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THE MALANKARA CATHOLIC CATHOLICOS AND THE CATHOLICATE

The Catholic Church is the communion of individual (*sui iuris*) Churches. In the Catholic communion, all the Churches are of equal rights. There may be inequality among the Churches only due to numerical strength or due to other historical factors. According to the mind of the Second Vatican Council, in spite of all the factors, they are of equal status and are equally entrusted to the pastoral care of the Pope of Rome (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 3). The Pope, as the successor St. Peter in the ancient See of Rome, has the right to provide for the growth and functioning of all the Churches in the Catholic communion. There are four types of Churches in this communion.

1. Patriarchal Churches

There are at present seven patriarchal Churches: They are Roman (Patriarchate of the Occident), Alexandrian, Antiochene (Syriac, Melkite, Maronite), Chaldean (Persian) and Armenian¹ Their titulars hold ancient Apostolic Sees. They have special honours in the communion of Churches. The Chaldean and the Armenian heads use the double title, „Catholicos-Patriarch” The heads of patriarchal Churches, when they are elected by the Synod, send a letter of communion to the Pope of Rome. It is not for their recognition but communion. They also do not receive the *pallium* from the Pope, because it is a symbol of the full *communion of the Roman Catholic metropolitan* with the Roman Pontiff² The Patriarch is Father and Head of an Individual Church *sui iuris*.

¹ In the Armenian Apostolic Church, a patriarch is inferior to a catholicos. The patriarchs of Jerusalem and Istanbul are under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Catholicos of all the Armenians.

² Pope Paul VI abrogated c. 322 of the *Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati* which provided for the conferral of pallium on eastern patriarchs and metropolitans as an honorific distinction in 1978. See *Inter Eximia*, AAS 70 (1978), 441f.

2. Major Archiepiscopal Churches (c.151)

A major archiepiscopal Church is a patriarchal Church, however, without this title. „A Major Archbishop is a Metropolitan of a See determined or acknowledged by the supreme authority of the Church, who presides over an entire Eastern autonomous Church, but is not endowed with the patriarchal title” (CCEO c.151). He is the Father and Head of the Church *sui iuris*, as the Patriarch is in his Church. So he may be called „a Patriarch without the title” There are *three Archiepiscopal Churches* in the Catholic communion. They are the Ukrainian Church, the Syro-Malabar Church and the Malankara Catholic Church (2005). They have canonically all the powers of the patriarchs, but they do not bear the title Patriarch. Moreover when they are elected by the Synod, they have to get the *confirmation* from the Pope before their installation. Patriarchs and Major Archbishops can have an apocrisary, i.e. procurator, at the Roman Apostolic See (c. 61)³

3. Metropolitan Churches (autonomous Churches)

The head of these Churches would be a Metropolitan, appointed by the Pope. The Rumanians Church, the Ethiopian Church and the Ruthenian Church of Pittsburgh in the USA belong to this category. They have to receive *pallium* from the Pope (c.156). The Metropolitan Church for its existence (erection, modification and suppression) is totally dependent on the Pope. Metropolitan has no Synod but only a *Council of Hierarchs* (c.155).

4. Other Autonomous Churches (c.174-176)

The following Churches belong to this category: the Albanians, the Italo-Albanians, the Belarusian's, the Bulgarians, the Russian, the Slovak and the Eparchy of Križevci (in the former Yugoslavia). These Churches often have only one or two Hierarchs, appointed by the Pope. They have only just a few thousand Catholics.

The Malankara Catholic Church was a Metropolitan Church. In 2005 it is raised from the status of a Metropolitan Church to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church with the Synodal structure. Canonically and juridically this Church is now a Major Archiepiscopal Church with the rights of the Patriarch, but without the title Patriarch, which is reserved for the moment to the Heads of the ancient Apostolic Sees.

³ Actually the Syriac, Maronite, Melkite, Chaldean, Armenian and Ukrainian Churches have appointed their respective apocrisaries (procurators) with the Holy Roman See according to c. 61. See “Annuario Pontificio” 2005, 3-9.

