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Circular

Mission Week Celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church-2022

GEORGE CARDINAL ALENCHERRY,
the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church
to the Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Men
and Women and Lay Faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church.
May the Grace of the Lord be with you all!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

The first Christian community in India was formed after the missionary activity of St Thomas the apostle who was martyred in AD 72 at Mylapore. We are celebrating the 1950th year of the martyrdom of St. Thomas in 2022. In this context, the celebration of the Syro Malabar Mission Week gets an added significance. The Mission Week is celebrated from 6 January, the Feast of *Denaha*, to 12 January every year. The motto of the Mission Week is: *Know the Mission and be a Missionary*. We shall consider this week as an opportunity to know more about St. Thomas the Apostle and also get inspired from the zeal of the Apostle.

St Thomas the Apostle who lived and moved with Jesus, acknowledged the Saviour whom he experienced and proclaimed Him as "My Lord and my God" (Jn: 20:28) until the end of his life. When he came face to face with the oppositions or hostile people, he did not withdraw into a secure place nor did he abandon his mission. On the other hand, he went ahead bravely with his mission by establishing Christian communities in different places. The communities he established also absorbed his evangelical zeal and gave witness to the Gospel. Today, there are many of our missionaries who are active witnesses to the Gospel in different parts of the world. This is the evidence of the missionary zeal that has been transferred generation after generation down through the centuries. The Church will be like an evergreen fig tree that bears fruit in all seasons when it confronts obstacles and lives the Gospel faithfully (Mk 11: 12-14; 2 Tim. 4:2).

The main reason why St. Thomas Christians continue to be a part of Indian culture is that St. Thomas the apostle did not impose Gospel on the community but adapted

to the local culture and preached. Walls would be erected if a particular culture or a language is transplanted to another culture. In order to make their missionary work effective, the missionaries have to adapt themselves to the culture and the language of the place where they are working.

The pastoral work of the Church cannot just be limited to caring for the people who have already received the Gospel. Missionary activity is the expression of the maturity of a Christian community (*Verbum Domini*, 95). The word of God is to be proclaimed openly and in public. Even in the midst of sufferings, the Church has to find people, inspired by the spirit of God, to spread the word of God effectively (1 Cor: 2-5). The Church is obliged to proclaim the word of salvation to every individual (Rom. 1:14). St. Thomas was never afraid of death. Similarly, a real missionary does not have to be afraid of persecutions or death. This confidence and apostolic zeal should inspire every one of us, especially when confronting the challenges of today's world. Pope Francis in his message of Mission Sunday 2021 mentions that the early Christians were drawn to the Lord and to the 'New Life' that the Lord gave them, without succumbing to the fears and temptations to lock in that they had at that time. The new life means getting involved in the lives of the people with sincere love service-minded attitudes in the name of the Lord and to witness to the fact that the Kingdom of God is at hand which is what "we heard and saw" (Acts 4:20). This is the attitude we have to make as our own in the proclamation of the Gospel in this era.

Since the Holy Father Pope Francis has extended the opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the whole of India for the Syro-Malabar Church, we have an obligation to create Christian communities following the pastoral style of St. Thomas the Apostle. The missionary zeal of St. Thomas has to be appropriated by every one of the faithful. All the parishes have to offer their support for this venture. The priests, the religious and the laity have to come forward in greater numbers and training programmes have to be formulated for that purpose.

The possibilities of employing social media to increase the missionary consciousness and participation in the different ministries of the Church have to be explored. The Office of the Syro-Malabar Mission and the Commission for Evangelization coordinate and support the missionary activities of the Church from Mount St. Thomas. I recommend all those who can participate to join the online Mission Quiz on 9 January 2022, jointly organized by the Syro-Malabar Mission Office and the Commission for Catechesis to inculcate missionary awareness in our Church.

The fact that the missionary activities of the Church are going on without much interruption is because of the dedicated service of mission-minded priests, the religious and the lay faithful. We shall remember in our prayers all those who are

engaged in the work of evangelization and encourage them through our cooperation. Let the Bl. Virgin May Holy Mary, who empowered the Apostles at the Upper Room for their ministry of evangelization, intercede for us in our missionary endeavours! May the intercession of St. Thomas, our Father in faith, be a source of strength in our missionary activities!

Given this from the Major Archiepiscopal Curia of the Syro-Malabar Church at Mount St Thomas, Kakkanad on 18 December 2021.



Cardinal George Alencherry
Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church



1. This circular shall be read in all the parishes and institutions of the Syro-Malabar Church during the Holy *Qurbana* on Sunday, 02 January 2022.
2. Donations received through the Syro-Malabar Mission Week shall be handed over to the eparchial centres and delivered to the Syro-Malabar Mission Office, Mount St Thomas Kakkanad before 28 February 2022.