

By the Grace of God and by the approval of the Holy See, Thomas Mar Eusebius, Bishop of the Apostolic Exarchate of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in USA extends cordial greetings to all the priests, religious and Faithful of the Exarchate.

Prot. No. EPL 1/2010

### **Praise be to the Most Holy Trinity.**

My dear Fathers, Sisters, Seminarians and the Lay Faithful,

Miraculous are the ways in which God sustains each one of us. This is true of His providence in our personal life, in our family, in our Church and in the whole universe. In the past few months we have been experiencing this providence of God for our Church in a very special way. Our ecclesial history hitherto testifies to the fact that ours is an ecclesial community that has been so lovingly and miraculously cared for and nourished by God. The movement spearheaded by the greatest ecclesial visionary of the past century Servant of God Archbishop Mar Ivanios in 1930 was essentially a missionary movement. As we know, the humble movement started with just five people eight decades ago is today an autonomous Church in the universal Catholic communion, fully living all its ecclesial vitality and missionary potentiality, the clearest and latest manifestation of which has been the erection of the new Syro-Malankara Catholic Apostolic Exarchate in the United States of America.

The profound ecclesial consciousness and missionary commitment of Servant of God Mar Ivanios prompted him to undertake a journey to this country way back in 1947 and to introduce our Church to the people of this country. That sowed the seed of a new ecclesial movement in this country. The first sprout of this seed emerged in 1984 when His Grace Benedict Mar Gregorios, the then Metropolitan Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church officially started the first Malankara Catholic mission here. The vision of Mar Gregorios coupled with the missionary commitment of many a priest, sister and lay Faithful led to the growth of a very vibrant ecclesial community in this great country. The appointment of an Apostolic Visitor to our Faithful in this continent as a result of the ecclesial vision and commitment of His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios Catholicos was another milestone in our journey of united ecclesial and Christian witnessing here. The first Visitor His Excellency Isaac Mar Cleemis laid the foundation for a stable ecclesial fellowship. The leadership of his successor, His Excellency Joseph Mar Thomas helped further to consolidate our community here. I take this opportunity to thank most sincerely both of them, all the former Coordinators, namely His Excellency the Most Rev. Yoohanon Mar Chrysostom, Very Rev. Corbishop John Melamparambil, Very Rev. Corepiscopo Geevarghese Mannikarottu and Rev. Fr. Peter Kochery, all our priests, sisters and our lay Faithful who have painstakingly toiled to nurture our Church in America.

The ecclesial coherence and potentiality of our community here was officially acknowledged by the Universal Church as the Holy Father Benedict XVI awarded us with an Apostolic Exarchate for the Syro-Malankara Catholic Faithful in USA on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2010, on the eve of the 57<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of Servant of God Mar Ivanios. With the erection of the Exarchate, for the first time in history, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church attained a canonical provision similar to that of an eparchy outside India. For us, members of the Exarchate, it is a time to be deeply aware of and grateful to the loving Providence of God that is sustaining us, the special concern of the Holy See for our Church and the creative initiatives of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Episcopal Synod under the leadership of His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos. We are sincerely indebted to the American Catholic Church for its support and the promotion of our cause.

As we know, the new Exarchate was inaugurated and I was installed as the Bishop of the Exarchate on 3<sup>rd</sup> October in New York. This turned out to be an unforgettable and grace-filled event in the history of our community in America, thanks to the untiring and selfless leadership and service rendered by our priests, sisters and our lay community here. I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all of you for your exemplary ecclesial commitment and dedication. The love and sincerity with which you organized this

event was for me personally an indication of how warmly you welcomed the Exarchate and me as its Bishop.

The Exarchate marks a new beginning in our ecclesial presence in USA. It enjoins with it enormous ecclesial possibilities and also responsibilities. We have the legitimate freedom and all the possibilities that any Eparchy possesses in the Church in order to shape our own ecclesial life and Christian witnessing here. At the same time the Exarchate is an invitation for us to make our own specific contribution to this country. As an ecclesial community we are at the vantage point of beautifully combining three precious cultures in our concrete existence here. When the ancient cultural values of our Indian heritage and the spiritual values of our Syrian Christian patrimony are allowed to take concrete expression in this amazingly open American society, we will be making our own ecclesial contribution in this country.

I would like to spell out some of the possible projects that the new Exarchate presents before us and demands from us. In the broadest definition, the Exarchate is a provision to strengthen our ecclesial life. By promoting the values of our Malankara and Indian patrimony coupled with those of the culture of this country, we must be enabled to provide the most relevant Christian witness in this country. Therefore the primary focus has to be on deepening our spiritual and ecclesial life personally, in families and on the level of our parish communities. We have to strengthen our family relations by instilling in them a fundamental God orientation and ecclesial orientation. We have to strengthen our communities spiritually, liturgically and with sufficient infrastructural facilities. We have to bring all our people into the active ecclesial life of our community, even those who have not yet become part of it. We have to begin new communities wherever it is needed and is possible. We have to give special attention to the needs of our children and youth and do all that is needed for their proper ecclesial integration and growth. We have to promote vocations to priesthood and religious life from among us. We need to procure a church of our own which could function as the Cathedral of the Exarchate. We also need to have an Exarchate Center which could be the Bishop's residence and from where the various activities of the Exarchate could be effectively coordinated. Eventually every one of our parishes must have a church of its own. As an Exarchate, we need to be open to new missionary openings and institutional possibilities for concrete acts of Christian charity.

Relying fully on God's continued providence and resolving ourselves to give our best as individuals, families and as parishes to the growth of the Exarchate, let us take up this new responsibility that God so lovingly entrusts us with. While gratefully acknowledging all that you have done so far for the growth of our community here, I earnestly entreat each of you to render your whole-hearted and loving cooperation in this fundamental Christian, ecclesial mission of ours.

From 14 to 18 November, I shall be participating in the meeting of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) at Baltimore. As you know, it is for the first time that our Church is able to have a representation in this most important body of the Catholic Church in the US. I request you to strengthen me with your prayers in this matter. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November, I shall leave for India in order to participate in the Syro-Malankara Catholic Episcopal Synod scheduled to begin on 28<sup>th</sup> November. I rely on your prayerful support. May God bless you, your families and our parishes abundantly. May Mary our Mother be a constant support and inspiration in our life.

Your loving servant in Christ

+ Thomas Mar Eusebius

6<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2010

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*This circular is to be read in all our parishes on Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2010*