5. Explanation of the title *Catholicos* and *Maphrian*:

The title *Catholicos* was used to designate the supreme Heads of the individual Churches outside the Roman Empire. Thus the Persian Church, the Armenian Church and the Georgian Church have used this title to designate their heads. *Catholicos* means universal or common head. Although the title *Catholicos* is equivalent to that of the patriarch, these Churches also added later the title *Patriarch* to that of *Catholicos*. Thus today they are called *Catholicos-Patriarch* (with the double title). The former Eastern Catholic legislation contained in the *Motu proprio „Cleri sanctitati”* the title *Catholicos*, but the new Code (CCEO) does not mention it. „The *Catholicos* who does not have the title of patriarch is equal to a major archbishop”

Maphrian (fruit-bearer) is a title used to designate the representative of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch in Persia since 629. He was similar to a Latin Primate or Apostolic Delegate. He had, however, supra-episcopal powers to be always executed in the name of the „Jacobite” Patriarch of Antioch. In *Cleri Sanctitati* there is mention of the *Maphrian*: „The Metropolitan who has the title and dignity of a *Maphrian* is equal to an Archbishop without prejudice to the duties which come from his subjection to the authority of the Patriarch” The *Maphrian* was not entitled to have an *apocrisary* at Rome. (CS cc. 220. 331). the *Maphrian* was not elected by the Synod but appointed by the Patriarch. Hence the terms *Catholicos* and *Maphrian* are not interchangeable.

6. *Catholicos/Maphrian* in India (1913)

When Mōraṅ Mōr Agnātīyos ‘Abd al-Masīh, the senior Patriarch of Antioch († 1915), installed the first *Catholicos* in India, and published a document after the installation, he used both as synonyms: „In response to your appeal We install a *Maphrian*, that is, *Catholicos* with the name *Baselios*.” In the document he did not speak of it as a *reestablishment* of the one of Tagrit. He also did not use the phrase, „*Catholicos of the East*” as the Orthodox added recently by themselves. in the 19th century, the „Jacobite” faithful (*Puthenkuttukar*) in India did not have very clear ideas about the *Catholicate* and the *Maphrianate*. So when they came to know about the suppression of the *Maphrianate* in 1860/63 by Patriarch Mōr Yacoub II, they demanded for its *reestablishment* in Kerala. At that time the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch was totally opposed to this idea and condemned the request. But when Mōrān Mōr Abdalla († 1915), the successor of Mōr ‘Abd al-Masīh, excommunicated the Malankara Metropolitan Vattasseril Mār Dionysios (†1934), his friend and disciple, Fr. P. T. Geevarghese (later Archbishop Mar Ivanios), invited and persuaded Mōrān Mōr ‘Abd al-Masīh, to come to Kerala and install the *Catholicate* in Kerala. He succeeded in his attempts, which his predecessors had not been able to realise. According

to Mōrān Mōr ‘Abd al-Masīh who instituted it here, it has to continue in loving relationship with the „Jacobite” Patriarchate of Antioch. But from 1913, after the death of the first Catholicos in India, there arose division in the community and the ensuing civil litigation continues even today. The Second Catholicos/Maphrian was installed at 1925 only. And the third one was installed in 1928 by Vattasseril Mar Dionysios and Mar Ivanios. Only in 1964 the two groups arrived at an agreement and installed the fourth Catholicos jointly. The Syrian Orthodox Patriarch himself did the installation. But soon there arose factionalism and the same Patriarch, Mōr Yacoub III excommunicated him. The fifth Catholicos and the sixth Catholicos were installed by the autonomist Orthodox (formerly *Metran kakshy*) themselves, without any cooperation of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch. In 2002, Patriarch Moran Mor Agnātīyos Zakka I was installed one Catholicos for his group here in Kerala, who, according to some, is only a Maphrian of the Patriarch. So at present there are two Maphrians/Catholicos for the „Jacobite”/Orthodox community in Kerala. The civil litigation continues even today among them, followed by street demonstrations, closing of worshipping centres and violent encounters with the police.

