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DECREE

As requested by the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, the Committee consisting of Bishop Gregory Karotemprel CMI, Chairman, Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of Migrants and Bps. Gratian Mundadan and Lawrence Mukkuzhy, together with the other members of the Commission, Bps. Mar Vijay Anand Nedumpuram CMI and Mathew Vaniakizhakkal VC, after a laborious process of preparation and scrutiny with the help of experts has presented the final text of the Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Church for promulgation.

Therefore, in accordance with CCEO c. 112 §1 and the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church, Art. 8.4 of the Statutes of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church, I, the undersigned Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church hereby promulgate the Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Church as attached to this decree so that it may serve as a guide to all those persons engaged in the Apostolate of Evangelisation in the Mission areas as well as to those who prepare the personnel for such endeavours and exhort that this may be accepted, studied and implemented wherever applicable.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Kakkanad from the Major Archiepiscopal Curia at Mount St. Thomas on 19th March, 2006.



Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil

Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church



Fr. Antony Kollannur

Chancellor, Major Archiepiscopal Curia

FOREWORD

The Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church, held at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad in November 1998, expressed the desire of articulating its policy on mission in textual form. Such a policy is necessitated by the complexity of the Church's growth in the past twenty centuries. Apostolic in origin and grown up in the cultural milieu of Malabar, with jurisdiction all over India, she entered in close hierarchical relationship with the East Syrian Church by the fourth century. This shaped her liturgy, spirituality and Church administration in a particular way. After sixteen centuries of her existence, a new phase began in her history with the arrival of foreign missionaries. This made the Church again subject to a different liturgical, ecclesiastical and spiritual tradition, i.e. the Western tradition. On the one hand, it helped her acquire a renewed historical and mission consciousness, and on the other hand, it caused in her, a kind of identity confusion.

All-India jurisdiction of the Church was limited to a narrow geographical strip in South India. In the next phase, the Church was called to exercise duties of evangelization in different parts of India. In the current and latest phase, enjoying the dignity and responsibility of a Major Archiepiscopal Church, but not with total jurisdictional powers, she is called to evangelize not only India but also different parts of the world, especially, where her own members live as migrant communities. The effective exercise of evangelization and pastoral care of the faithful from these varied cultures, calls for the careful and proper handling of juridical, ecclesiastical, liturgical and sociological issues both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. The proposed policy on the Church's missionary activity is meant to address these questions.

The Synod entrusted the Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants with the duty of arranging the Church's first Mission Assembly in order to prepare the text of the said mission policy. The Commission prepared the first draft on the Church's mission

policy (the working paper, Instrumentum Laboris) after due discussions with missiologists, theologians, experts from the field of evangelization and various Church representatives. The first draft treated mission in all its aspects. It spoke of the emerging thrusts and trends in the area of evangelization and highlighted the problems the Church will have to face in the third millennium.

The Mission Assembly held from 12th to 14th November 1999, at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkanad, studied this draft thoroughly. The members of the Mission Assembly contributed by way of individual suggestions, group discussions and workshop dialogues. The Assembly concluded with a statement, which highlighted several points to be taken into consideration in the final formulation of the policy on the Church's mission *ad extra*. Accordingly a second draft was prepared by the Commission incorporating the findings and proposals of this Mission Assembly. This was presented to the Synod of Bishops held from 5th to 17th November 2001. After discussing it in detail, the Synod suggested that the text should be given to various Syro-Malabar Major Seminaries and experts in the field of missions as well as in the history of the Church. Hence the draft was sent to all our bishops, rectors and professors of Major Seminaries for suggestions and recommendations. A few of them responded with valuable proposals, suggestions and corrections. Incorporating all the recommendations and suggestions, the Commission then prepared a third draft, which was discussed in the Synod held in July 2002.

After discussing the content for one day in detail, the Synod asked the Commission to redraft the text with more practical suggestions. Once again the Commission studied the recommendations made by the bishops and experts in mission theology and finalized a new text which was discussed in the Synod of Bishops held in November 2003.

This fourth draft entitled "To be the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World", was more or less acceptable to the Synod Fathers. Hence

it was entrusted to a Committee of Bishops to again go through the whole text and prepare the final draft to be presented in the Synod of Bishops of November 2004. The Commission had once again sought the opinions of the bishops, to which a few had positively responded. This text has taken into consideration all those suggestions coming from individual bishops and experts in the field of missions. The Committee of Bishops appointed by the Synod gave the final approval to this Mission Policy.

It is with deep gratitude that I express my appreciation to all those who contributed to finalize this Mission Policy of the Syro-Malabar Church. My special thanks to Mr. Nick Ford, U.K. for his literature review of the final draft.

**Bishop Gregory Karotemprel CMI
Chairman
Commission for Evangelization
and Pastoral Care of the Migrants**

March, 2006

INTRODUCTION

TO BE THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The Need for a Policy on Mission *Ad Gentes*

Christ established the Church to continue His mission on earth. The Apostles were fully conscious of their missionary obligation and carried it out through their witness of life, proclamation and commitment. The Churches established by the Apostles share in their missionary responsibility. Mission is the result of a deep Christ-experience the individual has and the urge to share it with others. When the disciples experienced the Risen Lord, they felt it was their duty – rather than a mandate coming from outside – to share with others, an experience that totally altered their lives. Their experience of the Risen Lord was so powerful that they felt compelled to share it with others. When we proceed with the understanding that mission is the fruit of deep God-experience and contemplation, we will be able to take different approaches and orientations in missionary apostolate. Such an intimate personal experience of Jesus enabled St. Thomas, our father in faith, to exclaim, “My Lord and My God”. This radical experience of Christ inspired, guided and strengthened St. Thomas in his missionary life. The model of St. Thomas inspires and encourages St. Thomas Christians in their missionary apostolate.

Christian faith was introduced into India in the very first century of Christianity by Apostle Thomas. The community thus formed was known as the St. Thomas Christians, who lived and kept up this faith over many centuries. The major portion of this ancient community is currently called the Syro-Malabar Church and is one of the most flourishing Individual Churches. The Syro-Malabar Church has regained her status as a *sui juris* Church with necessary canonical structures. The Church has now a common head in the person of the Major Archbishop and a Synod to guide her course. She has promulgated the Particular Laws and is in the process of restoration and renewal of her Liturgy. In this process the Church should become also clear about her fundamental

right and duty of evangelization. Blessed abundantly with priestly, religious and missionary vocations, she is in a process of expanding her missionary endeavours.

As an Apostolic Church with her own identity, the Syro-Malabar Church has to spell out her specific missionary role in the Catholic communion in the multi-ecclesial and multi-religious contexts. Being an Eastern ecclesial tradition which in many respects is harmonious with the Indian religious heritage, the Syro-Malabar Church can have her own missionary approach and effectively carry out her own mission policy clearly spelt out in the present context. St. Thomas Christians become genuine missionaries when they share the faith with others and lead them to enjoy the fullness of life in Jesus Christ. To achieve this goal they have to become the light of the world, the salt of the earth and the leaven in the society.

Missionary Apostolate

The mission of Syro-Malabar Church to spread the Good News throughout the world prompts us to have a common policy. A number of religious congregations and even dioceses have started sending missionaries to continents of North America, South America, Africa, Europe and Australasia. There is a sizable number of Syro-Malabarians in Europe and North America. Of late we have an eparchy in Chicago for our migrants in the USA and Canada. It is the responsibility of the Church to give proper missionary orientation to all the emigrant faithful. Mission is basically an ecclesial act; hence whether undertaken by individual dioceses or religious congregations, it has to be coordinated and guided by the Church. They must follow the common policy of the Syro-Malabar Church instead of proceeding with their own individual or group policies. This necessitates the need for the formulation of a common mission policy for the Syro-Malabar Church in tune with her identity and oriental character.

The Privileged Position of Our Church

A new policy can be chalked out only based on what has been already achieved. The Syro-Malabar Church has the unique honour of

being founded by one of the apostles of Our Lord. She has withstood all vicissitudes and kept up her faith and grew up into a flourishing community. The unique way of witnessing to faith living amidst the vast majority of people who have a strong religious tradition, should form the basis of a new mission policy of the Church. Having an Eastern ecclesial tradition and socio-cultural heritage, the Syro-Malabar Church has an added responsibility to evangelize India and to spread the Good News throughout the vast continent of Asia.

The present vitality of the Church urges her to contribute generously to the Universal Church and in that context she shall go even outside the continent of Asia. In this connection, the Church feels the need to spell out a mission policy to be followed by her members all over the world. Hence, the mission *ad gentes*, undertaken by individuals or institutes of consecrated life or eparchies of the Syro-Malabar Church, is to be carried out in accordance with the directives and guidelines given in this document.

A mission policy of the Syro-Malabar Church should thus take into account her rights and duties as a *sui juris* Church, her eastern ecclesial heritage and Indian origin. The Syro-Malabar Church forms her mission policy based on the teachings of the Magisterium of the Universal Church, directives of the Holy See and the Synod and her own ecclesial heritage and dynamism. This mission policy of the Church should invite all her children to become more conscious of their missionary responsibility and encourage all to fulfill their missionary duties in their living context with greater commitment and enthusiasm.

MISSION OF THE CHURCH: A Theological Perspective

Contemporary Understanding of the Mission

1.1 A fair discussion on the topic of the challenges and prospects of mission can be done only in the light of correct understanding of the nature and mission of the Church in general. Missionary dimension of the Church has been one of the most dynamic subjects of reflection among theologians in most Churches. For the Catholic Church, Vatican II was a trend- setter in this respect.

The Missionary Command

1.2 The missionary command of Jesus, to preach the Gospel (MK 16:15) and to make disciples of all (Mt 28:19) is valid for ever. Jesus' command to the disciples is to become witnesses to Him all over the world (Lk 24: 46-49; Acts 1:8). They are sent like Christ himself with the same mission of Christ (Jn 20:21) who carried out His mission in numerous ways. Hence we understand that as followers of Jesus Christ, we are duty-bound to propagate our faith (LG 17; AG 23). We take our faith in Jesus not as a right but as a gratuitous gift. This is a gift to be shared with all. The urge to share this gift of faith is due to the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Once a believer receives the Holy Spirit, she/he cannot remain idle but has to share that gift of faith with others. History bears witness to this missionary zeal throughout the centuries starting with the Apostles themselves. Having received the gift of faith from the apostolic works of St. Thomas, we should not keep the torch of faith under the bushel. It is the duty of each and every member of the Syro-Malabar Church, to bring the Good News of Salvation to the nations.

