 515.

⁸ CCEO. c. 240.

⁹ CCEO. cc. 241 and 242.

the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga to engage in an in-depth study, constructive dialogue, and meaningful discussions in all spheres.

The Action Plan Overview

1. Guidelines (*Lineamenta*) Preparation: The expert committee of the Eparchy prepares the guidelines on the topics related to the theme of the assembly and distributes them to the Parishes and Missions.
2. Parish Assembly: Each parish has to organize its assemblies, based on the guideline, for different groups and the reports are to be sent to the Eparchial office.
3. Working Documents (*Instrumentum Laboris*): A working document is prepared by compiling all the points and suggestions received from the parish assemblies and it will be given to the participants for their advance preparation for the Eparchial Assembly.
4. Eparchial Assembly: During the Eparchial Assembly, there will be detailed discussions, guided by the Holy Spirit, on the topics decided.
5. Action Plan: In light of the assembly decisions, a priority-based action plan for the Eparchy will be completed within an allotted time and published.
6. Follow-up Committee: All recommended action plans will be implemented under the leadership of the follow-up committee.

This *Lineamenta* consists of three chapters. The first chapter focuses on how the Church is on the mission of Christ. The second chapter explores the theological legacy and the missionary zeal of the Syro-Malabar Church, and the third chapter discusses how we can build the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga, to be a mission of Christ in Canada.

CHAPTER I

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

This chapter explains how Jesus performed His mission on Earth. His mission was, as He Himself has said, to search for the lost sheep. Then it explains that the Church has the same mission to continue as she is the continuation of Jesus himself: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20: 21).

1.1. The Great Commission of Jesus

Jesus commissioned His apostles saying, *“All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (Mt 28:18-20). Jesus entrusted this mission to the Church at His departure. This commissioning by Jesus is to the Church, His disciples, and each of us the baptized Christians.

The mission executed by Jesus is *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”* (Lk 4: 18-19; Is 61: 1-2). The above two gospel passages combined should define the Mission of the Church on Earth.

Jesus Christ was and is, and will be, the greatest Good News that ever happened on Earth. The Church is and must be the visible sign of this Good News. That is, to be the Good News here and now is the mission of the Church. Ever since Jesus completed His Earthly existence as a human being the mission of the Church began. And Jesus continues as the invisible head of this visible Church on Earth. The Church continues His mission incessantly to this day. It will, and it must, for all times to come.

The more individual Christians recognize, and learn, the more they will be in the mission of the Church and become disciples. Invitation to discipleship is not our choice but the call and election by God. It is not because of any merit of those called but because of God’s pleasure. The individuals, each one, must discern, recognize, and follow. This call and commissioning are given to each one, baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Hence no Christian needs to wait for the call to come; just join and say, *‘Here I am, Lord; send me!’* (Is 6:8)

1.2. Church is Missionary by Nature

Missionary means *'anointed and sent'*. Jesus was called the Messiah, because He was anointed by the Father and sent to the world with a mission, to show the true face of God to the world, which was not seen by any till His coming. Jesus through His being, life, work, suffering, and death showed to the world what God would look like, how God would respond to human conditions, and how God loves. He presented Himself and His mission not only in words but through His life and finally gave Himself for redeeming humanity from the slavery of sin. The Church, now being sent by Jesus does not have a mission other than that of Jesus. It does not have a manner of functioning other than that of Jesus. The more the Church, each Christian, anointed and sent, becomes the living face of Jesus the more the world will experience the presence and action of God here and now. In and through these visible and tangible members the Church executes its mission of being sent by Jesus.

There were serious private discussions among the disciples as to who would be the first in the kingdom, and who would be the head of the kingdom when Jesus would be gone. James and John even made a bid for the first and second positions. Mark describes the aftermath of this incident: *"When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So, Jesus called them and said to them, you know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be the slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mk 10:41-45).

Anyone wishing to be a member, those invited to leadership positions in the Church, must ponder on the above incident and the words of Jesus, especially His concluding part that He "came not to be served but to serve and be a ransom for many". This Christ was the one who sent His disciples to the world to be servants like Him.

1.3. Be Rooted in Christ

Pope John XXIII discerned that the Church had drifted far away from the servant's attitude, and therefore, he called for the Second Vatican Council. This assembly attracted the attention of the whole world, and there were long discussions in the Church and the media and took many new initiatives to go back to the roots. There were many exoduses from the Church. The outflow did

not necessarily weaken the Church. It strengthened; some people, who refused to be true servants like Christ, decided to leave. However, the changes did not last long. The Church's leadership today seemingly gives less attention to the teachings of Vatican II. Many disregard to follow and listen to the words of the one who came to serve and not to be served.

The Church must ponder on Jesus' style in executing His mission. The calling of Levy and Zacchaeus and the subsequent meals in their houses are very important in this regard. Jesus called those who were branded as public sinners and therefore outcasts from mainstream society, which was a revolutionary act and playing out of the ring. Then eating with them and with their friends was very unorthodox (Lk.5:29-32). In this context the words of Jesus are very helpful, "*I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance*". Jesus makes it very clear that His mission was to call sinners. For the same reason, His Church also is a Church of sinners and for sinners. If we as a church look for and care for only the clean ones maybe, we are in the wrong place. As Jesus did in the above cases every Christian must be willing to get to the so-called dirty places and peoples. It is to them that Jesus has primarily sent us. They are waiting to see the true face of God.

Going out in search of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), to the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem to heal the man paralyzed for thirty-eight years (John 5:2-9), visiting the town of Nain to bring back the widow's only son to life (Luke 7:11-15), forgiving the sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50), going to Gerasene to cast out the demons from a man (Luke 8:26-39), etc., are examples of Jesus' way of doing His mission. He went about places in search of those who were marginalized and forsaken by the so-called 'clean society'. He did not wait for them to come to Him, instead, He went in search of them. All these were personal encounters with Jesus, one-to-one meetings, which changed the lives of each of them. His calling of disciples was also similar to personal and intimate meetings. This is not just a model for the Church, but "the model". Such encounters today should be the work of everyone who is baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1.3.1. The Joy of Being Rooted in the Risen Christ

Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis have been trying to echo the Words of Christ and manifest His lifestyle through their lives and words. Pope Francis in his Apostolic exhortations called upon the Church to *the culture of encounter and reaching out to the peripheries of the Church*. The Church welcomed them as and when initiatives came. However,

such actions did not stay long with the Church as they did become parts of the Church's life. Many in the Church seem to be comfortable going with the wind and swimming along the current in the world rather than remaining faithful servants of Jesus and becoming agents of change.

Pope John Paul II exhorts us to concentrate on Christ and to give witness to the self-giving love of Jesus. The Vatican II document, *Church in the Modern World*, was a new orientation in pastoral theology which is now almost the most important branch of Theology. The renewed and emphatic call of the recent popes is *to scrutinize the signs of the time*. Pope Francis continues to give a new orientation in this regard. His teaching in *The Joy of the Gospel* is a very powerful and pertinent appeal for the same. His exhortations in, *The Joy of Love* and *The Call to Holiness in Today's World*, are strong follow-ups on the *Joy of the Gospel*. Christology gets renewed prominence in the teachings of recent popes. They invite us to be thoroughly rooted in the Risen Christ.

1.3.2. The Call to Evangelize

The pastoral model of the Church is the relation between the Shepherd and the Sheep. Accordingly, the good shepherd is and must be the mirror and the source. Each Christian is a shepherd after the model of Christ. Jesus' lifestyle and interactions with those who are like "sheep without a shepherd" must be reflected in the lifestyle of the Church. Church leaders and the faithful follow the example of Jesus who is the Eternal Shepherd.

"As He went ashore, He saw a great crowd; and He had compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd." (Mark 6:34). A shepherd's work is to protect, feed, and lead the sheep. Jesus did that, first feeding their body and then gathering them to feed their soul. In feeding the soul in addition to compassion there is also confrontation, which Jesus had, and is natural. Confrontation must be faced not necessarily to defend the self but to defend the gospel, the Good News, and to establish the kingdom. For this, the shepherds of our time must know the mind of the Great and the Good Shepherd. Then only it will be evangelizing, which is not just pulpit proclamation much more, it is living the Gospels, and becoming the Good News.

Authority in the Church flows from that of Jesus. Hence the Church must exercise it in the way Jesus did. *"You call me teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So, if I, your Lord, and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet"* (Jn 13:13-15). The basic premise from which Jesus exercised authority was being a servant and loving

everyone irrespective of who they are. Love was always accompanied by unconditional acceptance and forgiveness to all. Jesus explained how a shepherd should act in Mk 10:41-45.

1.4. Be a Mission and Build the Church

1.4.1. Be a Mission

The concept of “mission” and the act of “building the Church” go together. There is a universal tendency among Christians to think Church as a separate entity from themselves and Christ. But as Jesus revealed to St. Paul (Acts 9) the believers, namely the Church, are the body of Christ. Hence being a member of the Church means that he/she shares the ‘mission’ of Jesus. Just as He is the mission of the Father sent to reveal the divine plan of salvation to humanity, all Christians who are members of the body of Christ are endowed with this same mission (Jn 20:21).

