



SYRO MALABAR EPARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Pastoral Letter 21

04/06/2025

Theosis-the Purpose of Liturgical Spirituality

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

To commemorate the 2025th anniversary of *M'shiha's* incarnation, this year is observed by the Catholic Church as the Year of Jubilee, themed 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Keeping the spirit of the Year of Jubilee, this year is also observed by us as the Year of Spirituality, as the third year of our Second Five-Year Pastoral Plan, 'The Holy to the Holy Ones', and we are endeavouring to assimilate the pearls of Eastern Spirituality into our Church life and personal life. The aim of our spirituality is theosis (deification). In the Syriac language, this process of theosis is called '*mes alahanusa*' (to become like God or to become like *Alaha*). This is the amazing mystery that makes us partakers in the life of *M'shiha*, who gifted us His Divinity and having taken on humanity from us (Mar Aprem, Hymns on faith 5:17) and us evolving into His Body. Today, the body of the risen and assented *M'shiha* is the Church. Therefore, '*mes alahanusa*', in short, is us living in the Church, for the Church, thinking with the Church and it is the mystery of us evolving to be the Church. According to the spiritual vision of the Syriac Church, theosis is the ecclesiastical life. This is realised through the Power of God (*Ruha* of Holiness) that God has given us. Therefore, the spirituality of the Eastern Churches is centred on the *Ruha* of Holiness, and it is the Liturgical Spirituality guided by the *Ruha* of Holiness.

This year, in a very special way during the Season of the Apostles, which commences on the 8th of June on the Feast of Pentecost, and during the following seasons of the liturgical calendar, guided by the *Ruha* of Holiness, let us strive to ascend to the pinnacle of Liturgical Spirituality based on the *Ruha* of Holiness. As we go past the halfway point of the Year of Jubilee and the Year of Spirituality, let us strive to pursue the goals of these observances with greater zeal and sincerity in the days to come. I would like to remind once again the goals we set at the beginning of the Year of Spirituality and their importance as well.

Let us make the observance of the Year of Spirituality life-bound, founded on the four elements that the Eastern Catholic tradition emphasises as the basic principles of our spiritual life.

1. Firm and Humble Reverence to God's Salvific Mysteries:

By reading the Holy Scriptures, we should be able to meet God daily, who reveals Himself through His acts even today. We should develop the habit of reading and meditating during our family prayer in our homes, on the verses of the Holy Scripture, that are given in our liturgical calendar, to be read during the Holy Qurbana on that day. I invite everyone to join the chain Holy Bible reading which we initiated on the 18th of December 2024, on the feast day of the Miraculous Sleeva of Mylapore, and continued daily, and the nighttime Liturgy of the Hour Prayer, Lelya (every day on Zoom platform from 8.20 pm onwards). I exhort everyone to make it a routine to join, personally and along

with the family, for the Lelya Prayer and for reading the Word of God, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Psalm 119:105).

A spiritual lifestyle of continuously reciting short Bible verses and short Statements of Faith as prayers, and always experiencing God's presence, overcoming temptations and living in communion with God is a unique feature of the Eastern Churches. In order that we too own this style of prayer, which is a source of indescribable blessings, a collection of 33 Aspirations has been given to all our families, especially for children and young people. I urge you to select an aspiration that you feel the most heart-touching to you, recite it constantly in your heart, contemplate on it and to make the whole life a prayer.

2. Constantly strive for Theosis:

I once again remind you all that there should never be any shortcomings in the participation in the Liturgy of the Hours and in regularly receiving the Holy Sacraments which are the sources of immortal grace, especially participating in the Holy Qurbana, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the zeal to live in the purity of the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is through the Holy Sacraments that we are united with *M'shiha*, who is the Vine, and divine life flows into us (Lumen Gentium 11).

It is with the aim to help the faithful of our Eparchy in Theosis, based on a spiritual lifestyle, that is rooted in the East Syriac spirituality of our Church, that the '*Urha 2025: Eparchial Family Quiz of Spirituality*' has been envisioned in our Eparchy. I specially exhort you to actively participate in this initiative to learn more about the spirituality of our Church and to accomplish it in our lives.

3. Community (public) life through participating in the Liturgy, Family Units, Pious Associations and Social Service:

Mar John Chrysostom teaches that "although there are many members in the Church, they join to form one body". We experience our unity with *M'shiha* when we gather as a Church (1 Corinthians 11:18) to celebrate Holy Qurbana, for Family Unit gatherings and when we participate in the Liturgy of the Hours, which are the official prayers of the Church. Therefore, during this Year of Spirituality, let us actively participate in Holy Qurbana celebrations and Family Units, and as one community, together with the Church try to unite with *M'shiha*.

Our Pious Association activities help us to make our faith more luminant through charitable activities, which are the training field of our Christian existence. Therefore, during this Year of Spirituality, everyone should actively participate in our Pious Associations such as Men's Forum and Women's Forum for the adults, SMYM for the youth and Cherupushpa Mission League and Savio Friends for the children.

Eastern church fathers have resembled Christian life to a pilgrimage on several occasions. Pilgrimages have a very important place in our spiritual life. We should be prepared to organise pilgrimages to Mylapore and to our Marth Alphonsa Cathedral, Preston, which has been declared as a pilgrim centre, as part of the Year of Jubilee and to other holy centres. Everyone who can participate in the pilgrimage to Walsingham on the 19th of July 2025, organised by our Eparchy, should join in and try to enrich our spiritual life.

4. A mystical life of Prayer, Fasting and Sharing:

A lifestyle of prayer, study, fasting and sharing is another significant level of our spiritual growth. These help us to grow in virtue, to avoid evil and to get closer to God. We should find time to read good spiritual books which would nurture Christian faith and spirituality. Because, as Mar John Chrysostom says, “when your mind and heart immerse in spiritual books you will always be satisfied, because spiritual reading gives you a foundation in God.” Therefore, efforts should be made this year, to set up a library of spiritual books wherever possible, and to encourage the reading of spiritual books.

We should be able to pray with the Church and personally as well, to fast as a must on days stipulated by the Church, to observe the Holy Abstinence Days passed down to us by our forefathers and to train our children on this and to abstain from meat on Fridays. Let us make charity work our lifestyle, charity work which involves the poor and the helpless in what God has blessed us as a gift. Thereby, let us follow an ascetic lifestyle, which is the hallmark of Syriac Christians, and pass it down to the generations to come.

The goal of our spiritual life is not only to be “saved” from sin, but to become “partakers of the Divine Nature” (2 Peter 1:4) and experience the foretaste of Heavenly Life and to live in *M’shiha* in this world itself. Pray that this observance of the Year of Spirituality may help us to grow in this divine nature and be deified, staying close to the Church everyday.

May the grace of *Maran Isho M’shiha*, and the love of *Alaha*, and the fellowship of the *Ruha d’Qudsha* be with us all, now and forever, Amen.

Lovingly in *M’shiha*,

+ Joseph Srampickal

Yawsep Srampickal
Bishop, Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain

NB: This Pastoral letter must be read on 8th of June 2025 in all Parishes/Missions/Proposed Missions of the Eparchy during the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* (if Holy Qurbana is not celebrated on 8th of June 2025, this should be read on the nearest Sunday when Holy Qurbana is celebrated).