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Kudumbakootayma (Family Units)

“Internal to the parish, especially if vast and territorially extensive, small Church communities, where present, can be a notable help in the formation of Christians by providing a consciousness and an experience of ecclesial communion and mission which are more extensive and incisive” (Pope John Paul II, The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People, 61).

My dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

The importance of family units in the parish as presented in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II invites us to reflect prayerfully on the urgency for establishing and fostering family units in Syro Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain. Following the rich tradition and ecclesial nature of Syro Malabar Church, it is my earnest desire that the Eparchy should give due importance to the formation of *kudumba kootayma* (Family Unit) in order to build up the Church in view of providing greater pastoral care for families and individuals in Great Britain. A few families living in a defined area of a Parish/Qurbana centre gathered together as a unit to pray and to reflect is normally described as *kudumba kootayma* (Family Unit) in Syro Malabar Church. A family unit ought to be true expression of communion as well as a means to build up a vibrant parish community. Moreover, it is my conviction that formation and effective functioning of family units will contribute immensely to the life and growth of the new Eparchy of Great Britain.

The teaching of the Church about the basic Christian communities as a template is applicable to family units in our Eparchy. Family units are nourished by the Word of God and called to remain embedded into the local Church and the universal Church.

In the Old Testament, family and Temple were the most important places of worship and celebration. The Passover, the greatest of all Israelite celebrations, was held in families. Jesus made family not only a centre for worship but also His base for evangelization. He told his apostles, “Look for a worthy person in every town or village you come to and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his home bless it” (Mt 10:11-12). After Pentecost, the early Church met daily in believers' homes for breaking the bread (the Eucharist) and sharing meals (Acts 2:46). All the churches for the first 300 years as we understand from the church history were primarily existed in families. From the Letters in the New Testament, we recognise that the home-based

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community was a training ground for leadership in the early Church (1Tim 3:5,12). In our time, too we intent that these family units shall serve as cradles for vocations to priesthood and consecrated life.

By maintaining a sincere communion with the priests whom Lord gives to His Church, and with the Magisterium which the Spirit of Christ has entrusted to them, the family units constantly should grow in missionary consciousness, fervour, commitment and zeal. The units thereby will become centres of Christian formation and missionary outreach. The family units consist of families that gather for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and reflection on human and ecclesial matters. As Pope John Paul II observed, "these communities decentralize and organize the parish community, to which they always remain united" (Pope John Paul II, *The Mission of the Redeemer*, 51), so these units should shine as signs of vitality within the Church, instruments of formation and evangelization, and solid starting points for a new society based on 'civilization of love'. In these small, basic or so called 'living' communities, the faithful can communicate the Word of God and deliver it in service and love to one another; these communities are true expressions of ecclesial communion and centres of evangelization, in communion with their pastors. (Pope John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*, 26)

So, I request the priests ministering at our Qurbana centre/s where there are no family units present, to do necessary arrangements to establish family units on or before 31st July 2017. Moreover, I wish that all family units may have every month family unit prayer in accordance with the practical guidelines (please see the attached guidelines) received from the Eparchy.

May the Holy Family patron of all family units bless you all.

Yours in our Lord and our God,

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