1.4.2. ‘Build my Church.’

The famous saying ‘Rebuild my Church’ is taken from the life of St. Francis of Assisi. In the early days of the conversion of St. Francis, as he was praying before the crucifix in San Damiano Church, he heard a voice asking him to “rebuild the Church”. Though he misunderstood it as the physical rebuilding of the collapsing Church, later he realized that it was the divine commissioning to rebuild the Church, the body of Christ. With that commissioning, he became a mission to rebuild the Church in Europe. The history of the European Church will be incomplete without the reference to St. Francis and his missionary activities. This same voice of Christ echoes in the land of Canada to rebuild the Church. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga as part of the body of Christ shares this responsibility of building the Christ’s Church. The Eparchy must look after the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Community so that no one among them may be lost and also, she must search for the sheep outside the folk.

St. Peter explains the process of building the Church in the following way: *“Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation..... Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like a living stone, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet 2:1-5). In 1 Peter 2: 9 we read, *“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s people, so that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light”*. The members who are chosen

and becoming members of the Church must reflect on the words of Peter and ask themselves whether they are truthful members according to the mind of Peter, carrying out the mission for Christ to become living stones to build His spiritual house.

1.4.3. Church – The Body of Christ and the People of God

1.4.3.1. The Body of Christ

“The Body of Christ” is a common New Testament metaphor for the Church. The Church is called *“one body in Christ”* in Romans 12: 5; *“one body”* in 1 Corinthians 10: 17; **“the body of Christ”** in 1 Cor 12: 27 and Ephesians 4: 12; and *“the body”* in Hebrews 13: 3. The Church is equated with *“the body”* of Christ in Ephesians 5: 23 and Colossians 1: 24.

When Christ entered the world, He took a physical body “prepared” for Him (Heb 10: 5; Phil 2: 7). Through His physical body, Jesus demonstrated the love of God, tangibly, and boldly—especially through His sacrificial death on the Cross (Rom 5:8). After His bodily ascension, Christ continues His work in the world through those He has redeemed. The Church now demonstrates the love of God, tangibly, and boldly and thus continues the redemptive work of Jesus. In this way, the Church functions as “the Body of Christ.” The Church is called the “Body of Christ” because the members of the “Body of Christ” are joined through Christ (Eph 4:15-16), follow Christ as their Head (Eph 1:22-23), possess a diversity of gifts suited to individual functions (1 Cor 12:4-31) and share a common bond with all other Christians, regardless of background, race, or ministry. “There should be no division in the body, . . . its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Cor 12:25). Every Christian must ask if he or she is a messenger of communion just as Jesus is in communion with the Church.

1.4.3.2. People of God

The Church fathers in Vatican II teach us in *Lumen Gentium* that the Church is “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.¹⁰ In the Church we are indeed made holy, not “merely as individuals” but “together as one people”.¹¹ The people of God as Jesus visualized are a community of lovers, who love with no limits. The basis of this love is the love of the Father in Heaven for His children. Being God’s children, every human being is a son or daughter of this loving Father forming one family, one body. No human on earth is excluded from this family. *“Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body,*

¹⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 9.

though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greek, slaves or free, and we were made to drink of one Spirit". (1 Cor 12:12-13)

This is the life the Church must live and the message it must disseminate.

Pope Francis said to his audience on June 12, 2013: "Being the Church, being the People of God means being God's leaven in this our humanity".¹² Continuing his series of weekly talks on the nature of the Church, the Pope spoke about the phrase favored by Vatican II, namely "the body of Christ". By referring to the Church as the "People of God," he remarked, the council fathers emphasized the reality that the people of God are governed by "the law of love." The mission of the People of God, the Pope continued, is "to bring God's hope and salvation to the world: to be a sign of the love of God who calls all to friendship with him."

1.4.4. Synodality - Communion, Participation, and Mission

Pope Francis initiated a synodal journey of the whole People of God, beginning in October 2021 in each local Church and culminating in October 2023 in the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The focus of this Synod is on listening to the Holy Spirit. Listening to express, how we can journey better together as Church, called to Communion, Participation, and Mission. Pope Francis is inviting Catholics both in the mainstream of Church life and on the margins to voice their dreams, ideas, and vision about the Church.

Fundamentally, synodality is about journeying together. This happens through listening to one another to hear what God is saying to all of us. It is realizing that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone to help us walk forward together on our journey as the People of God.

Synodality is "walking together". Saint John Chrysostom said that for him "Church" and "synod" were synonyms since the Church is all about walking together. In this sense, synodality is a way of renewing the Church in her deepest roots, to be more united with one another and better carry out our mission in the world. It highlights the fact that we all have something precious to contribute to the Body of Christ. In this way, a "synodal Church" is a Church that listens: "It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The lay faithful, the bishops, the pope: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17), to know what He is saying to the Church".¹³

¹² Pope Francis, Weekly Audience, June 12, 2013.

¹³ Pope Francis, Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, October 17, 2015.

Communion, Participation, and Mission are the basic characteristics of the Synodal Church. They describe the synodal Church. It is a Church in which the People of God are in communion with Our Lord and one another, are participating in both the life of Christ and the lives of their neighbours and are united in the common mission of the Spirit.

The mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role, united with each other. A synodal Church walks forward in communion to pursue a common mission through the participation of each of its members. Communion has at its roots, the love and unity of the Trinity, and is expressed in God's covenant with His people.

Participation is a call for all the people of God to engage in listening deeply and respectfully to one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Church should have the vision and the ability to discern the Spirit manifested in the people of God, young and old, listening to their aspirations and dreams, prophesying, visions, and joining the Spirit of God manifested in and through them. The Spirit of God is not a monopoly of the shepherds alone. The same Spirit works in and through the sheep. Only when the Spirit in the shepherd and the sheep meet there is a possibility for true pasturing and shepherding. This is the communion of the saints that we profess in our profession of faith.

A synodal Church is where there is unity in faith and where all participate actively in the prophetic mission; a mission of evangelization and proclaiming the Good News of salvation and liberation, of announcing the gospel of life, justice, and peace. This also includes the mission of denouncing evil and all its manifestation in society and calling people to conversion.

1.4.5. Mission - The Life of the Church

The mission of the Church is the task given by God for the people of God to accomplish in the world. In simplest terms, the mission of the Church is the Great Commission, Mt 10:7-8, *“As you go, proclaim the Good News, ‘The kingdom of Heaven has come near. ‘Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.”* Our task as the gathered body of Christ is to make disciples, by bearing witness to Jesus Christ the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father.

If the word “Church” is important, so is the word “mission.” The Apostles, in the broadest sense of the term, were those who had been sent out. This ‘sent outness’ is also the first thing we should note as related to the term mission. It is the first thing Jesus notes about his mission, that

he was sent to proclaim a message of Good News to the poor (Lk 4:18). Being “on a mission” or engaging “in a mission” suggests intentionality and movement. Jesus Himself was a mission so were the apostles. Therefore, every Christian obedient to the great commission must be involved in missions.

“Mission” was primarily a word used in connection with the Trinity. The “sending” was the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son. This is a crucial point. We will not rightly understand the mission of the Church without the conviction that “the sending of Jesus by Father is still the essential mission.” The mission of the Church is nothing different from this. The Church continues the same mission of Christ. “The Church doesn’t do mission; the Church is mission.” As followers of Christ, our mission is to be disciples who make disciples. The Church is a way for followers of Jesus to act together as one body, with Jesus as the head, to fulfill this mission. Therefore, the mission of the Church will be completed, only when she gathers all into the Trinitarian communion revealed by Jesus.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL LEGACY AND THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Introduction

Chapter One explained the duty of the Church to be a mission to build the Church. This chapter outlines the responsibility of the Syro-Malabar Church in Canada of building the Church in this part of the hemisphere.

The Syro-Malabar church, formed in faith by the preaching of St. Thomas the Apostle, has contributed not only to the evangelization of India but across the globe. It is the second largest Eastern Catholic Church after the Ukrainian Church and the largest of the Saint Thomas Christian denominations with 5 million believers. With its deep-rooted spirituality and high rate of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, the Syro-Malabar Church continues sharing the wonderful legacy that started from St. Thomas the Apostle.

2.1. Theological Legacy of the Syro-Malabar Church

The most valuable legacy of the Syro-Malabar Church, known as the “Way or Law of Thomas,”¹⁴ is the intimate and personal Christ experience of St. Thomas the Apostle, our father in faith, who touched the Risen Lord and proclaimed Him as “My Lord and My God” (Jn 20: 28). This proclamation of St. Thomas forms the source of the theological patrimony of the Thomas Christians.