Concept of Mission in Vatican II

1.3 In Vatican II, mission is understood in a better way. There is a transition from “missions” in the plural to “mission” in the singular. Mission belongs to the Church; it is an ecclesial action. The Decree on the missionary activity of the Church, presents a superb theological vision of the Church as essentially missionary in character (AG 2). We have a well-thought out theology of mission in *ad gentes*. The Decree develops Church's mission as a sharing in the mission *ad extra* of the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Jesus, Church and Mission

1.4 The meaning of the Church's mission could be understood only in the life, words and deeds of Christ. His person and mission are the paradigms for any work that could be called mission *ad gentes*. Jesus is not simply an external model for the missionary. He is the intimate effective cause of the Church's mission. And Jesus Himself is the very first and the greatest evangelizer (missionary).

Trinitarian Origin of Church's Mission

1.5 The rediscovery of the Trinitarian foundation of the Church's mission and missionary activity (mission *ad gentes*) is one of the well-known achievements of Vatican II. To comprehend the mission of the Church better, we must analyze the mystery of the Church in the mystery of the Trinity – Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. There is only one God in three Persons. Here, unity is genuine, but includes plurality. In the Trinitarian model, unity includes plurality, as there is diversity of Persons.

The Church, the universal sacrament of salvation (LG 48) is missionary by her very nature (AG 2). The deepest root of her missionary drive is God Himself. “Missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than a manifestation or epiphany of God's will and fulfillment of that will in the world and history.” (AG 9) All missionary activities flow from the fountain of love of God the Father, the origin without origin. God the Father who ardently desires the salvation of mankind has sent His only begotten Son into the world to save it and to be the unique

mediator between Him and humanity. So the origin of every mission is the first sending forth of the Son into the world.

Jesus achieved this purpose by His life, teachings, miracles, sacred passion and death, His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. Jesus brought salvation for all through the paschal mystery. These paschal mysteries are to be accepted individually by everyone for his/her salvation. This is realized only when each member of the Church communicates the same mission to others. For that, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit from the Father who lives in and animates and directs the Church. So it is from the fountain of love of the Father, the mission *ad extra* of the Son and the Holy Spirit, that the Church receives her mission.

Now, the Church is founded ultimately on the double sending forth of the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity into the world (mission *ad extra*). The Church then continues in time and space the historical missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. She continues Jesus' mission of bearing witness to God's fountain of love and to realize salvation to humanity. In short, whatever the Church does to continue this unique mission of Jesus is known as the 'mission' of the Church. This one and undivided mission is now carried out through many and varied ministries¹ and that particular ministry of witnessing to the life of Christ and preaching the Gospel to people of other faiths is known as missionary activity.²

Mission of Jesus Entrusted with the Church

1.6 Jesus had entrusted the accomplishment of His mission to the Apostles. "As the Son was sent by the Father so He, too, sent the Apostles" (LG 17). Christ's mission is continued in the activity of the Church. The Church has received the command to proclaim and establish among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and God (LG 5). Christ continues the salvific mission through the Holy Spirit who is the soul of the Church and the driving force for her missionary endeavour (LG 4, 13, 24). Through Him the Church becomes the "universal sacrament of salvation" (LG 48). The Church carries on the mission of Christ. That is to say, in God's universal design for the salvation of the world, the Church is the prolongation of the mission of Christ and the day by day translation

on earth of his divine self-communication to his creatures is the missionary activity. And this is an absolutely indispensable task. Missionary activity is obligatory in order to propagate the faith and salvation of Christ (AG 5).

The Church is in mission everywhere and it belongs to the entire Church. There is no distinction among Churches with regard to missionary vocation and missionary responsibility. Both Eastern and Western Churches are equal in their missionary vocation and responsibility.³ And mission is the vital function of all the members of the Church (LG 17, 35). Among Churches there should flourish co-operation instead of rivalry. Above all, charity should prevail among Catholics of all Rites (AG 15; OE 30).

Post Vatican II Concept of Mission

1.7 Post Vatican II mission theology preferred the new word evangelization to mission. In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI wrote: "Evangelization is the grace and vocation of the Church. The Church exists in order to evangelize." (EN 14) According to Pope Paul VI, evangelization is a "complex, rich and dynamic reality".⁴ The task of evangelization is carried out with a particular purpose, which is the renewal of humanity.

The Church's evangelizing mission does not simply imply the geographical expansion with the visible boundary and increasing number of her members, but it includes proclamation, witnessing, building up of the Church, works of charity, dialogue with non-Christians, inculturation, preferential options for the poor, the marginalized and other subaltern groups, apostolate among the migrants, new evangelization, human promotion, actions on behalf of justice, peace and integrity of creation etc. "In the Church's mind, to evangelize means to bring the Good News to all the strata of humanity and through its influence to transform humanity from within and make it new" (EN 18).

Evangelization is a multi-dimensional concept. Some of its elements are so prominent that their absence would render the concept meaningless. Such elements are witness of life given by Christian communities to Christian values (EN 21, RM 42-43), clear and

unequivocal proclamation of the Good News (EN 22, RM 44-45) and the entering into a community of believers through the sacraments (EN 23). The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* emphasizes the permanent validity and urgency of the missionary commitment of the Church. Mission *ad gentes* remains valid and urgent always. While the encyclical highlights the importance of the Kingdom-centred mission, it cautions the missionaries about the danger of working for a Kingdom devoid of Jesus Christ. *Redemptoris Missio* gives a clarion call to renew the missionary commitment of the Church.

Ecclesial Communities as Sign of the Kingdom of God

1.8 Jesus was the first and the greatest herald of the Gospel. The early ecclesial communities were the fruits of apostolic preaching and witnessing. They considered preaching of good news of the Kingdom as their primary mission (1 Cor. 1:17). It is the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles that has given birth to the Church: “the Church originated in the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the twelve Apostles” (EN 15). The Council repeats the following expression of St. Augustine on the missionary activity of the Twelve: “They preached the word of truth and brought forth Churches” (EN 59; AG 1).

The Apostles were the privileged founders of the Church. They preached the Gospel in various parts and established the Churches. Each of these apostolic Churches was the result of the interaction between the Gospel message preached by the Apostle and the cultural milieu that received the same. Thus the work of evangelization undertaken by the Apostles in obedience to the missionary commissioning resulted in the formation of different ecclesial communities. What was common to all these ecclesial communities was faith in Jesus Christ. In each of these Churches the mystery of Christ was fully present. Each Eucharistic community presided over by a Bishop was considered the Church of Christ. The Eucharist and its celebration as an event occupy the central place in the Church. The St. Thomas Christian community of India is rightly one of such ancient Apostolic Churches.

THE SYRO -MALABAR CHURCH AND HER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Saint Thomas Christians

2.1 As per the well-established tradition Apostle Thomas arrived in India in 52 A.D., preached the Gospel and founded the Church in India. The community formed out of this early Christianization was known in history as the St. Thomas Christians. According to the well accepted tradition St. Thomas founded seven Churches (communities) in South India and in many parts of North India before his martyrdom at Mylapore in 72 A.D. The descendants of this apostolic Church call themselves St. Thomas Christians or simply Thomas Christians and are deeply conscious of their apostolic origin. It is worth mentioning that this is the only apostolic Church known after the name of its founder-apostle; all other early apostolic Churches are known by the place of their origin.

Thomas of Cana

2.2 Thomas of Cana, a rich merchant, together with a few families of Persian Christians arrived in Kerala in 345. The king and the Christians of Kerala very cordially welcomed them. They played a great role in the organization and building up of the Church and exerted great influence in the Christian community of Kerala. The arrival of these Christians brought vitality to St. Thomas Christian community.

The East Syrian Church and Thomas Christians

2.3 The young Churches formed by the preaching of St. Thomas and his disciples in the Middle East and in India were interrelated owing to linguistic, ethnic and commercial ties. But the Churches in Mesopotamia, owing to their proximity to the flourishing Christianity in their vicinity as well as their internal dynamism, began flourishing rapidly. And this, in turn, influenced the Churches elsewhere, especially

on the Malabar Coast, leading to a common liturgical patrimony and hierarchical allegiance. This hierarchical relationship lasted till the 17th century.

Although the Malabar Church had her hierarchs from the Persian patriarchate and followed the East Syrian Liturgy, she had autonomy in her administration and indigenous customs in liturgy and Church discipline. A unique feature of this autonomy was the role of the Archdeacon who administered the temporalities of the Church and dealt with organizational matters.

The Latin Church and the Thomas Christians

2.4 From the 16th century begins the third phase in the history of Thomas Christians. The European missionaries reached Malabar and it was an occasion for mutual discovery. The relation was cordial in the beginning. Later, due to the inability of the foreigners to understand the diversity in Catholic practices, and the strong attachment of the native Christians to their own ecclesial traditions, there arose a situation of confrontation. It was accelerated by the Synod of Diamper in 1599 in which Latin practices were imposed on the Thomas Christians of East Syrian Tradition. The most regrettable after-effect of it was the 'Coonan Cross Oath' in 1653 in which a section of the Thomas Christians decided to sever all relations with the European missionaries, especially the Portuguese Jesuits. As a result of this confrontation the Thomas Christians were subjugated by the Latin hierarchy and their All India Jurisdiction was taken away from them, confining them within the limits of the erstwhile Travancore and Cochin States.

The group of Thomas Christians, who severed all relationship with the Portuguese Jesuits, later accepted the Antiochean Rite and gradually came to be known in history as 'Puthenkuttukar' who were also called 'Jacobites'. It was from this Jacobite Church that a group led by Mar Ivanios reunited with the Catholic Church in 1930. Thus was born the Syro- Malankara Catholic Church.