On 10th February 2005 at Pattom St. Mary’s Cathedral, when the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Lopez Quintana announced, after reading the Papal Decree raising the Malankara Catholic Church to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church, that the Major Archbishop will be called Catholicos, he was not referring either to the three ancient Catholicates outside the Roman Empire nor to the Catholicates/Maphrianates existing in India among the Malankara Orthodox/Syrian Orthodox Churches. It is a new institution. It is something new in the history of the Catholic Church and is unique. Although the Major Archbishop is equal in dignity and rights to a Patriarch, the title Patriarch is for the moment reserved to the Heads of the ancient Apostolic Sees. The title Catholicos is in current use among the Malankara faithful in Kerala, and Mar Ivanios continuously requested for its recognition by Rome in his ecumenical negotiations. This title was recognised now to the Major Archbishop of the Malankara Catholic Church, Mōrān Mōr Cyril Baselios, by the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Pope in India. The Nuncio himself remitted him the insignia of the Catholicos.

7. The Malankara Catholic Catholicate

When Mar Ivanios entered into ecumenical negotiations with Rome in the name of the bishops of the *Metran Kakshy* (today’s Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church) according to the decision of the Synod, there were three demands: 1. that the position of the Catholicos and the Synod should be recognized; i.e., the autonomy of the Malankara Apostolic Church should be maintained; 2. the bishops should have authority over their faithful wherever they are; 3. the liturgical and

other ecclesiastical traditions should be respected and should not be changed; i.e. the integral Oriental tradition should be preserved without any change.

At that time, according to the pre-Vatican ecclesiology, the first demand was not recognised. Now it is realised after 75 years. That is why the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Pope, announced it at the Pattom Cathedral on the 10th February in the presence of a large crowd. It was widely reported by the media. That is why the Apostolic Nuncio gave the insignia of the Catholicos to Mōrān Mōr Baselios, the Father and Head of the Malankara Catholic Church. It was the constant aspiration of the Malankara Catholics to get the Church raised to the status of the Catholicate with its own Holy Synod. I was witnessing the announcement at Pattom Cathedral. Never have I seen such a great joy and enthusiasm at the face of the large crowd present, when the Nuncio announced *that the Major Archbishop will be called Catholicos*, according to the Syriac and Indian tradition. It was a moment of great jubilation. A great dream is realised and a great honour is conferred upon the Malankara Catholic Church by the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church.

8. The Announcement (10th Feb. 2005)

It was on the 10th February 2005 that the Apostolic Nuncio came from New Delhi with the Papal Decree raising the Malankara Catholic Church to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church, in accordance with the Canon Law promulgated in 1990 by Pope John Paul II of blessed memory. It took several years for the realization of this aim. There was a lot of correspondence and discussions among the dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The Holy Father was firmly convinced of the vitality of this Apostolic Church and the need to raise it to a higher status. In one of the latest *ad limina* visits of the Malankara Catholic bishops, he had stated with particular joy „the Malankara Catholic Church is one of the fastest growing Churches in the Catholic communion” The announcement of the raising of the Church to the new status was made still by Pope John Paul II. The news was well received by all in India and outside, especially by the Malankara community. The newspapers wrote editorials on this extraordinary event and the Television channels gave it wide coverage.

9. The installation (14th May 2005)

The canonical installation took place on 14th May at the Pattom Cathedral. It was already under the pontificate of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. The Nuncio was once again present and the Prefect of the Oriental Congregation, His Beatitude⁴ Mōrān Mōr Agnāṭīyos Mousa I (Daoud), Syriac Patriarch emeritus of

⁴ The official title of a patriarch who is a cardinal is in Italian *Sua Beatitudine Eminentissima*.