2.1.1. The Profession of Faith by St. Thomas

After having witnessed the Risen Lord, St. Thomas proclaimed Him as “My Lord and My God” (Jn 20: 28). There are different shades of meaning for the words ‘Lord’ and ‘God’. The term ‘God’ comes from Hebrew ‘*Elohim*’ and the Greek ‘*Theos*’. God stands for the all-powerful one who created the world and sustains it. The word ‘Lord’ comes from Hebrew ‘*Adonai*’ and Greek ‘*Kurios*’. It is also translated as ‘*Yahweh*’ (*Jehovah*), who interacts with people like the making of Adam out of clay, conversing with the first parents, and making a covenant with the people of Israel. ‘*Elohim*’ came from the Priestly tradition and ‘*Yahweh*’ came from the Yahwistic tradition

¹⁴ Paul Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India*, Rome: Mar Thoma Yogam, 2003, 21. (Hereafter referred as Pallath, *Catholic Church*)

in the Bible. Thus, Old Testament used both 'Lord' and 'God' when referring to God the Almighty. Psalm 35:23 reads, "My God and My Lord".

Jesus was usually called "Lord" by his disciples. The Lord could mean someone of higher rank or the "Son of God". In Matthew 16:16, Simon Peter answered Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". The faith proclamation of St. Thomas is extremely important as it ratifies the statement of Jesus: "...I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn 14:11). By professing the Risen Christ as "My Lord and My God," St. Thomas declared that he had not only seen Christ (the Lord) but also in and through Christ, he saw God (the Father) and thus he confessed "My Lord and My God". Hence, Thomas manifested an advancement in his belief and conviction. He expressed his faith in the divinity of Jesus. Jesus had told in John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Thomas while seeing the Risen Lord acknowledged that the God the Father was visible in Jesus.

2.1.2. The Missionary Zeal of St. Thomas the Apostle

St. Thomas the Apostle, the great missionary among the twelve apostles, is well known for his love for Jesus, his spirit, and his courage. When the other disciples forbid Jesus from going to Judea to be with Mary, Martha, and their beloved brother Lazarus, who is grievously ill, it was Apostle Thomas who exhorted his fellow disciples to stay with Jesus even though his enemies were seeking to kill him: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (Jn 11:16). "His determination to follow his Master is truly exemplary and offers us a valuable lesson: it reveals his total readiness to stand by Jesus, to the point of identifying his own destiny with that of Jesus and of desiring to share with him the supreme trial of death".¹⁵ In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, St. Thomas reveals an important truth of the spiritual life of a missionary: "...never to distance oneself from Jesus".¹⁶ Tradition holds that St. Thomas became a great missionary and he travelled to Edessa in Syria, and then to India, where he founded many churches and died a martyr's death.

2.1.3. Apostolic Heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church

St. Augustine wrote in his *Exposition of Psalm 44*, "The Apostles preached the message of truth and begot Churches." According to the vigorous, living, and widespread tradition, the Apostle Thomas reached South India in the middle of the first century, i.e., in 52 AD and disseminated the Christian faith there. The early Christians who received faith from the Apostle

¹⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience on "Thomas the Twin," 27 September 2006.

¹⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience on "Thomas the Twin," 27 September 2006.

Thomas have been called “the Christians of Saint Thomas,” known today as the Syro-Malabar Church. For St. Thomas Christians, Christianity was not simply a set of doctrines, concepts, or dogmas, but a way of life (*margam*) to reach God the Father and to obtain salvation, which was realized by Jesus Christ, “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), through His paschal mysteries.¹⁷ They faithfully preserved and diligently observed “the Way or Law of Thomas,” throughout the centuries, since they were fully convinced that this way had been taught to their forefathers by the Apostle Thomas himself. By the term, “the Way or Law of Thomas,” they meant the faith, liturgy, spiritual life, discipline, traditions, and customs, as well as the whole socio-political and cultural mode and activities of the St. Thomas Christians.¹⁸ The “Way or Law of Thomas” gave a distinctive mark to the spiritual heritage of this community.

2.1.4. Syro-Malabar Church is Missionary by Nature

The Church’s missionary dimension can be derived from the Scriptures where the Son was sent by the Father. In the same way, He sent the apostles all over the world. He said to them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20). In proclaiming Christ, we as the Church, through the Holy Spirit move the hearers of the Good News to receive and profess the faith; prepare them to encounter God in the sacraments and set them free from the slavery of sin and incorporate them to Christ.¹⁹ The Syro-Malabar Church received her missionary zeal from St. Thomas the Apostle. The legacy of St. Thomas is to believe with conviction, confess with enthusiasm and witness with courage. This must be a permeating presence in the life and activities of the missionaries. A missionary is one who has experienced the Risen Lord and who proclaims Him courageously through words and deeds. Endowed with the Eastern Catholic faith and rooted in Indian culture and tradition, the Syro-Malabar Church has developed a unique way of witnessing the Gospel. The missionary zeal of the Syro-Malabar Church is well expressed in the fourth *Gehanta* prayer of the Holy Qurbana: “Let all the people on Earth know that you are the only true God the Father and that You have sent your only

¹⁷ Paul Pallath, *The Liturgical Heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church: Shadows and Realities*, Changanacherry: HIRS Publications, 2019, 15. (Hereafter referred to as Pallath, *Liturgical Heritage*)

¹⁸ Pallath, *Catholic Church*, 21.

¹⁹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964, paragraph 17

begotten Son Jesus Christ...". The Syro-Malabar Church has made substantial contributions to missionary activities, especially by providing numerous zealous personnel: more than 8,000 priests, 35,000 Sisters and 1300 major seminarians. Thousands of priests and religious of Syro-Malabar origin are serving in different dioceses across the world.

2.1.5. Liturgical Theology of the Syro-Malabar Church

Pope Pius XII defines the Sacred Liturgy as "the public worship which our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father, as well as the worship which the community of the faithful renders to its Founder, and through Him to the Heavenly Father. It is, in short, the worship rendered by the Mystical Body of Christ in the entirety of its Head and members".²⁰ "Nevertheless, the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows. The aim and object of apostolic works are that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God amid His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat at the Lord's supper" (SC 10).²¹

Liturgy plays a key role in preserving and transmitting the faith and early traditions of the Church from generation to generation.²² An intrinsic relationship exists between faith and the liturgy: the Latin axiom, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, means the law of prayer establishes the law of faith. Faith is formally declared and celebrated in the Liturgy.²³ Therefore, all Eastern Churches, including the Syro-Malabar Church, always look to the liturgy for the proper formulation of faith since the changes in the formulae in the liturgy can alter the faith itself. Liturgy consists of sacraments, Liturgy of Hours and sacramentals; among which Eucharistic celebration is the most important one as it "is the source and summit of the Christian life" (CCC 1324).²⁴ What we celebrate is the sum of what we believe in. The magnificent mysteries of our faith can be understood and explained in relation to the celebration of the Holy Qurbana. The celebration of the Divine Liturgy (Holy Qurbana) is the advanced Earthly experience of the ultimate encounter with God in heaven. The proper function of the liturgy is to enable the participants to live out the mystery of salvation. The Church realizes the celebration of the paschal mystery and the salvific

²⁰ Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei*, 20 November 1947, paragraph 20.

²¹ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963 paragraph 10.

²² Pallath, *Catholic Church*, 24.

²³ Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22 February 2007, paragraph 64. (Hereafter referred as Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*).

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964, paragraph 11

encounter with Christ by using sacred space, sacred time (liturgical seasons), sacred persons, sacred objects, sacred words, sacred music, sacred signs, and symbols. Therefore, “the Church’s great liturgical tradition teaches us that fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated, offering one’s life to God in unity with the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the whole world.”²⁵

2.2. Transmission of Faith

Transmission of faith is the fundamental duty of the Church as mandated by her divine master (Mt 28:19-20). It “leads Christian communities to articulate, in a strict sense, the basic works of the life of faith, namely, charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening and sharing”.²⁶ The catechetical heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church is as old as this Church itself. Our forefathers developed family and community-centered systems of catechesis by which faith was transmitted to the next generation.

2.2.1. Family-Centered Catechesis

Since the early times of the St. Thomas Christians, faith was handed down from one generation to the next mainly through family-centered catechesis. For them, home is the place where faith is born, nourished, and transmitted. They gave a religious dimension to every event in the family. They developed many domestic rites in connection with birth, the beginning of education (*Vidhyarambham*), marriage, death, funeral, and memorials for the dead.²⁷ Traditional Syro-Malabar families have some unique characteristics, such as solid faith in the sacred and inviolable nature of the marital bond, special social manners and family customs especially family prayer, family spirituality and ecclesial life, the system of faith formation through catechetical activities, the role of grandparents in the family, openness to adopt good elements from other cultures, high regard for priests, consecrated people and the elderly, zeal for social action and so on.

2.2.2. Community-Centered Catechesis

St. Thomas Christians handed down faith from one generation to the next by means of community-centered catechesis, viz., liturgical celebrations, catechetical instructions, and customary practices. Liturgy was the principal mode and source of catechesis among the St.

²⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 64.

²⁶ Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly, *Instrumentum Laboris*: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Christian Faith,” Vatican City, 2012, paragraph 92.

²⁷ Pallath, *Liturgical Heritage*, 39.

