



SYRO MALABAR EPARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Pastoral Letter 16

21/11/2022

Relying on God's grace and protection, I, Mar Joseph Srampickal, Bishop of Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain, write to all Priests, Deacons, Religious and all the Faithful.

Liturgy: To have an encounter with Christ and to be one with Him.

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are entering a new Liturgical year with the first Sunday of the Season of the Annunciation. The holy remembrance of the Nativity of Child Jesus fills our hearts with Joy. Happy to extend to you all the loving wishes of the season of Annunciation.

We could prepare the first five-year Pastoral plan, 'Living Stones' (2017-2022) at the very early stages of our Eparchy. I am grateful to you for all the support and cooperation you have given and are continuing to give as per the plan. Though we cannot say that everything happens perfectly as it was envisaged, we could realise many of our plans. The natural limitations of the infancy of our Eparchy and the covid pandemic were adverse factors for us. Still through that, it could undoubtedly be a strong foundation for the Eparchy and could gain the strength to leap forward. Let us continue our efforts to accomplish the goals of the Pastoral plan.

At the beginning of the new Liturgical year, we are commencing the 2nd Five Year Pastoral plan, "Holy to the Holy Ones" (*Qudsha L'Qandishe*). This new Pastoral plan is centred on Liturgy, Theology, Spirituality, Discipline, and Culture. As per the plan, we have selected 'Liturgy' for our reflection in the first phase beginning on 27th November, 2022.

Liturgy has got the prime place in the Church. Liturgy, which is the solemn celebration of the faith, is the main element of the individuality and identity of each Church. The liturgical year is the ecclesiastical order of the liturgical life. It is the instruction of the Church that the Pastoral plan is to be formulated according to the Liturgical year of each Church. All our devotions and entire prayer life should be according to the spirit of the liturgical year. First place should be given to the main elements of the Liturgy which are the Holy Qurbana, other Sacraments, Sacramentals, and Liturgy of the Hours. All the devotions must lead the faithful to the Liturgy. Liturgy is the work of God and devotions are the works of man. Devotions are personal whereas Liturgy is the work of the Church with Christ as the head and faithful, the body. It is because of this ecclesiastical nature of the Liturgy that no individual has permission to add, omit or alter anything in the Liturgy.

What happens in the Liturgy is the encounter with Christ and becoming one with Him. Pope Francis says, “ Christian faith is either an encounter with Him alive, or it does not exist.” (*Desiderio Desideravi* 10.) If it is the first encounter that happens in Baptism, the other Sacraments, especially, the Holy Qurbana make it possible for the inflow of the strength of His Paschal mystery into us. This encounter happens in and through the Church, the Body of Christ. One who is newly baptised is added, by that Sacrament, to the ecclesiastical fellowship, to the group of the faithful who have already encountered Christ. It is in this Apostolic fellowship, the Church, we get the Holy Spirit, people of God are nurtured and the Church as a body grows through the Liturgy of the Hours. It is in this same fellowship that the faithful are resting in the tombs, waiting for entry to Heaven.

We have to give proper liturgical formation continuously to all the faithful in the Eparchy. The Priests should be aware of all the instructions from the Eparchy concerning Liturgy and give formation to the faithful at the Parish level. The primary liturgical formation is the proper celebration of the Liturgy. Let us try to read books and articles on Liturgy, have discussions on that and make use of modern social media where authentic teachings on Liturgy are available. In the first phase of the Five-year pastoral plan, we try to give formation to all age groups of people and thus make our Eparchy a model liturgical community.

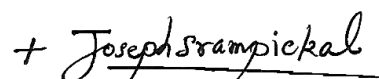
Dear brothers and sisters, the face of our Church shines when the Liturgy is protected and celebrated properly and without any blemish. Our Eparchy has much to do with this responsibility and obligation. Let the new Five-year pastoral plan may lead us to achieve the goals.

Special attention during the Liturgical Season of Annunciation.

Observe the 25 days of preparation for Christmas starting on 1st December, with spiritual exercises and with a spirit of abstinence. Speak about abstinence at home. Encourage each other to observe abstinence. Assign little acts of sacrifice to children to practice every day. Try to put into practice the details in the *Suvara* calendar prepared jointly by the Commissions for Catechism and Mission League. May the Lord bless us abundantly to celebrate various feasts of the Season of the Annunciation according to our situations and with all simplicity which help the enrichment of our life of faith.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Love of God the Father, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Yours in our Lord and our God,

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Mar Joseph Srampickal
Bishop, Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain

NB: This Pastoral letter must be read in all Syro-Malabar Parishes/Missions/Proposed Missions during the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* before 19th December 2022.