Antioch, was the main celebrant for the function. His Beatitude Mār Varkey (Vithayathil) of the Syro-Malabar Church, Metropolitan Mār Joseph (Powathil) of Changanassery, the Latin Archbishop of Trivandrum, Msgr. Susai Pakiam, and several other civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries were present. There was a large participation of faithful, clergy and religious of the Syro-Malankara Church. The celebration began with a procession from the Archbishop's House at Pattom to the cathedral. The Chief Minister of Kerala, His Excellency Mr. Oommen Chandy, an Orthodox believer, came forward and spoke at the beginning of the procession. Archbishop Susai Pakiam gave a sermon at the Cathedral, praying to continue the spirit of renewal, the simplicity and vision of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. During the Eucharistic celebration, the installation was conducted according to the Syro-Antiochene rite. In his speech Mōr Agnātīyos Mousa I emphasised that, in the Catholic communion, there is neither a big Church nor a small Church. All the Churches of this communion are equal in dignity and mission. He announced that the Major Archbishop is equal to a patriarch in dignity and honour, although he does not have the patriarchal title. He wished that the Malankara Catholic Church continued its ecumenical vocation, increase in the number of faithful, priests, bishops and dioceses. After the ceremony, there was a public reception for the new Catholicos. His Eminence Mār Varkey (Cardinal Vithayathil) said that it is just that the Major Archbishop of the Malankara Church be called Catholicos this being in accordance with the tradition of this Church.

10. Integral Oriental Tradition of the Apostolic community

From the time the full and visible communion of Mar Ivanios with the Petrine Apostolic Church of Rome was restored, the Roman Apostolic See was very careful in persuading this Church to preserve the integral Oriental traditions. But because of times, persons and circumstances, there were some deviations here and there. And in the 50's of the 20th century, Rome directly intervened and asked to correct the deviations and to go back to the genuine Malankara traditions. At the Second Vatican Council, all the Churches are strongly exhorted to return to the original purity of the rites and rectify, if there were, any deviations of the past (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 6). The Malankara Catholic Church is in the process of formulating its *Particular Laws*. It is certain that with the formulation and promulgation of these laws, the genuine authentic Eastern traditions would be preserved and fostered. In fact there are not many deviations. There may be a few borrowings from other Churches and in several cases, they have even sometimes proved to be useful for fostering the piety of the faithful. No Church needs to abhor the good development in other Churches. And no church needs to remain as a museum piece. The Church of Christ is a growing Church. It must be ready to adapt itself to the changing situations and at the same time it has to remain in its roots. The Council demands authenticity and adaptation, growth and stability.

11. Territorial limitations

When Mār Ivanios was in the Orthodox Church, Vattasseril Mār Dionysios, the then Malankara Metropolitan, encouraged him to start Bethany parishes and institutions which would be neither under the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch⁵ nor under the local Catholicos, so that these institutions may not be a partner in the civil litigations. The Bethany parishes were in all the non-Catholic Malankara eparchies, but directly under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bethany. Later this arrangement was recognised by the Catholicos. So Mār Ivanios wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in 1929: „By the by, all the Malankara churches should have come under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bethany who was given the rank of Metropolitan at the time of the Catholicos Mār Baselios III in 1929. Thus Bethany could be regarded as representative for the entire Malankara Church”⁶ Rome had assured that the two bishops would be kept in their respective office and title. Mār Ivanios would remain Bishop of Bethany with the personal title of metropolitan. After entering into communion with Rome, Mār Ivanios, Metropolitan of Bethany, retained his supra-territorial jurisdiction in the territory of the seven Syriac Orthodox eparchies. Despite the fact that Mār Theophilus had the title of an eparch of Tiruvalla, the churches founded from Bethany remained, even in his eparchial territory, under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Bethany⁷ In 1932 two years after the reunion, Pope Pius XI established the hierarchy of the Malankara Catholics according to the Latin rite model. The ecclesiastical province of Trivandrum was erected with Trivandrum as an Archdiocese and Tiruvalla as its suffragan. Here begins the territorial restriction. The Metropolitan had to limit himself to the land reaching from Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) to the river Pampa in the North; the suffragan had his jurisdiction from Pampa to the river Ponnani. By this Latin type of arrangement, the former Metropolitan of Bethany who became the Metropolitan Archbishop of Trivandrum, lost his *supra-territorial rights*. It was only in 1958, that the Northern boundary of the eparchy of Tiruvalla was further extended a bit to the Northern part of Kerala and to a few Districts in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. And after 1958 no further territorial extension was done.