Thomas Christians. Even though, they did not have any formal and systematic catechesis as of today; catechetical instruction was given to adults during liturgical celebrations, while children were given special instruction either before or after the Holy Qurbana on the mysteries of faith and morals. Among the liturgical celebrations, the celebration of Feasts also played an important role in the transmission of the faith. The faithful prepared themselves for the feast with fasting and prayer. Abstinence, asceticism, penance, and austerity were the salient features of the spirituality of St. Thomas Christians.

2.2.3. Living an Ecclesial Memory in a New Culture

Migration is a typical character of the St. Thomas Christians.²⁸ The immigration of the Syro-Malabar Catholics to North America started in the 1960s in search of better opportunities. In the early years of their settlement, these families practiced their Catholic faith in the local Latin Catholic parishes where they were actively involved. However, many of them strongly desired and were inspired to go back to the roots of their liturgy, traditions, and faith formation they followed from childhood in Kerala. Eventually, they were successful in obtaining proper pastoral care of their own Church *sui juris*, which led to the erection of the Apostolic Exarchate of Mississauga in 2015 which was later elevated as the Eparchy of Mississauga in 2018. Now, the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada learn to live in the culture of this land with our Catholic faith, oriental worship, and Indian heritage.

2.2.4. Process of Identity Transmission

A person who is ascribed to a Church *sui iuris* has to be given proper formation in the faith, liturgy, spirituality, discipline, traditions, and customs of that Church. It is our mission and a challenge at the same time. The first-generation immigrants in Canada take great interest to live the faith and traditions which they have acquired from their forefathers. The second generation is being trained to adopt the spirituality of our Church and to adapt to the life situations in Canada.

²⁸ Migration was an expression of the courage and valour of the St. Thomas Christians. The first stage of migration of the St. Thomas Christians was to the Malabar region to the North and High Ranges to the East of Kerala in the 1920s. Since the faithful were mostly farmers, they were looking for fertile land and wherever they settled, they built Churches and established their own faith communities. The first eparchy erected for the migrants was the Archeparchy of Tellicherry in 1953. The second stage of migration was to different metropolitan cities of India, like Bombay, Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore, and Calcutta. The Eparchy of Kalyan was erected for the Syro-Malabar faithful of Bombay in 1988. The third stage of migration was an immigration made to Europe and North America in the 1960s. Eparchy of Chicago (2001), Eparchy of Melbourne (2014), Syro-Malabar Apostolic Exarchate, Canada (2015) and Eparchy of Great Britain (2016) were erected for the Syro Malabar Catholics outside India.

Liturgical services and catechetical formation in English, youth retreats, participation of the youth in family units, seminars on faith-related issues, formation of Syro-Malabar Youth Movements, etc. are some of the activities for the second generation. However, the second generation finds it challenging to live out the faith and traditions of their forefathers in today's secular Canada. A recent study identified the following major challenges faced by highly religious individuals living in increasingly secularized societies, namely outside pressure to conform, misrepresentation by the media, immoral/contrary messages in the media,²⁹ degradations of religiosity and value system, conflict of legality and morality, mixed marriages and so on. Therefore, it is our responsibility to identify coping strategies for dealing with the perceived negative influences of secularism on family relationships and religious life.

2.3. Faith Formation

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view of initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (CCC #5). It is the lifelong process by which we learn and grow in the Catholic faith. It is about recognizing the invitation by Christ to come and follow Him – an invitation at every stage of life.

2.3.1. Faith Formation of Children

Faith formation of all children begins in the family. Parents are the primary teachers (catechists) of the Catholic faith for their children. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents" (CCC #2226). In addition to domestic catechesis, an integral and systematic catechesis is needed for

²⁹ Quinn Galbraith; Christina Riley; Alexandra Carlisle; Heather Kelley, "Surviving Secular Society: How Religious Families Maintain Faith through Community and Parenting Practices," in *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*, Brigham Young University, USA, Vol. 10 (3), 2020, 62.

the faith formation of children.³⁰ One of the unique characteristics of the Syro-Malabar Church is the age-appropriate catechetical formation provided for children. However, it's high time to rethink whether the present catechetical formation well equips our children to be a sacrament of Christ in Canada.

2.3.2. Empower the Youth

In the words of Pope Francis, "Youth is a blessed time for the young and a grace for the Church and for the world. It is joy, a song of hope and a blessing".³¹ Youth ministry "involves two main courses of action. One is outreach, the way we attract new young people to an experience of the Lord. The other is growth, the way we help those who have already had that experience to mature in it".³² Currently, the youth ministry in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga is growing fast. Timely gatherings, seminars and retreats can foster a sense of belongingness among young people. Once they share and examine together their problems, challenges, and attempted solutions, they will be able to better support each other and collectively find solutions rooted in faith, for their issues and become a beacon of hope for the next generation. Youth ministry should embrace all youths, national and international.

2.3.3. Missionary Call of Adults

In response to God's call to holiness, our faith and life as adult disciples are grounded in developing a personal relationship with Jesus and becoming "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Mt 5: 13-16). The Church and its adult faithful have *a mission in and to the world*: to share the message of Christ to renew and transform the social and temporal order. This dual calling to evangelization and justice which forms the identity of a Catholic faithful, arises from baptism.

Conclusion

The Syro-Malabar Church is "Indian in Culture, Christian in Religion, and Oriental in Worship." Even though the Syro-Malabar Church has its origins in India, now it is spread all over the world. It is the duty of every Syro-Malabar Catholic to believe in the Risen Christ with conviction, confess Him with enthusiasm and witness Him with courage, just like St. Thomas the Apostle, our Father in faith.

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 October 1979, paragraph 21.

³¹ Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 25 March 2019, paragraph 135. (Hereafter quoted as Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*)

³² Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, paragraph 209.

CHAPTER III

BE A MISSION TO BUILD THE EPARCHY

Introduction

After discussing in general, how, and why the Syro-Malabar Church in Canada should become a Mission to build the Church, chapter three delves into the details of building up the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga and discuss our mission to build up the Eparchy. We encounter various challenges and real-life situations along with potential opportunities to live the Gospel. Different levels and platforms for witnessing the Gospel and efforts to reach up to the self-sustenance of the Eparchy and parishes are studied in this context. Our mission is to lead the entire eparchial community and the people around us toward Christ and to the fullness of life. Thus, we build the Church and our Eparchy as a community of believers who bear witness to their faith.

3.1. Be a Mission in Canada

3.1.1. Reach out to the Scattered

Canada is a vast country and geographically the second largest in the world. Syro-Malabar Catholics, with a population approximately of 30,000, are scattered across the country, aspiring to build up their family, trusting in the providence of God. With the geographical vastness and limited infrastructure, it is equally challenging to reach out to the scattered. Many immigrants move and settle in smaller towns and rural areas for better job opportunities and low living costs. They work hard to earn their settlement. Reaching out to them and bringing them closer to the Church is as important as forming new parishes and mission centers. It is challenging for those who live in remote locations, to access a Church. They may not even have a proper place to live and the schools they attend may not meet their expectations. They may have access to Churches in some locations, but only after driving for many hours.

The administrative requirements to connect with these scattered faithful and coordinate them need much commitment. As they visit any remote local parish, usually they are presumed to be a visitor and do not feel welcomed. Because of this, faithful from remote places get disconnected from the Syro Malabar parishes & missions. It is to be humbly admitted that some of our faithful have been separated from Syro-Malabar parishes/mission centers due to disagreements, misunderstandings, geographic distances etc. The pastor and the parish community are equally

responsible to reach out to those parishioners disconnected from the community. This should be a special mission, being good disciples of Jesus who is the Good Shepherd. Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out" (Ez. 34:11).

Establishing a help center or implementing effective means of communication such as an email or telephone number with the nearest parish and the Eparchial office may assist the scattered families to connect with the Syro-Malabar Church in Canada. Going to the peripheries is a mission of the Church. Availability of catechetical studies, sacramental preparation classes, family unit prayers or online meetings with the nearest parish priest through online platforms, will be beneficial for families living in places where regular pastoral care by the Syro-Malabar priests is not readily accessible. This approach enables outreach to the peripheries and ensures that support and guidance are provided even in remote areas.

3.1.2. Strengthen the Gathered

We explore the laity's great responsibility in God's plan for the world, in which they are not simply collaborators of the clergy but are genuine "co-workers working together for God's Kingdom" (1 Cor 3: 9). It signifies the unique mission of the laity as being "in the world" and transforming it from within through their life and witness. We should also consider several areas of society that need the transforming power of the Gospel brought by the Church's lay faithful in communion with members of the clergy and consecrated life. The lay apostolate is unquestionably "secular." It requires that the laity "seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God".³³ In their daily life, interwoven with family and social relationships, the laity realize that they "are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the Earth".³⁴ The co-responsibility of the lay faithful is to be encouraged and appreciated in the Eparchy to strengthen the family units and the parishes/missions.

Bishop, pastors of parishes, and other supporting priests should keep in mind that the rights and duties to exercise lay apostolate is common to all the faithful, knowing that the laity also have their own roles in building up the Church. For this reason, they should work fraternally with the laity in and for the Church and take special care of the lay persons in these apostolic works.³⁵ The

³³ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

³⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 33.

³⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, No. 25.

lay faithful carry out their ministry in the Church through different roles they are assigned to in parishes/missions and the Eparchy as catechists, *kaikarans* (trustees), pastoral council/parish council members, leadership roles in the various associations and ministries, renewal ministry coordinators, and dedicated volunteers in different categories. Pastors and those who are in parish/mission leadership should take every effort to strengthen the spiritual growth of the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care, building up communion and belongingness among the parishioners, and fostering the values of Christian families. Parish annual retreats, seminars and classes for different age groups, and regular family unit meetings would help strengthen the parish community. Apart from these, a necessary enculturation program is to be provided for the priests and the religious who come to Canada for the first time to strengthen their ministry.

3.1.3. Church is a Refuge - A Welcoming Church

We need a welcoming Church and community. A sense of belongingness and inclusiveness needs to be experienced in the parish community beyond the ideological or regional differences. New immigrants confront a feeling of strangeness. Moral support provided by the community is significant in belongingness. The close bonds set up an umbrella under which people feel secure. Church is a refuge for sinners; a comfort for people under stress. Children and youth should experience belongingness beyond language and cultural differences. Pope Francis reminds adults about listening to children and youth. "As adults, we find it hard to listen patiently to them, to appreciate their concerns and demands, and to speak to them in a language they can understand".³⁶ When we look into the future of the Church, we should accommodate the youth and their active participation in all levels of Liturgical celebration and other parish-based activities. A welcoming door is to be opened for them to initiate their role in the Church. It is important to involve youth in the parish committees, and wholeheartedly embrace their perspectives and ideas.

3.1.4. Challenges in Mission

Canada has had a great tradition of witnessing Christ since the 16th century. "The greatest gift America has received from the Lord is the faith which has forged its Christian identity. For more than five hundred years, the name of Christ has been proclaimed on the continent".³⁷ The rich heritage of Canada is ascribed to the moral values of Christianity cultivated by evangelization,

³⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, 105.

³⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 14

even though this fact is not explicitly recognized by many.³⁸ The glorified culture is in danger today, as the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops has highlighted. "Other large parts of the world whose culture is profoundly shaped by the Gospel message are at the same time prey to the pertaining influence of materialist and secular lifestyles, which manifests itself, particularly in the rejection of religion".³⁹ So, the faith journey in Canada is confronted with many challenges today.

3.1.4.1. External Challenges

3.1.4.1.1. Influence of Secularization and Liberalization in a Materialistic Culture

The cherished Canadian culture is rooted in the Christian ethical principles of dignity and sanctity of the human person and their freedom to live in the light of faith. Removing faith from moral principles or "the process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, rejecting the transcendent has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to disorientation, especially in adolescence and young adulthood, which are so vulnerable to change".⁴⁰ Denying God in a culture is the rejection of its very foundation. "One of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone".⁴¹ Furthermore, by rejecting God from a culture, "man not only loses sight of the mystery of God but also the mystery of the world and the mystery of his own being".⁴² Since the materialistic worldview refuses man to realize his intrinsic beauty as a creation, it is a danger to the values of the culture and humanity. In secularism, "there is a serious cultural and spiritual crisis, one sign of which is the loss of respect for the person and the spread of a kind of anthropological nihilism which reduces human beings to their instincts and tendencies".⁴³

What is the thrust of the Church as a witnessing community? We can rediscover our uniqueness by putting Christ as the keystone of existence and restoring our Christian identity in the culture

³⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 14

³⁹ Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 21

⁴⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 64

⁴¹ Pope Francis, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 77

⁴² Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 22

⁴³ Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 23

through a transparent and enthusiastic invitation to holiness. Because "today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman".⁴⁴

We aim to minister Christ in a secularized culture and live the Gospel values within our community to transform the culture. "Do not be conformed to the world where you live, but rather be transformed through the renewal of your mind. You must discern the will of God – what is pleasing and what is perfect" (Rom 12: 2). "The purpose of the Gospel is 'to transform humanity from within and to make it new.' Like the yeast which leavens the whole measure of dough (cf. Mt 13:33), the Gospel is meant to permeate all cultures and give them life from within, so that they may express the full truth about the human person and human life".⁴⁵ So, the challenge reminds us of our responsibility. We can never refrain from our duty to preach the Gospel.

3.1.4.1.2. Impacts of Individualism and Privatization on the Families

God created human beings in His image and likeness (Gen 1:27) and invited them to continue His ministry of creation through the sacrament of marriage. "The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent".⁴⁶ The spouses mutually accept each other under the divine law and form a lasting bond. Family instituted with a divine purpose is gifted the grace through the sacrament to bring about its ends, namely, the good of the spouses, the procreation of the children and the education of the offspring. Even if the family is an intrinsic part of society, the sacred bond no longer depends on human decisions alone, for God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes.⁴⁷ Therefore, the couple is gifted with the grace to continue their journey.

Families where the Gospel of love is to be preached and lived, face some alarming signs of degradation of the fundamental values today such as "mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses concerning each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the

⁴⁴ Pope Francis, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 77

⁴⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 95

⁴⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48

⁴⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 95

family itself experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces; the scourge of abortion; the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization;{and} the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality. At the root of these negative phenomena, there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's selfish well-being".⁴⁸ The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis where the value of marriage is under threat of becoming a place for mere emotional satisfaction.

Attempts at its privatization disintegrate the family relationship, and the persons under the same roof are unable to learn the sense of the common good and experience the goodness of living together. For example, emphasis on one's freedom of choice can annihilate another person's right to live; that happens in an abortion. "Loving the family means appreciating its values and capabilities, fostering them always. Loving the family means identifying the dangers and evils that menace it to overcome them. Loving the family means endeavoring to create an environment favorable for its development".⁴⁹ Family is never a chain of bondage to enjoy an individual's freedom. Families are the foundation of the Church, and society is invited to protect its fundamental values. Each family member must dedicate his/her interests to fulfill the divine plan for the family.

3.1.4.1.3. Culture of Death

We are confronting a culture of death in any society in which the dignity of human life as a gift of God is questioned. It includes unborn children, helpless victims of abortion, the elderly and incurably ill subjected to euthanasia and all other violence against human life, cornering many other people to the margins of society. Today, "in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed, and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right to life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death".⁵⁰ Procuring of abortion was legalized in Canada at all stages of pregnancy by the Canada Health Act, and Bill C-14 passed by the Parliament of Canada legalized euthanasia in Canada in its legal term called 'medical assistance in dying.' These are

⁴⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 6.

⁴⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 86.

⁵⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 18.

clear evidence of the reconstruction of the culture according to the ideals of utility, productivity, and cost-effectiveness. Life's value is determined by its utility only in such a consumerist outlook on life.

Catholic Church has always emphasized the value of life from the moment of conception. "The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore, from that same moment, his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life".⁵¹ God, the Lord of life, has conferred on human beings the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life in a manner worthy of man.⁵² Every believer shares this responsibility of the Church to protect the dignity of life as partakers of Divine ministry. So, we are obliged to join the pro-life ministry of the Church to proclaim the Gospel of love and life.

3.1.4.1.4 Influence of Media

Today, the faithful is to be vigilant in using the media, as we encounter many planned information campaigns in manipulating realities, opinions, and people themselves. The drive to sensationalize and falsify an event is a sin.⁵³ Furthermore, we witness disastrous campaigns in social media to target the reputation of persons or communities to defame them collectively in public. Network or virtual communities are not synonymous or substitute for natural human communities. On the contrary, it is a platform that helps us to enhance communication. Social media is a network created to liberate and protect the communion of people where unity is based on the truth, not on 'likes'. We need the wisdom to recognize the fraudulence, discernment to see the hidden agendas, patience to respond respectfully, courage to defend truth and perseverance to protect a culture of unity in handling media in everyday life.

3.1.4.2. Internal Challenges

Syro-Malabar Church in Canada is in the childhood stage and faces many challenges. Faithful immigrated mainly from the different regions of Kerala, seeking better jobs and life comforts.

⁵¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation-Donum Vitae* (22 February 1987), I, 1.

⁵² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 51.

⁵³ Pope Francis, *To Catholic media*, 16 December 2017.

The faithful must collectively interrogate the concrete challenges specific to the Syro-Malabar Church. Here we analyze some life-challenging situations of the faithful.

3.1.4.2.1. Ignorance/Loss of the Rich Heritage

The immigrants, at times, are in a dilemma to choose between the cultures. There is a tendency to imitate blindly everything seen in the Canadian culture brushing off the great values we practiced in our families and the Church. On the other hand, creating another Kerala in this foreign culture can also be misleading. The cultural practices which immigrants bring with them should be respected and accepted if they do not contravene either the universal ethical values inherent in the natural law or fundamental human rights.⁵⁴ We must appreciate the outstanding values of the Kerala culture as well as the great faith traditions we have inherited from our forefathers. Accept the values in the Canadian culture that can foster our faith and the dignity of persons. Teach the children to esteem the worth of moral integrity. It may guide us to overcome some of our children's dual cultural identity problems. There is a tendency to forget the Syro-Malabar identity that enhances the richness of the Catholic Church among the faithful, with its ancient nature of rich traditions.