Restoration of the Heritage

2.5 Ever since the division of the community into two, attempts have been made by all concerned to restore unity as well as to obtain bishops of their own rites. The first steps towards restoring the heritage of the Thomas Christians were taken by the Holy See in 1887 by creating two vicariates of Kottayam and Trichur for the Thomas Christians, thus separating them from the Latin jurisdiction. The next step of restoration was in 1923 when the Holy See established the Syro-Malabar hierarchy with Ernakulam as the Archbishopric. From 1962 onwards a few (ten) mission eparchies have been established in Central and Northern India. And finally the Syro-Malabar Church was elevated to the status of *sui juris* Church in 1993. Yet the Church has not regained her All India jurisdiction and jurisdiction over her faithful outside India except in the diocese of Chicago in the United States of America.

THE EAST SYRIAN HERITAGE AND THE SYRO-MALABAR TRADITION

Evangelizing Mission: Early Apostolic Period

3.1 The strong tradition that St. Thomas established seven churches/communities in Kerala shows that the ecclesial situation here was the same as in other parts of the world where Churches were founded by the Apostles and their immediate disciples. These Churches were in a fluid stage and in the course of centuries solidified into definite patterns by merging together into a settled tradition centred on famous ecclesial centres like Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, Seleucia-Ctesiphon (Edessa-Nisibis). Many of these ancient communities formed by apostolic preaching were not able to survive the test of time. However, the communities established by St. Thomas not only did survive, but spread to other parts growing into a flourishing Church. The preservation of their Christian faith in a culture dominated by believers of other religions, is the best proof of an authentic spirit of evangelization. They survived without imperial patronage or commercial backing as happened in the West.

East Syrian Missionary Tradition

3.2 The history of evangelization in India is intertwined with that of the East Syrian Church. The East Syrian Church was the most missionary-minded Church of Christendom till the end of the Middle-Ages. The East Syrian preachers had brought the faith to remote regions of Turkistan, Mongolia, Siberia, China, Japan and India.⁵ Such was the missionary charism of this Church that it was known in history as a "Church on Fire".⁶ A number of their followers during the 12th and 13th centuries outnumbered those of the Latin and Byzantine Churches put together, and geographically they were more spread out than the Roman Church.⁷ Hence, it is important to note that the St Thomas

Christians of India, in communion with the East Syrian Church, contributed their share in this evangelizing mission.

The East Syrian Concept of Mission

3.3 The East Syrian concept and approach of evangelization were quite different. Unlike the Christian West, the East Syrian missionary advances were never made with imperial patronage nor accompanied by commercial groups. Their approach consisted in communicating the living faith from a believing community to another community (of other faiths), that it may form and develop into a community of living faith. This was done through a monastic type of evangelization.⁸ The monks from monasteries went to different places and where they were accepted, formed small monasteries of their own. Here through an intense prayer life and evangelical style of living, they inspired those around them to come to them. Gradually the people who flocked to the monastery were led to the faith, step by step.

The monks adapted their life and work to the local situation, but kept intact their faith and commitment. The people would find the monastery as an inspiring model and salvific refuge. Once a community was well established then some monks would move from there to other places. Here the numerical increase or institutional growth were never considered the determinants of the missionary growth, rather it was the intensity of their life experience.

Missionary Legacy of the Thomas Christians

3.4 The Thomas Christians had their own unique mode of evangelization. Keeping intact one's Christian faith and bearing witness to it amidst the vast majority of followers of other religions were their missionary style. A large scale of proselytisation in the background of imperial might and economic strength was not their missionary style. Rather, it was like sowing 'seeds of faith' in a heathen soil, which would take its own time for fruition. (Mk. 4:26-29)

They had positive influence in the society in which they were living. Historians are united in attesting the fact that the Thomas Christian

community “shone like lights amidst the darkness that surrounded them.”⁹ They were respected as community of high moral standards. The Hindu nobility wanted Christian presence around them and they served as connecting links among the castes.

There was perfect harmony between Christianity and Hinduism. There has been a ‘life of dialogue’ between Hindus and Christians in pre-Portuguese India. The social customs, traditions and life style of the Thomas Christians attest to the fact that they have a very positive approach towards other religions. What is most striking in their relationship with Hindus is the fact that they shared almost all the social customs of the Hindu society, but kept intact their own Christian faith and worship.

We know for certain that the ancient Thomas Christians were very much attached to their faith tradition centred on the very Person of Christ. They were known in history as Nazranis, meaning the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. While all the Christian communities have been named after the place of their origin, the Thomas Christians are the only community known after the name of their Apostle and of Jesus of Nazareth, the core of their faith.

The liturgical prayers in use among them as well as certain pious practices and local traditions related to the day-to-day life of the faithful reveal the central place they had given to Jesus. To the believers of other faiths also, they were presenting Jesus as the unique Saviour, but never forcing them to believe it.

THE MISSIONARY CONTEXT OF INDIA

India: Land of Religions and Cultures

4.1 A deep grasp of contemporary Indian culture is essential for any genuine understanding of the missionary enterprise of the Church in India. In India, Christianity has to face long established and highly developed religious traditions. India is the land of four world religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. Christianity and Islam came to this country already in the first century of their existence. For centuries Indians have lived in a religiously pluralistic society. Any serious effort of preaching the Gospel today, must, by and large, consider these great religions and the influence they exert on Indian society.

Again, India is a land of ancient and modern cultures. India is one of the four main cradles of civilization in the world. India's cultural heritage is one of the most ancient, extensive and varied among all those which make up the cultural heritage of humanity. Indian culture and Hindu religion are closely related, but with some distinction. India contributes in other areas of culture such as art and literature, sculpture, mural paintings, mathematics, astronomy etc.

The Indian Social Milieu

4.2 India is the largest democracy of the world with a total population of over one billion. Still, India is a developing country where the majority of the population are underfed and unemployed. Economic inequality is a shocking reality in India. Corruption and malpractices in the society hinder the growth of the nation. To this we may add all sorts of discriminations in governmental and semi - governmental offices. Christian converts especially the Dalits are not eligible for the concession and privilege of the scheduled castes. Untouchability and caste distinction though legally abolished, still continue in one way or other. Acts of terrorism and violence so repugnant to the Indian culture, find their way

to the society. Religious fundamentalism is a major factor in the socio-political scene of India. These are but a few burning problems of the nation. The Church and her missionaries cannot and should not turn a deaf ear to these crucial issues. They have to face these challenges.

Indian Ecclesial Context

4.3 The ecclesial context of the Catholic Church of India is that of three Individual Churches: the Syro-Malabar Church from the apostolic time, the Latin Church from the sixteenth century and the Syro Malankara Church from 1930. With 2.3% of the population, the Christians are the second largest minority community in India. The Catholics constitute about 1.8% of the population. The presence and growth of the Church among the Adivasis and the Dalits and mission in the North-East India are significant. They form a good portion of vibrant Christians in India. The non-Catholic Christians are divided into many groups; like the Orthodox groups of Eastern tradition and various Protestant Churches of Western tradition. Apart from these mainline Churches there are also many Pentecostal groups working for evangelization in India.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR MISSION

Crisis in Christian Mission

5.1 Almost four decades have elapsed since the successful completion of Vatican II which undoubtedly paved the way for a better understanding and appreciation of the nature and mission of the Church. But to our surprise we notice that the Christian missions around the world are facing a grave crisis. Missionary activity is in colossal confusion. As the late Pope John Paul II notes: “Both internal and external difficulties have weakened the Church’s missionary thrust towards non-Christians” (RM 2). The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase.

Coming back to our Indian context we notice that hardly three percent of the “one billion population” of India follow Jesus. The urgency of the Church’s mission *ad gentes* is thus self-evident. What the Holy Father has said about the Church’s mission is equally relevant to our Indian situation. “The moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes*” (RM 3).

New Challenging Situation

5.2 We are well aware of the present complex situation. We have to take into account the religious, cultural, political, economical and historical complexities of our nation and the world. Indian society is a composite of different races, religions, languages, castes and sub-castes, ethnic groups and tribes. Almost half of the Indian population falls below the poverty line. Illiteracy, unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth, female infanticide, child labour, cruelty to women, lack of basic facilities like drinking water, electricity, roads, etc are just a few of the Indian social problems.

However, being aware of our responsibility, we are now determined to face all these challenges and are determined to share the Good News to all our brethren. Missionary work, we are aware, is our responsibility and we are not true disciples of Jesus Christ if we do not proclaim Him to the present Indian masses. They do have a right to know Jesus and to hear His message. It is our duty to announce this message with enthusiasm and to accept the same in return. Jesus, the Word of God is to be left to the freedom of the hearers.

Mounting Opposition

5.3 Today there is mounting opposition to the work of missionaries. Christianity was received and held in high esteem for many centuries. However, the situation has changed drastically. Today, Christianity is viewed with suspicion and animosity. Even the contribution of the Church in various fields such as education, health care and social uplift for the building of the nation is viewed with suspicion. Conversion to Christianity is something unthinkable to traditional Hinduism. For Hinduism does not proselytize. Religion comes with the free gift of existence. Hence according to the Hindu way of thinking it is meaningless to insist on total conversion of a person to something that he is not. They dislike deeply the evangelizing aspect of our missionary work.

Further, some of the emerging trends in the Indian society are real threats to the Church’s mission in India. Though known for centuries as the land of tolerance and non-violence, bloodshed and violence are on the increase in India in the name of religion. While there are powerful religious movements, a sort of indifference towards everything spiritual and religious is also evident in our land. Communalism and fundamentalism are obstacles to unity and integrity of the nation. The political parties exploit communal feelings. Though propagation of one’s faith is guaranteed by the Indian constitution, anti - conversion bills have been passed in some of the Indian States. In short, our work of evangelization in India in recent years has been under fire. This precarious situation demands a re-think about our missionary approach.

Inter Ecclesial Problems

5.4 There are also challenges within the Church that affect the evangelizing efforts. Today the situation in India is such that the Oriental Churches are unable to exercise their missionary obligation. The reasons for this are varied. We highlight here the problems and issues the Syro-Malabar Church encounters in India in exercising her missionary task. This is a delicate matter that involves questions of inter-ecclesial relations. The three key issues are: (1.) the denial of the right to *ad gentes* mission, (2.) the question of jurisdiction, and (3.) the denial of our right to provide pastoral care to our emigrants found all over India.

Jesus gave the mission mandate to all His disciples. Sharing the Good News is the responsibility of all Christians irrespective of the ecclesial traditions and rites. Hence mission “*ad gentes*” is the God-given right and duty of the members of the Syro-Malabar Church remaining faithful to the ecclesial identity of the Church. The Second Vatican Council and other documents of the Church categorically affirm the equal missionary responsibility of all Christians of different ecclesial traditions.