12. Migration in India and outside

In 1930 when Mar Ivanios entered into full communion with Rome, the Kerala people, especially the Syriac Orthodox of both factions, were chiefly cen-

⁵ The designation »Jacobite« was abandoned by the Syriac Orthodox hierarchy and is nowadays, in the era of lived ecumenism, no longer used. The official name is »Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch«.

⁶ Letter of Mar Ivanios to the Apostolic Delegate in India on 17th September 1929.

⁷ Cf. J. MADEY, *The Catholic Syro-Malankara Church. Some Reflections on its canonical status*, "The Harp" 16 (2003), 195-213, esp. 203.

tered in today's central Kerala (in the then Travancore-Kochi States). In 1947 India became independent and people began to move about in the free country for job and settlement. The Syrian Christians also migrated in large numbers to the Malabar region (which was incorporated into the new State of Kerala in 1956) and to the big industrial cities in India. Today there are large numbers of Malankara Christians (Catholics as well as non-Catholics) in the various cities and states in India. The non-Catholics (Orthodox Syrians, Syriac Orthodox, and Marthomites) have their own Hierarchies throughout India. But for the Malankara Catholics so far there is no adequate provision for the pastoral care of the migrants. It is a new situation, which has to be faced by all who love the Church of Christ.

Another further development is the migrant workers in large numbers to the *Gulf countries* in recent years. They are left uncared for long and the erosion of faith is unthinkable. It is an unpardonable mistake not to take care of their pastoral needs sufficiently, properly and adequately. This situation was presented to the Pope several times by the Malankara Catholic and Syro-Malabar bishops, but so far, even 40 years after the Vatican Council II, nothing tangible and effective has been done in this direction.

13. Ecumenical Scandal

Although the Malankara Catholic Church is raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church and its Father and Head is called Catholicos having the rights and powers of a patriarch according to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, his jurisdictional authority is very much restricted by the territorial limitations. This is the hurdle, which has to be removed immediately. The Malankara Catholic Church has the inalienable right to take care of its faithful wherever they are. They cannot be hindered by any one. In the same way the right to preach the Gospel cannot be denied to any Church. It is an ecumenical scandal in the Indian subcontinent. After several memoranda, Pope John Paul II assured on 1st February 1986, after his arrival in Delhi, that the Decree on the Oriental Churches (nos. 3-4) would be properly implemented: „Be assured that I shall do everything possible to ensure a just and fair settlement of the issue that will take into account all the pastoral exigencies of unity and truth”⁸

14. Catholicos of All India (Catholicos d'kolleh Hendo)

The Head of the Thomas Christians had always had the title „Metropolitan of All India” (*Metropolita d'kolleh Hendo*), Metropolitan and door of All India (*Metropolita u tara'd'kolleh Hendo*), Metropolitan of the See of St. Thomas (*Metopolita d'kurzia d'Mar Tomas Slihā*). Even after the Synod of Udayam-

⁸ *The Pope speaks to India*, 32.

perur (1599), the Latin Bishops Roz, Britto, and Garcia used this title. The Archdeacon of the Thomas Christians was Archdeacon of all India (*Arkadiakon d'kolleh Hendo*). Some of the *Puthenkur* leaders (non-Catholics) continued to use it. It has to be reinstated. The Catholicos of the Malankara Catholic Church is the Catholicos of All India and he, as Father and Head of the Malankara faithful, should have direct right to meet their pastoral needs adequately and properly without dependence on any local Latin bishop. We hope and wish that the new Pope Benedict XVI would fulfil the promise made by his predecessor in 1986 at New Delhi.