3.1.4.2.2. Problems Faced by the Immigrants

Catholic Church advocates immigration through its social teachings. It is the personal right of an individual to migrate to a country in which he hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for himself and his dependents.⁵⁵ The states have the right to control immigration to protect their sovereignty from establishing internal security to safeguard citizen rights.

Syro-Malabar Catholics migrated to Canada for a better life. Without exception, all immigrants and international students have struggles settling down in this country. Our faithful face challenges in the initial stage such as finding an adequate job, language barriers, getting used to the weather, missing support from family, social isolation, adapting to new culture and values, financial constraints, and housing etc. Lack of support from family members who may be living away at another end of the world and the grandparental support to bring up children, impact many young families. The faithful community supporting them in their struggles is an important factor in this context.

⁵⁴ Pope John Paul II, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 2001, No.13.

⁵⁵ Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Migration, and the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 1, a.

3.1.5. How Can We Survive?

Planting the Syro-Malabar tradition in another culture is challenging. This needs to be tackled prudently and open-mindedly. Any biased statements and conclusions can produce undesirable results. How can we survive by reconstructing the original tradition in another culture? We may need to ask ourselves: What shall we adapt and retain from the original source? What shall we do to ensure the presence of our growing generation in our Churches? Do we need a foresighted new model for pastoral ministry recognizing the present scenario? Amidst dedicated efforts to build up the Church, we witness some instances of group bias and regionalism in our community. Isn't it a counter-witness? Doesn't it damage integrity and solidarity? Can we propose a Syro-Western pastoral model for the Syro-Malabar immigrant Eparchies worldwide? The Synodal discussions at the parishes opened a new arena of complexities between the first-generation immigrant community and the second generation as well as the conflicts of interest between them.

3.2. Be a Witness to the Ends of the Earth

Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses to the ends of the Earth (Acts 1:8). The Church and the sacraments of Christ through the Church carry out this responsibility in the world in different spheres.

3.2.1. Faith Witness at Different Levels

In the modern world, a "witness" is commonly understood as someone who testifies on behalf of a person or to an event they have seen with their own eyes or for which the person has first-hand knowledge. As followers of the Lord Jesus, we are called to serve as "witnesses" to our faith. To be a witness to Christ is to testify by our words, actions and attitudes, the sacred mystery that we have "seen," heard and believed in our lives.

We witness to Christ not by giving testimony to facts but to the truth - a truth that is not always visible or "provable" by modern standards. We render testimony to what we have "seen" in our hearts and not necessarily what we have seen with our physical eyes. We testify to our faith more effectively in our actions than in our words, inviting people to meet the Lord, personally and powerfully, through our faith, hope, and love of Him. Eparchy, parish/missions, family units and families are the venues of faith witnesses.

3.2.1.1. Faith Witness in the Eparchy

An Eparchy is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted for pastoral care to a bishop with the cooperation of the presbyterate so that, adhering to its pastor and gathered by him in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist. It constitutes a particular Church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.⁵⁶

A bishop is like the Good Shepherd who pastures in the territory to which he is entrusted to and governs it as the vicar and delegate of Christ. The power, which he exercises personally in the name of Christ, is proper, ordinary, and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately regulated by the Supreme Authority of the Church and can be restricted within certain limits in view of the benefit of the Church or of Christ's faithful.⁵⁷ Holy Father Pope Francis, "Desiring to protect and promote the spiritual riches of the Oriental Churches..."⁵⁸, erected the Apostolic Exarchate for the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada. Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga is entrusted to establish parishes and missions to foster the faith life of the Syro-Malabar faithful across Canada and to promote the re-evangelization of Canada.

3.2.1.2. Faith Witness in Parishes and Missions

A parish is a certain community of Christian faithful, stably established within a Diocese, the pastoral care of which is entrusted to a Vicar.⁵⁹ Parish churches are those churches canonically erected in the territory of a parish under the pastoral care of a Vicar for the spiritual welfare of the parishioners. "The parish is a community of worshippers where all the faithful gather for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The Christian life does not grow if it is not nourished by participation in the liturgy, particularly in Sunday's Holy Mass, and by personal prayer, by personal contact with God".⁶⁰ "The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love"⁶¹. To those seeking answers to society's increasing secularization, individualism, and materialism, our community should provide a powerful witness to the Gospel. Evangelization must remain rooted

⁵⁶ CCEO, 177 §1.

⁵⁷ cf. CCEO, 178.

⁵⁸ Cf. Decree of Election, Eparchy of Mississauga.

⁵⁹ CCEO, 279.

⁶⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, 2 September 2011.

⁶¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2179.

in the parish. It is in the parish that one becomes engaged with the Church community, learns how to become a disciple of Christ, is nurtured by Scripture and nourished by the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments, ultimately becoming an evangelizer. Successful evangelization and catechetical initiatives must be focused on the parish and parish life. The parish community is the prime mover and the pre-eminent place of faith formation and accompanies all of us to grow into a mature faith.⁶² The parish is where the faith is passed down, lived, and sustained for all members of the body of Christ, especially those seeking to return.

A parish is entrusted to a pastor for pastoral care. "The pastor is to be a presbyter to whom, as the principal cooperator of the Eparchial Bishop, is entrusted the care of souls as their proper shepherd in a determined parish under the authority of the same Eparchial Bishop⁶³. A pastor is entrusted with the duties of teaching, leading, and sanctifying the faithful community. They are joined by the religious sisters and brothers who have given their whole life to God by totally consecrating themselves to God. The purpose of the parish is to live out the Catholic Church's universal mission on the local level. Second Vatican Council teaches, "Church is missionary by its very nature. The fundamental mission of the missionary church is evangelization".⁶⁴ The mission of the Church is carried out by the parishes at the local level. We can become witnesses to Jesus through active participation in the Holy Qurbana, frequent reception of sacraments, participation in Sunday celebrations, enthusiastic participation in the pastoral activities of the parish and the associations, and by leading an exemplary life holding Christian values.

The active participation and practice of the liturgy, prayers, devotions, and popular piety of the Church provide a powerful witness to the faith. Faith-empowering activities like senior home visits, feeding the hungry, and donating food and other consumables to shelter homes are some of the charity works our youth can be involved in society.

3.2.1.3. Faith Witness in Family Units

The early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2: 42). Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common (Acts 4: 32). The very purpose of the family unit is to inculcate the early

⁶² Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, 67.

⁶³ CCEO 281 §1.

⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 2 & 35.

Christian living in our parish/mission according to the teachings of the Church. Following the spirit of the early Christian community, family unit members gather as one community for prayer, learning, and social interaction. It deepens the familial bond among the members of the parish/mission.

3.2.1.4. Faith Witness at the Domestic Church

Family is the primary stage of evangelization. A family that prays together stays together. Family, the domestic Church is the nursery of learning the primary lessons of faith and moral values. This is an area of deep conviction. If we do not strengthen family bonding in Christian relationships and prayer, it is challenging to be the witnesses for the children. Pope Francis reminds us: "When it comes to teaching the faith at home, I prefer to use the language of "faith sharing". Faith is first experienced and later described and repeated in doctrinal form. Many young children and adults have profound experiences of faith though they lack the words to articulate them. They sense the hand of the Divine in their lives but may not feel comfortable describing the experience".⁶⁵

Parents must realize that they have stories of faith to share with the children; their faith experiences, how God guided and protected them in this strange land and much more. As primary faith sharers, parents can listen carefully to children's stories and experiences to help them identify those "God moments" or moments of grace in their own lives, reflect on parents' own life journey and the role God and faith have played in it and share parent's reflections.

As the cradle of love and life, the family is also the source of culture. It is the place that welcomes life and the school of humanity where children study moral principles to live in a society. So "the family must safeguard its basic role as the primary place of humanization for the person and society".⁶⁶ Family is the domestic Church, where "parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state".⁶⁷ So, the

⁶⁵ Pope Francis, *General Audience Saint Peter's Square Wednesday*, 16 October 2013.

⁶⁶ Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 13.

⁶⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

family is a domestic Church, where the Christian is called to holiness and is nourished and perfected.

3.3. Different Platforms for Proclamation

3.3.1. Role of Departments, Associations and Ministries

Department of Catechesis, Department of Associations for Children, Department of Youth Ministry, Department of Family Apostolate and Department of Vocation are the key departments working for the different age groups and categories. Associations, and ministries like Jesus Kids, Holy Childhood, Little Flower Mission League (CML), Syro-Malabar Youth Movement (SMYM), Mathruvedi (Syro-Malabar Mother's Association), Pithruvedi (Syro-Malabar Father's Association), Catholic Congress, Knights of Columbus, Nurse's Ministry etc. also actively work in witnessing Christ.