Universal and Individual Churches

5.5 From the very beginning the Church has been pluriform in nature. The very first ecclesial community constituted after hearing St. Peter was not homogeneous. It included people belonging to different cultural denominations (cf. Acts 2:5-13). Several Local Churches came into being through the proclamation of the Word by the apostles and their successors. Though the same Word of God was proclaimed, it was received, lived, celebrated and proclaimed in a pluriform way. This diversity was due to the interaction of the one Word of God with different cultural, social and religious milieu of the people who encountered it. These Local Churches later developed into certain families of the Church with their own liturgy, spirituality, theology and Church discipline.

It has come about through divine providence that, in the course of time, different Churches set up in various places by the apostles and their successors joined together in a multiplicity of organically united

groups which, while safeguarding the unity of faith and unique divine structure of the universal Church, have their own discipline, enjoy their own liturgical usage and inherit a theological and spiritual patrimony (LG 23).

Owing to their distinct individuality in liturgy, theology, spirituality and Church discipline, these Churches later came to be called Individual Churches. Vatican II understands the Universal Church as a communion of all Individual Churches (UR 23). The Church of St. Thomas Christians is one among them.

Individual Ecclesial Traditions

5.6 As the Catholic Church is a communion of 23 *sui juris*/Individual Churches, the whole ecclesial wealth of each Individual Church belongs to the whole Church, and as such, is to be acknowledged, appreciated, encouraged and proclaimed. “The growth of the Universal Church is possible only through the growth of the Individual Churches” (OE 2).

Equal Right of Evangelization

5.7 Every Individual Church has its God given right and obligation to proclaim the Word that it has received and enshrined in its faith-tradition. The missionary right flows from the basic understanding that all Individual Churches are equal in all respects: dignity, rights and obligations (OE 3). Together with the Council Fathers we also affirm that the evangelizing duty pertains equally to all Individual Churches. Further, each Individual Church is free to grow by establishing hierarchies (OE 4).

Limited Missionary Expansions

5.8 Ever since the establishment of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy in 1923, there has been a steady growth in the missionary vocation in the Syro-Malabar Church. And in 1962 Pope John XXIII erected the first Syro-Malabar mission of Chanda outside Kerala and entrusted it to the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate. Later on Pope Paul VI established three more exarchates in 1968. All these and the later erected exarchates have

now been raised to the status of eparchies and today we have ten such eparchies outside *territorium proprium* and one overseas in the United States.

Evangelization being the inalienable right and unavoidable obligation of the Church, its denial goes against the collective consciousness and the common teaching of the entire Church.

The Question of Multi-Jurisdiction

5.9 Multiple jurisdiction in India will only foster the genuine growth of the three Individual Churches. An Individual Church is not a territory. It is the People of God united in faith with the specific features of its expressions in liturgy, theology, discipline and spirituality. Since the best expression of a Church as faith community is its liturgy, it follows that the liturgical head of the Church should constitute its juridical head, too.

Pastoral Care of the Migrants and Evangelization

5.10 Pastoral care of the emigrants of an Individual Church is of great importance as evangelization is inseparable from the life of an Individual Church. The pastoral care of migrants belonging to a particular *sui juris* Church in the territory of another ecclesiastical jurisdiction is also important not only to keep them in the proper ecclesial tradition, but also for fruitful evangelization. An ecclesial community that is built up properly in its ecclesial identity can become an effective agent of evangelization. Through adequate pastoral care alone can the community of the migrants be built into an evangelizing community. The presence of such a community is far more powerful in evangelization than individual efforts.

5.11 These migrants lack above all a real ecclesial sense which should have instilled in them a missionary consciousness. Cut off from their own proper ecclesial traditions, the emigrants lose the sense of oneness with the Church. Very often our emigrants follow Latin liturgy, discipline, traditions and practices which are quite alien to them.

Again, the emigrants do not get proper faith formation (catechesis) which they used to get at home. They miss very much the Sunday Schools, where our children are initiated to genuine Christian life. Sunday Schools in Kerala, we know, not only initiate our children to Christian faith, but also foster religious and priestly vocations. Priestly and religious vocations among the emigrants living within Latin eparchies are rare. This absence of vocations is a painful sign of the decadence in spiritual life. The tradition of evening family prayer, special devotions etc. are fading away among emigrants. All these are sufficient to show the lack of proper pastoral care among them.

The Second Vatican Council stipulated that provision be made everywhere to protect and advance all Individual Churches. For this purpose, each should organise its own parishes and hierarchy, where the spiritual good of the faithful requires it (OE 4). In the Decree on Bishops the Council says:

Where there are believers of different rites, the bishop of that diocese should make provision for their spiritual needs either by providing priests of those rites, or special parishes, or by appointing Episcopal vicars, with the necessary faculties. If necessary, such a vicar may be ordained bishop. Alternatively, the bishop himself may perform functions of an ordinary for each of the different rites. And if the Apostolic See judges that, on account of some special circumstances, none of these alternatives are practicable, a special hierarchy should be established for each different rite (CD 23).¹⁰

So, the pastoral care of the migrants is a genuine problem that the Syro-Malabar Church faces in exercising its missionary duty. Through adequate pastoral care alone, can the migrants be built into an evangelizing community.

Organizing Our Migrants

5.12 It is high time that we organize our migrants in India and abroad. Unless they are given pastoral care, in their own proper ecclesial tradition, they may in the course of time end up as anonymous Christians in their local community. Some may even think of joining other oriental non-Catholic communities or even may grow indifferent to faith and Church.

But, if they are properly cared for and catechised they will become evangelizers of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Commission for the pastoral care of the migrants can take necessary steps to remain in contact with Syro-Malabar migrant concentrations in important places, both inside and outside India. The Syro-Malabar Religious Congregations and Apostolic Institutes can join this commission in organising pastoral care programmes for the migrants. The Major Archbishop shall issue pastoral letters to the migrants once in an year. So also an Assembly of the migrants be convened once in five years. In addition to the general principles mentioned above, this Synodal Commission shall have the following tasks:

1. to identify and inform the Major Archbishop of areas outside the proper territory or our mission eparchies where there is a sizeable community of our faithful so that necessary steps may be taken to provide pastoral care for them in our rite.
2. to remain in contact with the Local Ordinaries who have concentration of our migrant faithful under them.
3. to prepare an annual report regarding the situations of the pastoral care of the migrants the world over and submit it to the Major Archbishop and the Synod.
4. to prepare a directory of our migrant faithful in cities outside the proper territory and our mission eparchies.
5. to coordinate programmes for the social welfare of our migrant faithful.
6. to find ways and means to make use of the potential of our migrant faithful.
7. to help the migrants to keep their original heritage by providing them with information on our Church through leaflets, brochures, news letters etc.
8. to assist our migrant faithful to form associations which may help them to keep up their heritage and traditions.

9. to see that proper catechesis is given in migrant communities.
10. to make provisions for our migrant people to remain in contact with the Mother Church and to encourage bishops and priests who make visits abroad to visit our migrant communities as well, if the distance permits them to do so.
11. to take the initiative to free the present Syro-Malabar mission eparchies from the suffragan status of the Latin archdioceses and to take the necessary steps towards the erection of a mission Arch Eparchy under which all the Syro-Malabar mission eparchies come.
12. to take necessary action to establish eparchies, parishes, appoint chaplains or parish priests for our migrant communities according to the need of the situation. This shall be done in consultation with the Major Archbishop and the local Latin hierarch.
13. to organize the diocesan and religious priests belonging to our Church living in the big cities of India and abroad and to make use of their services in organizing and catechizing our migrants.

THE SPECIFIC PATHS AND DIMENSIONS OF OUR MISSION

6.1 We firmly believe that the Syro-Malabar Church has got a unique role to play in the evangelizing mission of the Church. We are uniquely privileged to possess both the Eastern Catholic and Indian heritage. Therefore, we are bound to give priority for the evangelization of our own country. The unique way of witnessing to faith living amidst vast majority of non Christians for about two millennia is an added reason for the same. The present vitality of the Church sending missionaries all over India and all over the world prompts us to spell out our specific missionary role. The Syro-Malabar Church is blessed abundantly with missionary vocations and her missionaries are found all over the world. At present these missionaries go to various missions on their own initiative. Given that evangelization is an ecclesial act, all these initiatives and individual efforts must be promoted, coordinated and guided by the Church under the supervision of the Major Archbishop and the Commission for Evangelization.

Proclaiming Jesus

6.2 Proclamation of the Person Jesus is the sum and substance of evangelization. The Church has to preach that Jesus is the unique mediator between God and humanity. There is no authentic evangelization unless the name and teaching, the life and promises, the kingdom and mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, are not proclaimed (EN 22). There shall be no watering down of the gospel message. “Evangelization risks losing its very substance and entirely disappearing if it trivializes or denatures its contents by the way it expresses it” (EN 63).

Witness of Life

6.3 Every Christian is called to be a witness to Jesus (Acts 1:8). In the context of the present quest for “authenticity”, a genuine witness of

life becomes more than ever an essential condition for effective evangelization (EN16). Mission is always witness, *martyrion (sakshi)*. Proclamation without witness will produce no effect on the hearers. Authentic Christian life itself is witness: wordless but powerful and effective proclamation of the Good News. Where direct proclamation becomes impossible we have to diffuse the Gospel message through the witness of a true Christian life, as has been commanded by our Lord (Lk. 24:48). Life witness must be a priority in our missionary endeavours. The formation of our missionaries as well our families, especially our migrants, shall be steered towards this priority.

In India in particular, where we are surrounded by the followers of other deep rooted religious traditions, the very life of Christians shall be the best way of transmitting the Gospel values. In this, contemplation and prayer have a priority. The other religious traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism etc) are profoundly characterized by a sense of prayer and interiority. The speciality of the Eastern Churches lies in their Liturgy and the contemplative approach in their spirituality. Therefore we consider it our bounden duty to present ourselves as a community of worshippers where contemplation and prayer become high priority.