15. Reaction

The attitude of the other Churches and communities to the new status of the Malankara Catholic Church and to its Father and Head Mōrān Mōr Cyril Baselios, Catholicos-Major Archbishop, was cordial. As is known from the history of the Reunion Movement, the *Metran Kakshy* had from the very beginning a very negative attitude towards the New Ecumenical Movement and towards Mar Ivanios and the growing community. They did everything in their power to crush it and tarnish the image of its Head. But since the unity of all Christians is the will of the Lord of the Church, the community grew and in God's abundant mercy it is now a Major Archiepiscopal Church with 500,000 faithful bearing witness to the unity of mankind and proclaiming the peace to all. It is one of the very flourishing missionary Churches in the whole of Christianity. When the Church was raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church and when the Head was called Catholicos, some of the Orthodox publications took a slightly negative attitude to it (*Malankara Sabha* - an official publication of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, *Malankara Sabhaadepam* of M.O. John, an Orthodox priest). But in general, their antagonism was very much mitigated when one compares it to their reaction to the Church in the beginning and down through the years. The *Malayala Manorama* Daily, run by an Orthodox family, hailed it as a great recognition of the meritorious service rendered to the country and world by the Malankara Catholic Church. In the same way the Hindu Daily *Mathrabhumi* and the Syro-Malabar Daily *Deepika* positively reacted to the new status.

The Malankara Catholic Church is in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and this Church follows the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. It follows the ecumenical principles of the Council and the teachings of the recent Popes. It is fully committed to Ecumenism. It believes that the Lord wants the unity of all Christians and it has to be done according to the will of the Lord. It does not think that the Catholicate of the Malankara Church is against anybody or is the continuation of any line, but is to foster better relations with all men of good will, especially with our Malankara Syriac Orthodox

and Orthodox Syrian brethren in Kerala, who are blood of our own blood and flesh of our own flesh.

Katolikos i katolikat Katolickiego Kościoła Malankarskiego

Streszczenie

Kościół katolicki jest komunią Kościołów *sui iuris*, które cieszą się równymi prawami i objęte są troską papieża. Wyróżnia się cztery typy takich Kościołów: patriarchalne, arcybiskupie większe, metropolitalne i autonomiczne. W 2005 r. Katolicki Kościół Malankarski jako dotychczasowy Kościół metropolitalny został podniesiony do rangi Kościoła arcybiskupiego większego z prawami Kościoła patriarchalnego, jednakże bez tytułu patriarchy, który zastrzeżony jest dla głowy Kościoła w miejscu starożytnej stolicy apostołskiej.

Arcybiskup Większy Katolickiego Kościoła Malankarskiego w nawiązaniu do tradycji syryjskiej i tradycji Indii, na podstawie papieskiego dekretu z dnia 10 lutego 2005 nosi tytuł katolikosa. Decyzja ta została przyjęta we wspólnocie malankarskiej z wielką radością, była bowiem spełnieniem oczekiwań wyrażonych już przed ponad 75 laty przy zawieraniu unii z Rzymem. Kanoniczne objęcie stolicy biskupiej miało miejsce 14 maja 2005 r. w katedrze w Pattom. Eku-
 menicznym skandalem pozostają jednak ograniczenia jurysdykcyjnej władzy katolikosa spowodowane terytorialnymi granicami na subkontynencie indyjskim. Tymczasem Katolicki Kościół Malankarski pragnie duszpasterską troską obejmować wszystkich swych wyznawców, bez względu na miejsce zamieszkania, stąd rości sobie należne mu prawa. Należy mieć nadzieję, że papież Benedykt XVI spełni obietnicę swego poprzednika, zgodnie z którą katolikos Katolickiego Kościoła Malankarskiego będzie mógł spełniać swoje zadania niezależnie od jakiegokolwiek lokalnego biskupa łacińskiego w Kerali.

Katolicki Kościół Malankarski czuje się zobowiązany do podtrzymywania braterskich więzów z innymi Kościołami, zwłaszcza Syro-Malankarskim Kościołem Ortodoksyjnym i Syryjskim Kościołem Ortodoksyjnym. Zobowiązanie to, wynikające z wiary, że wolą Pana jest jedność Kościoła, odwołuje się do eklezjologii Soboru Watykańskiego II i nauczania papieża, którym malankarscy katolicy chcą pozostać wierni.