Associations in the Church work among the determined groups to promote spiritual life, lay leadership, personality development, an apostolate of evangelization, and promotion of Christian doctrine and thereby energize the faith community. Parishioners are encouraged to join such associations, get training, be active and produce good fruits because they are instituted for the good upbringing of the children by the mother, the Church. Second Vatican Council teaches that we should give proper importance to these associations as they deserve since they do missionary work, and priests, religious and lay people must consider them significant and encourage such associations.⁶⁸ All these associations and community gatherings aim to sanctify and nourish the Church, the body of Christ. Through them, the missionary activity of the Church will become vibrant.

Members in associations and ministries should remember that "movements and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church".⁶⁹ Involvement in the lay ministries should reflect the Christian values in the social, political, and economic sectors of society. It often remains tied to

⁶⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, No. 21.

⁶⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 29.

tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society.⁷⁰

3.3.2 Media, Shepherds of Faith, Divine Academy, ISSSAC etc.

Media are the communication outlets or tools to store and deliver information or data. Social media are based on computer technology, and they facilitate the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information by building virtual networks and communities.⁷¹ Media help people to communicate and to be united.

Catholic Church recognizes the media, if appropriately used, for their excellent service to humanity for communication and information sharing as well as for the spread of the values of the Gospel.⁷² "The Catholic Church, since it was founded by Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use".⁷³ Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of social networks: "Communication is a means of expressing the missionary vocation of the entire Church; today, social networks are one way to experience this call to discover the beauty of faith, the beauty of encountering Christ. In the area of communications too, we need a Church capable of bringing warmth and stirring hearts".⁷⁴

During the unprecedented time of Covid-19, the Church used media for the immense possibilities of proclamation, such as online Holy Qurbana, homilies, Catechism classes and related activities, association meetings and activities. Pope Francis' prayer intention for Holy Mass at the Casa Santa Marta on 13/05/2020 was "for all who work in the media, who work to communicate." They are working, he said, "so that people are not so isolated; for the education of children, to help us to bear this time of isolation".⁷⁵ So, media is a "global continent" of dialogue and communication. Eparchy and the parishes should use the media creatively to profess Christian values to society and to strengthen communication. The media commission of the Eparchy can coordinate this ministry.

⁷⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 102.

⁷¹ *Wikipedia*

⁷² Second Vatican Council, *Inter Mirifica*, 2.

⁷³ Second Vatican Council, *Inter Mirifica*, 3.

⁷⁴ Pope Francis, *48th World Communications Day*, 2014.

⁷⁵ Pope Francis, Holy Mass at the Casa Santa Marta, 13-05-2020.

The primary focus of Shepherds of Faith (SOF) is to support missionary activities under the guidance of the Church to serve the needy in the Syro-Malabar communities across Canada. By the generosity of its members and other donors, SOF endeavours to provide pastoral care to some of the needy, most isolated, and vulnerable communities and people amongst us, nurturing fellowship, and integral youth development. SOF plays a vital role in providing spiritual and financial support to the Eparchy under the leadership of the laity.

Divine Academy is a platform for the integral development of children. Integrated Social Service Society-Action Canada (ISSSAC) is formed to coordinate the social and charitable activities of the Eparchy under one umbrella.

3.4. Road to Self-Sustenance

The longer the disciples walked with Jesus, the more tempting it became to rely on themselves because “they have done it before.” We trust in the providence of the Lord from the erection of the Eparchy.

Syro-Malabar Catholics have a great tradition of supporting the Church financially. Monumental achievements that we earned are the fruits of the hard work and commitment of our faithful. Despite the financial challenges, families generously support the Eparchy. Yet, there are many financial hurdles to overcome to support the different ministries of the Eparchy. We need our own churches to start a full-fledged ministry. Since the faithful are scattered nationwide, the availability of fewer full-time priests to provide pastoral care in the Syro-Malabar rite is a challenge. Each *sui iuris* Church and its traditions are to be protected and valued by other churches and denominations. We need more full-time priests and religious to effectively serve the faithful. Building up the necessary material structure for the Eparchial and parish administrative systems is inevitable to coordinate the ministries effectively. Financial insecurity is an obstacle in our journey to self-sufficiency.

3.5. Call to Witness Christ to Enlighten the Culture

3.5.1. Witness Christ in the Immigrant Culture

The Syro-Malabar faithful, with their rich spiritual base, have the potential to inspire society when they face the challenges of Canadian culture. People received faith in Jesus because the early Christians uniquely differed from other people (Acts 2: 37-47; 4: 32). Christianity would not have

survived if it did not offer a counter-cultural ethical stand, a new social imaginary; in one phrase, a new way of life rather than going with the flow.

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* reminds us of certain things in our missionary activity. Evangelizing the culture with Catholic tradition is our duty. So, we have to say 'yes' to missionary spirituality. We tend to identify spiritual life as a few religious exercises without a passion for evangelization. It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or a desire for power or human glory at all costs, rather than giving their lives to others in mission, keeping the missionary enthusiasm.

Sometimes people fear undertaking apostolic works and try to avoid any responsibility. We may feel that everything goes normal but, faith is wearing down. As true disciples of Jesus, we need to renounce selfishness and spiritual sloth, being pragmatic. Otherwise, tomb psychology will develop and slowly transform Christians into mummies in a museum. Disillusioned with reality, some faithful experience a constant temptation to cling to a faint melancholy, lacking in the hope which will, in the end, generate only darkness and inner weariness, and slowly consume all zeal for the apostolate. We are called to radiate light and communicate life.

We are in a battle of witnessing Christ. There may be challenges in this battle which can help us to grow in faith. Do not be pessimistic seeing the burdens of Christian life. Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we must march on without giving in, keeping in mind what the Lord said to Saint Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Christian triumph is always a cross, yet a cross which is at the same time a victorious banner borne with aggressive tenderness against the assaults of evil.⁷⁶ So, keep a burning fire of faith within us to be a mission to experience the joy of evangelization.

3.5.2. Christ, the Fullness of Life

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Jesus is the "living water" (Jn 4:14) that quenches the thirst of every human soul, the ultimate thirst of human beings for eternal life. Jesus becomes the fullness of life, being the integral liberator of humankind who

⁷⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 69-85.

liberates man from every bondage (Cf. Lk 4: 18-19). ‘When we let our life be illumined by the light of Christ, we experience the joy of being liberated from all that threatens our life’s complete fulfillment’.⁷⁷ Jesus gave us life by his redemptive suffering on the cross. Man created in the image and likeness of God was expelled from the paradise. Jesus came back to give us the lost heirship as the sons and daughters of God by laying down His life for our redemption. Jesus says, “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture” (Jn 10:9). So, Pope Francis says “Jesus wants to tell us that to enter into God’s life, into salvation, we need to pass through him, not through another one, through him; to welcome him and his Word”.⁷⁸ By laying down his life for the folks, for us, Jesus gave us the fullness of life making us partakers in the divine kingdom. It is through Jesus that we enter the fullness of life. The Lord’s “life in abundance” purifies and elevates all earthly delights and sorrows. It is a life of courage, conviction, a clear conscience, and communion with Him, with our very flesh sanctified by His most sacred Body and Blood.

Jesus shares the fullness of life with us when we receive him as the center of our lives. “Christ is at the center; Christ is the center. Christ is the center of creation, Christ is the center of his people and Christ is the center of history”.⁷⁹ The Apostle Paul, in the letter to the Colossians, offers us a profound vision of the centrality of Jesus. He presents Christ to us as *the first-born of all creation*: in him, through him and for him all things were created. He is the center of all things, he is the beginning: Jesus Christ, the Lord. God has given him the fullness, the totality so that in him all things might be reconciled (cf. *Col* 1:12-20). He is the Lord of creation; he is the Lord of reconciliation. The attitude demanded from us as true believers is that of recognizing and accepting the centrality of Jesus in our lives, in our thoughts, in our words and in our works. So, our thoughts will be Christian thoughts, thoughts of Christ; and our words will be Christian words, words of Christ. “True joy is not a mere passing state of soul, nor something that is achieved by our own power but is a gift; it is born from the encounter with the living person of Jesus”.⁸⁰

The Christian life is “simple”; just put Jesus at the center of our daily choices. And this involves knowing him, worshiping him, and following him. The center of the Christian life is always Jesus,

⁷⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, 4 March 2011.

⁷⁸ Pope Francis, *Angelus Message*, 21 August 2022.

⁷⁹ Pope Francis, *Homily at the Mass celebrated in St Peter's Square*, 24 November 2013.

⁸⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, 12 Nov 2011.

the first and last word of the Father, "the Lord of the universe", the "Savior of the world". There is no other, he is the only one".⁸¹ Mission of the Church is to profess the only true God Jesus and his centrality in our lives, in the Church and in the universe.

Conclusion

Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada have the responsibility to build the Eparchy by upholding our faith tradition, with Jesus our Savior at the center. Faith formation programs, associations, ministries, and lay movements should work together to build up this Eparchy and the Mystical Body of Christ. Our priority is to evangelize the parishes/missions, families, and the people of God. Secondly, we must be the instruments of evangelization for our surroundings and the whole of Canada. Facing the challenges of mission courageously, we proclaim that Christ is the fullness and the center of our lives.