Dialogue with the Religions

6.4 The Gospel is never preached in the vacuum. It is addressed to a people with a particular background. In presenting the faith to the non-Christians of India, the ancient Thomas Christians had their own unique ways and means. That is to say, there had been ‘a life of dialogue’ between the Hindus and the Christians in India (*acharanena praghoshayati*).

In the multi-religious context of India, followers of different religions live in constant interaction. In such a situation dialogue is not an option for the missionaries but a necessity. Human qualities are required for such dialogue. But they are not sufficient. Since dialogue forms an integral part of the mission of the Church, and an expression of mission *ad gentes* (EA 31) there should be specific gifts of the Spirit to enable a missionary to engage in it.

Dialogue is founded on the recognition of what is true and holy in other religions, on God’s universal saving love: “providence,

manifestations of goodness and saving designs extend to all men” (NA 1). The Christian through dialogue enters into the religious experiences and traditions of the followers of other religions and invites them to participate in the religious experiences of the Christian tradition.

Eastern theology always upholds the principle of '*logos spermatikos*'. Where there is God's word there is salvation. God's saving act and presence have been operative in time and space even before the foundation of the Church by Christ. That is to say, the religions of the world too are included in God's universal plan of salvation. So any attempt to have dialogue with the followers of other religions should start from the basic understanding that these religions too have salvific values and God's presence within them. While upholding our own Christ-experience we recognize the God-experience of humanity. This recognition of the religions of Asia in no way minimizes the urgency of the Christian mission. The recognition of the positive values in other religions in no way undermines the uniqueness of Christianity.

A missionary in dialogue lives in good rapport with people around and is ready to help those who are distant, even if they are considered hostile and wicked. This is more than mere humanity, it is a divine mandate. The man of dialogue prays, and in prayer develops the keen sense for God's presence and love wherever he encounters it. He knows where God speaks, in the midst of a sinful world, at times through the most inadequate channels of human thought and language. He is convinced of the fact that God is there with his light and love and there are no boundaries for his presence.

In the missionary context of India we have to give greater importance for dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange and dialogue of spiritual experience. Dialogue of life is living together of the followers of different religious traditions in harmony and cooperation. Adherents of different religions live side by side as brothers and sisters. The dialogue of life should lead to these other three forms: dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange and dialogue of spiritual experience. Through dialogue of action, Christians work together with followers of other religions for the socio-economic development of the society. In this living and working together, they

share their faith with others. Indians in general are more attracted to sharing the God-experience in life rather than to theological discourses, dogmas, doctrines and theories. The Church should manifest adequate emphasis to these forms of dialogue and others if any, and people should be trained for such dialogue.

Asceticism and Monasticism

6.5 Asceticism and monasticism have great importance both in the Indian and Syro-Malabar traditions. The central place of contemplation in evangelization efforts is self evident. The ascetics (*munis*) of the ancient Indian religions were in fact monk-missionaries. The same was true of Eastern Christianity and especially of East Syrian Church, which had an excellent monastic tradition.

There is close resemblance between the Oriental and Indian outlook on asceticism. Hinduism is a religion of interiority. The spirit of asceticism and renunciation is one of its essential constituents. Asceticism was a constitutive element of Syrian spirituality. The Syrian ascetics were known for their austere and rigorous life, and their missionary work beyond the boundaries of Syria is well known. Monasteries were great centres of evangelization. The St. Thomas Christians have received fruitful stimuli from the East Syrians and their own Indian counterparts. Following their footsteps, we shall also put up monasteries throughout the breadth and length of our country. The Syro-Malabar monks should become not only ascetics but also charismatic heralds of the Good News to our fellow brethren. Hence one of our missionary priorities ought to be the founding of as many small houses of prayer as possible all over India.

Religious Orders, Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life and even interested lay people have to imbibe the spirit of asceticism and monasticism. The missionaries who take such a way of life should have an authentic monastic formation. Training centres for initiating such monastic ashram - life are necessary today. Such missionaries have to live in ashrams of humble surroundings not far removed from people and sharing their way of life. Such missionary work is passive and indirect but at the same time intense and dynamic.

The present “ashram movement” (hermitage) started by some of our religious, is a welcome step to foster the spirit of prayer and contemplation. An ashram is a place of intense and sustained spiritual quest and contemplation with a simple lifestyle. It is essentially a centre of prayer and silence. These *ashramites* are the living symbols of divine presence for the outside world and also for the members of the Church. This form of ashram life, which is already prevalent in some of our mission dioceses has to become an important missionary method of the Syro-Malabar Church. Such ashram lifestyle can lead people of our missionary dioceses closer and closer to the divine Guru, Jesus Christ.

Itinerant Missionaries

6.6 Jesus and his apostles were itinerant preachers. They were going from town to town, from village to village, all through Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem. So too we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, Apocryphal writings and the works of the Apostolic Fathers that in the early Church there were many such successful itinerant preachers. From our tradition we learn that Apostle Thomas was an itinerant preacher. This is evident from the fact that he had given shape to seven distinct ecclesial communities not to mention his close association with places like Malayattoor and Mylapore.

Coming back to our Indian situation, we notice the great importance that Hinduism has given to rishis, munis, gurus, pilgrimages and pilgrim centres. Buddhism has given rise to itinerant monks who went around with great zeal to spread their message. Even today Sanyasis (*Bikshus*) are held in high esteem. People support them with food, clothing and shelter. They are people who have genuinely detached themselves from all worldly ties and who dedicate themselves solely to the Supreme Being. They go around radiating their God-experience sharing with people their heavenly bliss and enthusiasm. This way of life, needs to be adopted by at least a few of our missionaries. It will be a very powerful means of evangelization in the Indian, Asian contexts.

Founding of Local Liturgical Assemblies

6.7 Another key element in evangelization is the formation of local liturgical assembly, the Church. Our missionaries must concentrate on

building up such liturgical communities which is so clearly emphasized by Church documents like *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI.¹¹ The missionary activity of the Syro-Malabar Church should be the proclamation and sharing of the faith experience of this particular Church handed down to us through its genuine liturgical traditions. And combining both Indian and Eastern elements there will evolve in the course of time new forms of Eucharistic celebration, a natural fruit of the organic growth duly envisaged by the Church in the missions.

From the very beginning in the East, the emphasis was on the assembly of believers gathered around the Word. Following our tradition of palliyogam our missionaries shall give attention to the building up of these assemblies on a participatory basis. While sharing one’s own Christ-experience and Church-experience, they must work towards the realization of a better Gospel-culture encounter.

The Path of Inculturation

6.8 Inculturation is something that happens naturally when the Gospel meaningfully encounters the various cultures. It is the by-product of an involvement with a people rather than the conscious target of programme of action. It is actually the people that create a culture. So, only when the Church involves itself in the life and struggles of people around her, will she begin to acquire and understand new cultural elements. Inculturation from below, from the people, is the valid form of involvement.

The Gospel message has to be communicated through a medium that is best understood by the people. Hence, the study of the local language of the people to be evangelized is of paramount importance. Inculturation is to be extended to all domains of Church life. Some forms of change in the liturgical dress, art, music, etc. are not enough to count the Church as really incarnated in the culture of the locality. What the Church needs is a deep rooted existential adaptation. True inculturation is not simple adaptation of certain names, or the borrowing of certain religious symbolisms or religious practices. Inculturation has to cover the total reality of the Church.

What is special about Eastern theology is that it does not consider any culture as impure or devoid of the Word of God. The Gospel is not considered as a 'supra cultural ideology'. The East Syrians and the Greeks were well known for their appreciation of the local cultures.¹² This is also true of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Syro-Malabar Church in India is in a better position to make further encounter with the Indian cultures. Her form of worship and style of life have become part of Indian heritage and culture. The fact that the Syro-Malabar Church is authentically Indian does not dissuade her from attempts towards inculturation in the newly formed communities of the Church outside Kerala. So the Syro-Malabar missionaries must make an earnest attempt to present their own Christ-experience in a local cultural garb. She has to commit herself to the social and cultural traditions of each place or region where her missionaries are engaged in the work of evangelization.

The Syro-Malabar Church, which has a tradition of meaningful encounter with the local cultures and building up a community very much inculturated, can have her own contributions to the Universal Church. In this context the Syro-Malabar Church has to think of her world wide mission. Our missionaries must be cautious about the methods used during the colonial period. Modern international culture is sweeping across the whole world, submerging local cultures. The identity of a national culture should help people to relate themselves to the other national cultures. Hence an overstress on national culture would only do harm to the work of evangelization. The Church should try to express her spiritual, liturgical traditions in a language and medium which would be understood by all concerned.

Human Promotion and Development of the Society

6.9 The Church has to consider all efforts for humanization as an integral part of her mission.¹³ The good news of liberation announced by the Word of God cannot be isolated from the good news of human efforts of development and humanization. The Syro-Malabar missionaries have to be aware of the fact that the work for human development is not extraneous to evangelization, but pertains to the very

core of the Gospel. The Syro-Malabar Church has to be the living sign of Christ the liberator. The Church should positively try to build up a more humane environment for the humanization of people and society.

The social reality in India still remains one of abject poverty, deprivation, impoverishment, marginalization and dehumanization in spite of the phenomenal developments in recent years. The missionaries who preach the message of the Gospel to these poor people cannot but identify themselves with Christ who identified himself with the poor. Evangelization in such a context assumes new dimensions: dimensions of an integral development, struggle for justice, that is, an all-round liberation.

Great emphasis in the liberating mission of the Church in India should be given to awareness and conscientisation programmes. The vast majority of the masses are unaware of the evil structures which exploit them. In India, the gap between the rich and poor, the haves and have-nots is very great. The fruits of industrialization go to a tiny minority of the very rich of the nation, while the vast majority is denied even the basic human rights. Here the Church has to assume her prophetic role. She should not only plead for the downtrodden but make them aware of their own rights and equip them to be in the forefront in the fight for justice. The Syro-Malabar Church's missionaries must always keep this in mind. They may organize reconstruction programmes, adult literacy, rural health education, campaign for payment of just wages, campaign against discrimination on the basis of caste and sex and campaign against corruption. The Church should be the champion of the cause of the marginalized in India. At the same time, while executing developmental works, the Church should not give an image of itself as a rich institution.

Missionaries as Reconciliators

6.10 The message of repentance and reconciliation was very explicit in the preaching of Jesus. He began His ministry by preaching, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1: 14-15). Many of the parables communicate the importance of reconciliation with God and men. Jesus through his life and teaching invited people to repentance and reconciliation. Our

missionary life, apostolate and preaching should inspire people to come closer to God and fellow human beings. Missionaries are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). Hence invitation to reconciliation with God and human beings remains at the core of mission.

Reconciliation with God involves an experience of repentance and of being forgiven. Here we have to think of being loved by God with an endlessly forgiving love and being brought back into a living relationship with God. Reconciliation with God presupposes reconciliation with human beings (Mt 5: 23-24; 2 Cor 5: 19). Reconciliation with others is the only convincing evidence that we are reconciled with God. Missionaries have an important role to play as reconciliators in the world. In the present context of increasing ethnic rivalries, communal riots, intolerance, etc. this ministry of reconciliation becomes more urgent.¹⁴

Society Based on Justice, Peace and Love

6.11 Any evangelizing mission that sidelines the proclamation of the Gospel in its essential dimensions of love, peace and justice is failing in its duty. The Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1971 proclaimed, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of this world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Christian mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situations”¹⁵. Again Vatican II’s pastoral constitution on the Church, *Gaudium et Spes* says, “Our salvation is very much bound up with our commitment to the transformation of the material and earthly realities and to the creation of a new society” (GS 43).

The reality of poverty, exploitation, oppression and marginalization of the vast majority of our countrymen in this age of globalization and neo-colonialism, forces the Church and her missionary praxis to explore new avenues to become ‘context-sensitive’ and thus be relevant to the lives of the people. This is the incarnational principle that calls for a paradigm shift in being Church today, which necessitates breaking new ground in mission. Human issues and human rights issues must be addressed by the Church in her missionary praxis. We need to

go back to the Bible and ministry of Jesus, and rediscover the truth from the Bible, “God identifies himself and intervenes on behalf of the poor and the oppressed”.

The Role of the Media in Mission

6.12 The Media have tremendous power to influence the world by informing, educating, entertaining and enriching. Pope Paul VI emphasized the necessity of using media in evangelization when he stated in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “The Church would feel guilty before the Lord, if she did not utilize this powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect” (EN 45). The message of Christ should be communicated to all people in the world and the media can play an important role in it. In adopting the mass media for the apostolate, we are utilizing the fruits of science and technology at the service of Christ and his Church.

As communication media is the fastest developing technology today, it has to be used to communicate God’s love to the world. The real potential of the instruments of social communication are to be explored and used by the Church for her mission. Modern media have unlimited powers to reach the minds and hearts of people. The Church should learn to use media in all phases of her mission work. Media education for Church personnel is a must. Media education in our centres of formation is emphasized in *Communio et Progressio*. The document states, “If students for the priesthood and religious in training wish to be part of modern life and also to be at all effective in their apostolate, they should know how the media work upon the fabric of society, and also the technique of their use. This knowledge should be an integral part of their ordinary education” (CP 22).

Experts in theoretical and practical aspects should work together and transform media into a liberative force. The media should be used by the Church to form a well-integrated society, through a wholistic integration of human person and all the aspects of human life such as social, political, psychological and spiritual. The media should be instruments in the Church’s programme of evangelization in the modern world. Indeed, Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* emphasized the

importance of media when he stated, “It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communications with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology” (RM 37).

Ecumenical Dimension of Our Mission

6.13 The Syro-Malabar Church has a special ecumenical mission in India. There are altogether a total of over 7 million Thomas Christians divided into different Catholic and non Catholic Churches and communities. It is the duty of the Syro-Malabar Church to unite all the sons and daughters of St. Thomas who formed themselves just one community for over 16 centuries. She can act as a mediator between the East and the West. In order to achieve the above, the Syro-Malabar Church should try to deepen her own theological position and live according to the rich oriental patrimony.

Liturgical Dimension of Mission

6.14 Liturgical witness is a key element in the missionary dimension of the Eastern Churches. Liturgy has got both internal and external dimensions. The internal aspect pertains to the life and sustenance of the Church. Liturgy is the motivating factor for mission by providing both the content and the context of mission. The context is the return from the presence of God to the need of the people. It is impossible to participate in Christian worship without reference to the world mission, and it is impossible to engage in real mission without a living participation in the Eucharist.

The Eucharistic celebration makes the Church into what it is;¹⁶ transforms it into mission. According to the Eastern tradition, the Church is the ‘heaven on earth.’ Its most sublime representation is the Eucharist. And this Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization (PO 5). In the Eucharistic celebration there are two movements; one ascending and the other descending. Making the Church present is her first mission. It is the exercise of her priestly function. Those who are nourished by

the Body of Christ are the best ‘witnesses to Christ-event’. Their mission is to go out and bear witness to what they themselves have experienced. Without this mystical experience nobody can be a true witness, a true missionary.

Missionary Thrust of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy

6.15 In the liturgy we are not only proclaiming the redemptive history of the past, but there is the sharing of an experience of the present. We are proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom. Before that we ourselves experience this Kingdom, that is, our relationship with the Triune God. We also experience the universal brotherhood of mankind. For, the Kingdom of God indicates not only our relationship with God, but also with our brethren. Liturgy is the best moment of this experience. He who experiences that ineffable love of the Father, brought about by Christ and in the Holy Spirit cannot but share this experience with his fellow human beings.

The Syro-Malabar Liturgy is basically Syrian and more precisely it belongs to the East Syrian family of liturgies. In general, the Syrian liturgies are very rich in their structure and theological expressions. They express the whole mystery of the Church. A rediscovery of their liturgical traditions is of great importance to their missionary activities. Missionary activity is in fact, a sharing of the Christ-experience of the Church. Liturgy is the ‘locus par excellence’ of one’s faith experience and every experiential liturgy, essentially contains a mission thrust of sharing one’s Christ- experience with others. Here are a few important missionary elements of the Syro-Malabar liturgy:

The prayers for the catechumens in the Syro-Malabar liturgy are a proof that this liturgy still contains a missionary element. The prayers for the catechumens remind us of the golden age of the Church when mission, the conversion to Christ of non-believers, was considered the essential task of the Church¹⁷.

More than any other liturgies, the Syro-Malabar liturgy expresses the profound love of God the Father through the repeated chants and praise of the Trinity. The Abba experience is one of the key concepts of

this liturgy. In its Anaphora, the whole salvation history is expressed which reminds the Church of the great things the Father has done for the world. After knowing and experiencing the love of the Father nobody can remain idle. Another element that prompts the worshipper to be a missionary is the experience of the forgiving love of God. This Liturgy reminds one of the awe-inspiring presence of God which makes each aware of one's own unworthiness and sinfulness. The one who is forgiven, becomes a true missionary proclaiming God's merciful love and forgiveness.

Evangelization in the modern world aims at the integral liberation of humankind. The Syro-Malabar liturgy is full of inspiration towards this message. It is, in a very particular way, the celebration of God's love as well as human brotherhood.

The prominent role that this liturgy accords to the Holy Spirit argues for the missionary imperative of this liturgy. Holy Spirit is intimately connected with the whole economy of salvation. It is the Spirit that makes us true missionaries. Through many and varied prayers, the Syro-Malabar liturgy reminds the faithful of the great role of the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption¹⁸. Participation in the Divine Liturgy becomes a Pentecostal experience for the faithful who are led by the Spirit to the far away places to be the witnesses of the Christ event.

The eschatological hope that the prayers of this liturgy convey, points out the missionary thrust of this liturgy. Repeatedly the liturgy reminds the participants that we are a pilgrim people moving toward the heavenly Jerusalem. The prayers express this deep awareness of eschatological fulfillment. Being filled with this eschatological joy and hope, one turns to be a missionary as the Emmaus disciples who recognized Jesus at the breaking of the bread and returned to Jerusalem to proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection. This is the primary task of every missionary.

LAY INVOLVEMENT IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

7.1 Active participation of the laity in the 'Growth of the Word of God' (Acts 12:24) was visible from the very beginning of the Church. All Christians are called to share their faith with others in their living context. As sharers in the mission of Christ, lay faithful have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel. They are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (CL 33).

The Church consisting of an enlightened and leading clergy and an obedient and learning laity, has not been the pattern of the Eastern tradition of the Church. More than a rigid division between the ordained hierarchy and submissive laity, the charisms of the believers are affirmed and promoted here. Even in liturgical celebration, the various charisms are brought into light, for example, role of the deacon, lector and the choir.

The history of our Church shows that the laity was conscious and zealous of the Church traditions and discipline and upheld them with all their might from challenges from within and outside. For them, an ascetic life was not the sole prerogative or duty of the monks. Their life also was permeated with the spirit of asceticism and led by an eschatological vision. Hence the present approach of giving the spiritual to the clergy and temporal to the laity was unknown to them. It was the same Spirit of Christ, experienced and expressed through various roles and charisms. The involvement of the laity through the parish councils (*Palliyogam*) and pastoral councils has been prevalent in our community even long before Vatican II.

The Laity and Their Missionary Action

7.2 Empowered with the Holy Spirit through the gifts of baptism and confirmation and possessing a share in the royal priesthood of Jesus

Christ, laypersons are called to become active missionaries of the Church (RM 71-72). Their field of missionary action is as wide as the world itself. In many parts of the world as well as in India, laypersons already serve the cause of the Church as active missionaries, reaching out to their fellow beings.

Laypersons get ample opportunities to be true witnesses to the life of Christ. If they are well committed to the Kingdom of God, they can play a very effective role in the total liberation of people by eradicating injustice and oppressive situations.

The participation of laity in the missionary activity of the Church is not a mere choice but a necessity. Without the active participation of the lay people the Church cannot fulfill her mission fully for which she is sent. This mission may take various forms. Lay apostolate is the very participation of the laity in the mission of the Church. Thus the laity exists to participate in the mission of the Church that is concerned with the salvation of people.

Special Role of the Laity in the Field of Evangelization

7.3 With Vatican II, the Universal Church has become aware of the role of the laity in the evangelization process and in the growth of the Church (AA 26). Lay people have a special function in the field of evangelization. By their very particular vocation, the lay people are placed in the midst of the world as daughters and sons of the Church in charge of the most varied temporal tasks. By this reason they are at an advantageous position to penetrate into the world to exercise a very special form of evangelization. This they do by the renewal of the temporal order through their lives of witness and other forms of proclamation of the Gospel. They are in a privileged position to enter into every strata of humanity. Besides the vast fields of politics, social action, economics, science and arts, national and international lives, mass media, etc., they are also called to evangelize the field of cultures. They also have to boldly face the realities such as human love, education of children and adolescents, professional work, situations of different kinds of suffering and human oppression (EN 70).