⁸¹ Pope Francis, Holy Mass at the Casa Santa Marta, 13-05-2020.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Syro-Malabar Catholics are industrious, intelligent and have complete trust in the Divine providence. We demonstrate our loyalty to our country, Canada; we are conscious of our duties and responsibilities as citizens of Canada. Canada is our country. We will remain here as Catholics of the Syro-Malabar Church and as Canadians, though conscious of our Indian origin, Kerala culture and Malayalam, our mother tongue. We want to give our best efforts as citizens to this beautiful land, Canada, and to absorb the best that Canada and Canadian possibilities offer; from this process of generous giving and receiving, we will evolve into genuine Canadians and develop a natural Canadian pattern of life. The Syro-Malabar Catholics have a mission in Canada. The descendants of our sturdy pioneers will see that the best in our East Syrian Catholic Culture is not lost but is handed down as a birthright to their posterity in Canada, and our mission to witness Christ to the ends of the earth.

We are called to proclaim that “the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus”.⁸² Being rooted in Christ and the values of the Gospel, we work together with all the Catholics in Canada to spread the joy of the Gospel to society and thereby build the Church. The most sublime profession of faith “My Lord, My God” by St. Thomas the Apostle, through whom we are introduced to the Gospel, is the foundation of our East Syrian Liturgical tradition, spirituality, theology, and the way of St. Thomas.

An intense study is inevitable on how we can carry out our God-given duty of transmission of faith and empowering our families and parishes in our Eparchy. Constructive evaluation of our pastoral ministry, including the activities of the departments and associations will strengthen us in moving forward. Critically assessing our missionary activities of the past years will help us to work creatively in our mission. We need to support each other and bear the responsibilities rather than pointing at each other. The priests working in a culture to which they are new are to be welcomed and supported by the faithful. Cultural differences can be a hurdle for an effective pastoral ministry. We live in a Church, where everyone listens to each other and walk together for a common mission.

⁸² Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, paragraph 1.

All the challenges and concerns discussed here are relevant only when we think about evangelization as a commitment because evangelization is the most potent challenge. When Church withdraws from proclaiming Christ, no challenges become relevant. Challenges remain when there is perseverance to witness Christ.⁸³ Therefore, let us consider the challenges as an occasion to retrospect on our ministry. The Church is always on a mission, the mission of witnessing Christ, the Savior of the world.

Let us remember the words of St. John Paul II on 9 November 1984 at the Introduction Mass in Quebec City during his papal visit. Faith will illuminate Culture; it will give it savour; it will enhance it, as the Gospel says regarding "light," "salt," and "leaven," which the disciples of Jesus are called to be. Faith will ask Culture what values it promotes, what destiny it offers to live, what place it makes for the poor and the disinherited with whom the Son of Man is identified, and how it conceives of sharing, forgiveness, and love. The Church will continue accomplishing its mission through the members if it is this way. Moreover, they will serve all of society, even the men and women who do not share the same spiritual experience as themselves. For such a witness respects freedom of conscience without abandoning them to specific "imperatives" of modern civilization, which claim to serve human advancement but detract from respect for life, from the dignity of a love that involves persons, and from the search for the actual values of humanity.

We proclaim the risen Lord, who is the center of this universe and witness the values that He lived. The values that the Church upholds are the upshots of the new life in Christ being the sacrament of Christ in the world. "For every benefit which the People of God during its Earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God's love"⁸⁴. The Gospel values that the Church witnesses to the entire humanity are the epitome of participating in the mystery of God's love revealed perfectly in Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of

⁸³ Cf. Pope Francis *Veritatis Splendor*, 6 August 1993, paragraph 10.

⁸⁴ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* 7 December 1965, paragraph 45.

revelation and prophecies accomplished the salvific plan through His Paschal mystery to give us eternal life.⁸⁵

All the faithful in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga are invited to join in the dialogue and discussion based on the topics presented in this *lineamenta*. The Eparchial Assembly is convened to form the vision and to figure out the priorities of the Eparchy for the upcoming years. Study this document with passion and perseverance in your parishes, family units and in departments and associations. Listen to each other about their vision of our Eparchy. May this be an occasion to realize our mission in transmitting the divine gift of faith and to drink from the streams of divine life to strengthen the mission of our Eparchy in Canada.

⁸⁵ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 8 November 1965, paragraph 4.

QUESTIONNAIRE - *LINEAMENTA*

CHAPTER I

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

1. What is the mission of Syro Malabar Church in Canada?
2. Who is a missionary from your perspective?
3. How can you be a missionary in Canada?
4. How far Syro-Malabar Church is involved in evangelization?
5. What do you understand by Church?
6. What is your role in the building up of the Church?
7. Do you experience walking together in the Church? If yes, point out the factors that helped you to walk together. If not, cite the reasons.
8. What are your suggestions to root your family and parish in Christ?
9. How can you support building a church community?
10. What are the possible missionary activities in Canada?
11. What are the challenges that you face in your missionary work?

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL LEGACY AND THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

1. How can the Eparchy better promote and educate the faithful regarding the Syro-Malabar Church's theology, particularly the Syro-Malabar liturgy?
2. How was your faith transmitted to you by our ancestors, and which aspects of that transmission had a greater impact on you?
3. In your perspective, what is the most crucial element in transmitting faith to the next generation?
4. How would you rate the quality of faith formation programmes in your Syro-Malabar parish?
5. What challenges or obstacles, if any, hinder your participation in faith formation opportunities in the Eparchy? (eg: time and financial constraints, lack of interest etc.)
6. How can our parishes offer better support to parents and families, who are primary educators of faith, in their efforts to transmit the faith?
7. What resources or support do you believe would be beneficial in promoting the transmission of faith within our Eparchy?
8. How can effectively involve young individuals in the life of the Church and encourage them to embrace and share the faith? In what ways can we leverage technology and social media to engage them and facilitate the transmission of faith?
9. Are there any aspects of Catholic teaching or tradition that you find particularly challenging to communicate to younger generations? If so, what are they and why do you think they pose difficulties?
10. Are there any modifications or improvements you would like to see in the current faith formation program offered by the Eparchy? Are there any changes or improvements you would like to suggest regarding Eparchy's approach to faith formation?

CHAPTER III

BE A MISSION AND BUILD THE EPARCHY

1. Can you provide specific suggestions to reach out to the scattered Syro-Malabar Catholics residing in remote areas of Canada?
2. Do you think that lay leadership is valued and encouraged in our Eparchy and what measures can be adopted to empower lay leadership?
3. What are your suggestions for strengthening faith formation in the Eparchy and individual parishes?
4. Are there any aspects of faith formation that you believe are not being addressed within the Eparchy and would like to see prioritized by the Eparchy in the future?
5. In recent years, what faith formation opportunities have you engaged within the Eparchy and have they facilitated a personal encounter with Jesus for you? (e.g., Catechism classes, retreats, Bible studies, Holy Qurbana, workshops, prayers etc.)
6. The formation and training of catechists are essential in faith formation. Please share your thoughts on this matter.
7. What initiatives are to be implemented to encourage the active involvement of the faithful, especially children and youth, in Holy Qurbana?
8. Conduct a survey on Syro-Malabar Catholics attending regular Sunday Holy Qurbana at their respective parishes.
9. What are the challenges encountered by families and couples in Canada?
10. Are healthcare professionals confronted with dilemmas when it comes to decision-making upholding the sanctity of life?
 - a. How do you approach these situations in line with Catholic teaching?
11. Do you believe that Eparchy and our parishes utilize media and social media platforms for evangelization and dissemination of moral values within society?
12. How strategies can be employed to counteract media campaigns that aim to tarnish the excellent ministries done by the Church?

13. The experience of culture shock and the identity crisis among the Syro Malabar Catholics.
Discuss.
14. Do you think that work-life imbalances and economic challenges affect family life?
15. Provide specific recommendations for assisting and supporting the new immigrants.
16. What do you propose to foster the inclusiveness of youth and children within the parish?
17. Do you feel a sense of welcome within your parish community and that your opinions are heard and valued?
18. Share your general feedback regarding the practice of family prayer.
19. Do you witness Christ within your own family?
20. Are Gospel values actively lived and passed down within your families?
21. What are the challenges you encounter in raising children within the Christian faith?
22. How effective is the family unit meeting within your parish?
23. What suggestions do you have to ensure the active participation of all members in the family unit meeting?
24. Propose specific faith-nurturing activities for children during these meetings.
25. Do the pious associations fulfill their responsibilities within the parishes?
26. What are the challenges faced by pious associations, for the effective facilitation of their ministry within the Eparchy and parishes?
27. Provide valuable recommendations to strengthen pious associations such as CML, Holy Childhood, SMYM- National & International, Mathruvedhi & Pithruvedhi, Nurse's Ministry, Catholic Congress, Knights of Columbus, and other similar associations within your parishes.
28. What are your recommendations to enhance the financial stability of our parishes and missions, to improve facilities?
29. How successful are you in instilling Christian values and inspiring others in your society?
30. What are your suggestions to evangelize society by embracing Gospel values?
31. Christ is the center of your life, family, and society. Are you aware of your call to place Christ at the center of your life?