Success of the mission work of the Syro-Malabar Church depends very much on the missionary enthusiasm of the Church in general. Her committed laity must be involved in all stages and in every field of her missionary apostolate. For this the Syro-Malabar laity has to come forward voluntarily.

Need of Missionary Formation for the Laity

7.4 However, there is need for proper animation and formation to the laity to enable them to play their missionary role. Missionary zeal in our parishes seems to be on the decline. Steps have to be taken to facilitate better mission awareness in our parishes. Means and methods may be found out, so that parishes can have direct communications with missions. Resourceful parishes must take up mission programmes with involvement of the laity. Our laypersons must be encouraged and given chance to work as active missionaries in our mission areas. They must also be encouraged to fulfill their role as formators at home. Ecclesial recognition of charisms given to the lay people should be a priority in this regard. There should be a programme to adopt the mission dioceses by the dioceses of the mother Church in Kerala.

A comprehensive training programme for laity must include doctrine, lay-life, lay-spirituality, inculturation, study of the languages of the mission areas and missionary skills. Training must be given primarily at the level of family, parish and small ecclesial communities. Special theological centres are to be established for higher theological formation of laypeople. The laity has to be trained to be involved in the mission not only in the financial affairs but also in the actual evangelizing activities of the Church.

Laypersons who are interested in active mission ought to be identified, properly trained and encouraged to take up responsibilities in mission fields. Provisions must be made for lay missionaries to settle as families in mission areas. The present Jesus Youth and Christian Movements are indeed real missionary initiatives on the part of the laity. Proper guidance is to be given to these young enthusiastic missionaries who voluntarily go to our own mission territories. Efforts made by associations like the Cherupushpa Mission League, the Altar Servers'

Association, CLC and some individual priests, sisters and lay people in the promotion of missionary vocations by instilling love and concern for mission are highly appreciated and encouraged.

Christians Living in Diaspora

7.5 Migration is a widespread phenomenon in our days. It is an urgent matter to examine the pastoral and juridical consequences of this new phenomenon of the growing number of faithful living outside their traditional territories. The solicitude of the Church for migrants is expressed in the document "Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi"¹⁹. It is an urgent necessity on the part of the Christian community to proclaim the Gospel in an ever renewed way.

A number of Syro-Malabar faithful have gone out of Kerala, their home, to inhabit different parts of India and abroad. Through divine providence they are there and "the love of Christ towards migrants urges us" (2 Cor 5:14) to look afresh at this phenomenon of domestic migration (EMCC 10). Their pastoral care naturally falls under the decisive responsibility of the Ordinary of the place where they live. In our case these local Ordinaries are bishops of the Latin Church. In conformity with the teachings of Vatican II on the matter, the aforesaid document clearly lays down norms for the pastoral care of the Eastern Rite Catholic migrants (EMCC 52-55).

Syro-Malabar faithful living in Diaspora in India and abroad have to be made aware of their missionary potential. A thorough training in mission activities is a need of the hour especially at a time of stiff opposition to priests and religious in the mission areas.

Missionary Vocations and Christian Families

7.6 The basic unit of social communion is the family and it is the primary centre of human formation. Family structure and family ties are very strong in India. Indian people, belonging to different cultural strata and religious traditions, give prime importance to the social structure of the family as it is through this medium that their traditions are handed over to posterity. It can be noted that the Indian system of family structure

has kept the religious and cultural traditions of India very lively and vibrant though they do not have highly organized institutions like that of the Catholic Church.

The Church understands the family as its basic unit. Vatican II describes a Catholic family as the domestic Church (*Ecclesia domestica*). The family is the cradle of Christian life and faith practices; it is also the nursery of Christian maturity and vocation; in the family a child is initially evangelized through the proclamation of the name of Jesus and the making of the sign of the Cross. Hence the family is the most effective medium of the Church's evangelization. However, we have to remember that today family life is threatened by many unfavourable forces of modern culture. Catholic families are not an exception to this. In spite of the problems which modern Christian families face, it is in families that the missionaries of the Church are primarily formed.

If Church is missionary by nature, a Christian family is all the more missionary by its Christian nature. The Church gives utmost importance to family apostolate, as she understands the great role of the family in evangelization. Even then very little is done in families to foster missionary vocations. This has to be changed. Parents are to be encouraged to send their children to missions. To supplement the efforts of the parents in families to promote missionary vocations, students in Sunday Schools should be imparted more knowledge about mission and the missionary responsibility of every Christian. So also our faithful should be encouraged to pray for missionary vocations during family prayers. Also mission animation programmes and mission retreats could be arranged for the students in high schools.

MISSIONARY FORMATION AND MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY

Missionaries

8.1 Though all Christians are missionaries, God calls some people to make a life-long commitment to mission *ad gentes*. Such missionaries bravely and with ardent love for the Lord and people, sacrifice their life for the Lord and spend their time in sharing the Gospel with the people. Thus they build up Christian communities in different parts of the world. The contributions of such missionaries of the Syro-Malabar Church are innumerable and praiseworthy. There were missionaries belonging to religious congregations of men and women. There were missionaries coming from societies of Apostolic Life which came up in our Church as a response to the missionary call given by Vatican II. With the establishment of the mission eparchies, diocesan priests came forward in big numbers to serve in the mission. Besides, our Church is famous for missionary collaboration. Thousands of our children are sharing the Gospel with people in India and outside in the other *sui juris* Churches. Though young candidates come forward in big numbers in establishing our missions, there is of late a steep decline in missionary vocations. Parents are to be encouraged to instill in their children the missionary vocation and to send them to missions.

Missionary Formation

8.2 In the challenging missionary context of today, the Church has to give greater emphasis for adequate missionary formation. Though all Christians are missionaries, those who make a life-long commitment to mission *ad gentes* require proper training to effectively carry out the mission of the Church. Besides, they need a strong missionary spirituality so that they can be witnesses to the Gospel wherever they are.

Missionary formation should aim at imparting a clear and deep missionary awareness, a truly apostolic and evangelizing spirit that will enable the formees to understand and live their life in terms of mission. The formation should have the orientation to inculcate in the students a true missionary spirit and real apostolic outlook, through a clear and transparent openness to the great tasks of Church's mission in the world.

Seminary Formation of Our Missionaries

8.3 Jesus was the high priest, anointed to lead the people of God, preaching the Good News to the poor and letting captives free. Priests, through their consecration, participate in the ministerial priesthood of Christ. They are called to be the preachers of the Kingdom of God, shepherds of the flocks and ministers of the sacraments. They must be men of holiness, prayer, knowledge and high proficiency. It is understood that sufficient mission orientation is not given to our seminarians during the period of formation. Hence in this world of specialization we propose in view of the future mission that missionaries should be trained in the mission context in mission seminaries with various exposures and interactions with the people and culture of the mission. Exchange of professors between the seminaries can solve the problems until trained personnel in the mission are available.

In order to equip our future missionaries for fruitful dialogue, study of non-Christian scriptures and traditions may be given more importance in seminaries. Courses on theology of religions and practical training in dialogue can do much good. Future priests must be trained to understand and appreciate different cultures, languages, customs, art forms etc. Knowledge and love of people are a pre-requisite for effective evangelization. In order to know and love the people one has to take up the life-style of the people in its pinching forms of poverty and simplicity. Missionaries are to be trained for analysis of the social situations of people in order to transform the culture that supports exploitation and bondage, prevalent in many parts of the world and especially in India. Our seminarians must be exposed to the situations of their future ministry during the period of formation itself. A realistic formation process demands a formation in the field itself.

Missiological and Missionary Orientation in Formation

8.4 Besides the study of missiology, a truly missionary approach to theological teaching is necessary. The mission thrust should form the very heart of theology; the guiding and vivifying principle of every real theological reflection. The decree *ad gentes* exhorts university and seminary professors that in their teachings, especially of dogmatic, biblical, moral and historical subjects, “they should focus attention on their missionary aspects, so that in this way a missionary awareness will be formed in future priests” (AG 39). Taking into consideration the present missionary context of India, there must be a corresponding progress in missionary formation. Missionaries are to be formed to continue Jesus’ way of life in their missionary situations socially and culturally. With this end in mind, dioceses, religious congregations and societies of Apostolic Life have started their formation houses in mission lands. The syllabus of those formation houses should also become mission oriented. Study of local languages, culture, and religion of the local people, their anthropology and in the case of India, Indian spirituality, contemplative monastic life style of Indian people, etc. are to be given greater emphasis in such formation houses. Exposure programmes during the formation period can enable the candidates to become aware of the situations of the people for whom they are to work. Such exposure programmes can encourage and inspire the candidates to think of wider scope of mission *ad gentes*, new and creative ministries to be implemented in the mission. Besides, they can bring about changes in the attitudes and missionary approaches of the formees. Moreover, adequate training in the field of inculturation should be highlighted. Programmes which emphasize the missionary identity of the Syro-Malabar Church are also to be included in the syllabus of formation. A deep conviction about the identity of our Church in its liturgy, spirituality, theology and discipline is a pre-requisite for the effective mission of the Church. Our missionaries should be trained to become spiritual persons. In short, they should become holy missionaries.

Religious and Missionary Formation

8.5 The religious have always been in the forefront of the evangelizing mission of the Church. The intimate connection between

religious life and the mission of the Church cannot be denied. Witness through a life of consecration becomes very important in the context of the Indian people’s thirst for spiritual experience and asceticism. India too has a tradition of consecrated holy life. India gives a lot of importance to *Sanyasa*. People who have dedicated themselves completely to prayer, contemplation, renunciation and asceticism enjoy great respect. Such consecrated persons have a persuasive power. They inspire people to live a holy dedicated life.

Different Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of women and men have greatly contributed to the evangelizing work of the Syro-Malabar Church and they continue to do so. However there exists no permanent arrangement or adequate provision at present in the Syro-Malabar Church for utilising the missionary potentiality of our religious congregations. The Syro-Malabar Synod has to come forward for making adequate arrangements for utilizing the missionary potentiality of our Congregations. This could be achieved under the guidance of the Major Archbishop.

Missionary Spirituality

8.6 Missionary spirituality is the guiding force in the life of the missionaries to enrich and enable them to carry out the mission most effectively. The goal of the missionary spirituality is the accomplishment of the mission of Christ. Missionary charism is the basis of missionary spirituality. Missionary spirituality signifies the vitality of the mission *ad gentes*. It demands a responsible living of the Christian mission without any limit.

The life of a missionary is oriented to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. This orientation ascertains the life style and spirituality of a missionary. The intensity of the orientation differentiates missionary spirituality from spiritualities. The love of God and the ardent desire to share this love with others and to lead them to God is the centre of missionary spirituality and the motivating force in the orientation of a missionary’s interior life to non-Christians. The missionary spirituality should include the following elements:

Communion with God

8.6.1 Like Jesus the greatest missionary, missionaries have to grow in the Abba Experience, communion with the Father. To share God's love with the people they need to experience it in their life. They must spend silent moments in the presence of the Lord listening to Him. This experience of God will form the consciousness of mission and the obligation of Christians to participate in it. *Ecclesia in Asia* states, "A missionary who has no deep experience of God in prayer and contemplation will have little spiritual influence or missionary success" (EA 23).

The missionary must be deeply rooted in Jesus Christ. The missionary carries out the apostolate in the power of the Spirit as the herald and witness of the crucified and risen Christ. He must enter into intimate and loving communion with Christ until Christ becomes his all. Christ must live in the missionary and act through him. This Christ-centredness of his life will enable him to fulfill in himself the prayer of St. Paul for the Ephesians, "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" (Eph 4:17). Such an intimate and personal relationship with Christ will strengthen the missionary to preach the Gospel. The missionary must empty himself of self and be filled with Christ to the point of crying out with Paul, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Deep Faith and Trust in God

8.6.2 Deep faith and trust in God is another conspicuous element of missionary spirituality. Besides this trust in God, we notice three allied qualities: boldness and power which enable one to face all obstacles to witness to Christ, courage and perseverance, and a deep joy because one is called to work for Christ and because one is doing the work of Christ. Joy in missionary life comes fundamentally from the missionary vocation and sending. Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, so I send

you" (Jn 20: 21). The consciousness of being called and sent by Jesus as He was sent by the Father gives identity, meaning and joy in missionary's life. Further, the missionary's awareness and conviction that he continues the work of Jesus adds enthusiasm and joy in his life.

Holiness of Life

8.6.3 Holiness of life is emphasized over everything else in the life of a missionary. Holiness is the basic requisite for an authentic missionary in fulfilling the mission of the Church. One who preaches God must be a person of God. A missionary may be competent and efficient in many fields, but if his accomplishments are not supported by sanctity of life, he will not lead people to God. Without holiness the words of missionary will not produce positive results. The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* emphasizes the importance of holiness and says, "Our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life" (EN 76). The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* of Pope John Paul II on the permanent validity of the missionary command stresses the importance of holiness in the life of missionaries in the following statement: "Holiness must be called a fundamental presupposition and an irreplaceable condition for everyone in fulfilling the mission of salvation in the Church" (RM 90).

Love for the Church

8.6.4 Although the missionary has a special vocation to be a pioneer among those to whom the Gospel has not yet been preached, he goes as the representative of the Church. Therefore, he must be a man of the Church, loyal to the Church and finding his spiritual life in the Church. "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5: 25). A missionary should love the Church as Christ did. This is authentically articulated when John Paul II said, "Those who have the missionary spirituality, feel Christ's burning love for souls; and love the Church as Christ did" (RM 89). To love the Church as Christ did, means to continue the missionary work zealously without looking back. Therefore, for the missionary, "fidelity to Christ cannot be separated from fidelity to the Church" (RM 89).

The Abiding Presence of God

8.6.5 The life of a missionary is a life of challenges, oppositions, suffering and persecutions. Suffering is an integral and significant part of missionary life. All the gospels speak about the tribulations and hardships of the missionaries. But the Lord does not abandon them in the midst of their sufferings and persecutions. The writings of St. Paul bear witness to the sufferings and hardships he underwent to fulfill his mission (II Cor 11: 23-27). But in the midst of everything he sees the power of God at work. Due to the power of God, though he is afflicted he is not crushed, though in trouble he is not in despair, though tortured he does not feel abandoned, though stuck down he is not destroyed (I Cor 4: 8-12).

Love for the Poor

8.6.6 A missionary is called to live for the people. Commitment to the welfare of the people demands genuine love. "The work of evangelization presupposes in the evangelizer an ever increasing love for those whom he is evangelizing" (EN 79). St. Paul manifests his love for the people and his commitment to the welfare of the people when he writes, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us" (I Thes 2: 8). Commitment to the welfare of the people and love for the people demand from missionaries their concern, tenderness, compassion, openness, availability and interest in people's problems (RM 89). Every missionary should follow Christ the Good Shepherd as his model in life.

To proclaim to the people that they are loved by God, missionaries must show love towards all, to the point of giving their lives for them. Such a love with its liberating mission is oriented towards others irrespective of race, caste or ideology.

CONCLUSION

The missionary vision of the Syro-Malabar Church, as we have seen is based on the following orientations:

- i. As an Individual Church, it is the right and duty of the Syro-Malabar Church to go out and preach the gospel not only in India, but also universally, under the guidance of the Supreme Pontiff. The missionary activity is the task of all the members of the Church. It is not merely entrusted to a few missionaries going out to distant regions, rather it should be supported and nurtured by the Mother Church through prayer, reflection and active participation of clergy and laity. This participation should be organized and directed by the ecclesial leadership.
- ii. The ultimate goal of our evangelizing mission is to share our Christ-experience through our specific Syro-Malabar heritage with the people and to form genuine Eucharistic communities. Hence we have to imbibe the genuine spirit of our ecclesial tradition and uphold it in our life and mission. The communities formed thus, should be the core of further evangelizing mission there.
- iii. In our evangelizing mission we should take into consideration the following factors and pattern it in that light. We work in a multi-religious milieu with a rich cultural background. So the importance of dialogue must be considered. Our Catholic tradition is situated in an inter-ecclesial context. As other Christian denominations are also active here, we have to take into account the prospects of ecumenism. At present we are in a volatile political and economic situation, which is further complicated by religious fundamentalism.
- iv. The Syro-Malabar mission should have its own characteristic approach. Rather than striving for an institutional embellishment, it should be localized, community oriented and bearing personal testimony with a simple lifestyle, following the East Syrian heritage and in tune with the Indian culture. Our missionary activity should always have the stamp of asceticism with it. Our mission centres

should always have the feature of an ashram and centre of prayer both in appearance and life style.

- v. The influence of media in all aspects of human life and society is very significant. Hence, the Church should make effective use of this powerful means for evangelization.
- vi. The pastoral care of the emigrants should also form part of our mission. They have to be trained in the Syro-Malabar heritage and should be inspired to become active witnesses of their Christian faith.
- vii. Lay participation and ministries for mission should be promoted.
- viii. While promoting individual and congregational charisms in the missionary activity, all these should be supervised and guided by the Major Archbishop and the Synod of the Bishop's of the Syro-Malabar Church, as follows: .
 - a. The responsibility of coordinating all the missionary activities of the Syro-Malabar Church and the pastoral care of the migrant faithful from this Church rests primarily with the Major Archbishop and the Synod.
 - b. The Major Archbishop shall explore the possibilities of obtaining virgin areas for the work of evangelization. Steps should be taken to establish dioceses and parishes for the migrants wherever there is concentration of our migrant people.
 - c. When a diocese of another *sui juris* Church or any Individual Church requires services of the members of our Church, they are requested to contact the Major Archbishop. The duration and conditions of their service in other dioceses will be determined by the Major Archbishop.
 - d. The Major Archbishop should take the responsibility of sending missionaries to our missions and also to other sister Churches.
 - e. There should be an office under the Major Archbishop to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life for missions.
 - f. It is the duty of the Major Archbishop to arrange for the pastoral

care for migrants by providing priests from our Church. In this he shall be guided by the Magisterium of the Church as well as the norms put forward in both the Codes of Canon Law.

- ix. Missionary vocations are to be promoted and better utilized.
- x. Missionary institutes, Societies and Associations are to be encouraged and promoted.
- xi. The Church should pay more attention to the missionary formation of the candidates to priesthood, religious life and of the laity.
- xii. There is need to encourage and inspire the missionaries to develop an authentic and deep missionary spirituality.
- xiii. Finally, our missionary orientation should be universally directed and not to be confined to the Indian context alone. Mission *ad gentes* of the Syro-Malabar Church must be in accordance with her authentic nature as a *sui juris* Oriental Church.

NOTES

- 1 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990) 31; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia In Asia* (16 November 1999) 42.
- 2 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, 6.
- 3 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 3.
- 4 Pope Paul VI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975) 17,24,28.
- 5 Cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia In Asia*, 9.
- 6 J. Stewart, Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: History of a Church on Fire, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1928, p. xxvi.
- 7 A.S. Atiya, A History of Eastern Christianity, Methuen, London, 1968, p. 240.
- 8 C. Carey-Elwes, China and the Cross: Studies in Missionary History, Longmans, London, 1957, 5-48; 285-290.

- 9 G. Hough, *The History of Christianity in India: From the Commencement of the Christian Era*, Vol. I, London, 1839, p. 116-117.
- 10 See also Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 4; Letter of the Holy Father to the Bishops of India (28 May 1987); Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (3 May 2004) 52-55.
- 11 Cf. Pope Paul VI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58-62; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 9, 17-20.
- 12 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Slavorum Apostoli*, 1985, 21-22; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia In Asia*, 9, 22.
- 13 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1,8,29; Pope Paul VI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 30-38.
- 14 Cf. Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia In Asia*, 38.
- 15 See “*Convenientes ex universo*”, AAS 63 (1971) 923-942, 924.
- 16 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 21-24.
- 17 Alexander Schemann, *Liturgy and Life: Christian Development through Liturgical Experience*, New York, 1974, p. 47-48.
- 18 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 21-30.
- 19 Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (3 May 2004).

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