



SYRO MALABAR EPARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Pastoral Letter 22

28/11/2025

The Year Dedicated to Ecclesiastical Discipline

My dear brothers and sisters in Maran Isho M'Shiha,

This year we enter the fourth year of our Five-Year Pastoral Plan, *The Holy [One] to the Holy Ones*. We now dedicate this year (30 November 2025 – 28 November 2026) to Ecclesiastical Discipline. When we hear the word *discipline*, we often think of strict rules, a loss of freedom, or even punishment. But the word comes from the Latin *disciplina*, which means instruction and training. In the Church, this is very important. Ecclesiastical discipline is, above all, about teaching and forming us in the Christian way of life. It helps each one of us to know, love, and follow Jesus more closely, and to grow in a deeper and more heartfelt understanding of his life and his person. Let us now look at the different aspects of ecclesiastical discipline.

1. Canon Law and Communion in the Life of the Universal Church

The Christian life is a life of communion. It is communion with God, the Most Holy Trinity, and with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. If we want to be in communion with God, we must also be in communion with the Church. The Church is the dwelling place of the Trinity. It is the Bride of Christ. There is a way of life that helps us remain in this communion with the Holy Trinity, and therefore with the Church. St Paul reminds us of this in his first letter to Timothy: “*You will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15). In the Holy Catholic Church, the sacraments draw us into this communion. Holy Baptism (*Mammodeesa*) and the Holy Eucharist (*Qurbana*) lead us ever deeper into union with Christ and the Most Holy Trinity.

At the same time, the Catholic Church itself is a communion. It is a family of Churches with different apostolic traditions. There are 24 *sui iuris* or self-governing Churches. All of them are in full communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Christ and the successor of Saint Peter. To help us live this communion well, our Mother Church offers us clear guidance through her laws and norms. These are found in two main codes: the Code of Canon Law (CIC) for the Latin Church, and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) for the Eastern Catholic Churches, including our own venerable Syro-Malabar Church. Alongside these, we also follow the particular laws and statutes of the Syro-Malabar Church, and the statutes of our Eparchy here in Great Britain. All these laws and norms work together in harmony, under the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome. To live a truly holy Christian life—as Marthoma Nasranes—we need to understand and follow ecclesiastical discipline.

2. The Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain and Its Mission

The Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain, erected by Pope Francis, is a precious gift to our faithful living in Great Britain. The Holy Father established this Eparchy so that the Syro-Malabar faithful could live and grow within their own tradition, liturgy, theology, spirituality, discipline, and culture. In a time of globalisation and large-scale migration, there is a real danger of gradually losing our

identity as Marthoma Nasranees. While integration into wider society and communion with the local Church are essential, the universal Catholic Church strongly desires that the traditions of each *sui iuris* Church be preserved and promoted wherever her faithful live.

For us, this means that our unique Marthoma Nasrani Tradition—expressed through our liturgical, theological, spiritual, and disciplinary life, which together we call *Marthoma Margam*—must be preserved, promoted, and handed on to the next generation. To protect this heritage and to help us live it out faithfully, the Catholic Church provides a clear structure of discipline through the CCEO and through the particular laws and statutes of the Syro-Malabar Church.

3. A Call to Renewal in the Year of Ecclesiastical Discipline

My dear brothers and sisters, I invite all of you—priests, religious, and lay faithful—to take this Year of Discipline as a time to learn, understand, and live the laws of our beloved Syro-Malabar Church. Let us embrace a disciplined Christian, liturgical, and spiritual life. This will lead us deeper into communion with Christ, with one another and the universal Catholic Church. May our faithful practice of ecclesiastical discipline help us to live our Marthoma Nasrani identity, celebrate our liturgy with devotion, and keep alive the spiritual riches of our tradition in this land. Let our disciplined Christian life be a witness to the Gospel for everyone we meet, and a preparation for eternal life, which is the final purpose of all ecclesial discipline.

The following goals and action plans have been formulated for the Year of Ecclesiastical Discipline.

Five Goals

1. To educate the faithful about the discipline of the Church and its purposes.
2. To raise awareness of liturgical disciplines.
3. To preserve the tradition of *Palliyogam*.
4. To promote understanding of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (CCEO), the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church, and the statutes of the Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain.
5. To familiarise the faithful with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) and mystagogical catechesis.

Nine Action Plans

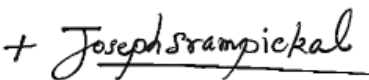
1. Conduct awareness programmes on the structure of the Catholic Church as a communion of individual Churches and on membership in a *Church sui iuris*; organise an Eparchial Quiz on Ecclesiastical Discipline.
2. Formulate the Eparchial Statutes.
3. Systematise parish administration by:
 - Maintaining proper records and registers in each parish/mission/proposed mission.
 - Establishing mechanisms to monitor the activities and records of every parish/mission/proposed mission.
 - Defining boundaries for parishes/missions/proposed missions and regions.
 - Establishing a uniform schedule for the election of parish council members and *kaikkarans* (custodians).

4. Provide training for parish council members on the role of the laity and the function of *Palliyogam* in the temporal and spiritual administration of parishes/missions/proposed missions.
5. Conduct awareness programmes on the sacraments of initiation.
6. Conduct awareness programmes on the norms of marriage and the annulment process.
7. Carry out the Bishop's pastoral visit to every parish/mission/proposed mission.
8. Prepare statutes for the various commissions and organisations of the Eparchy.
9. Promote close collaboration with other individual Churches.

With fraternal affection, I urge you all to work hard to attain these goals and follow the action plans so that we may truly live out our faith and continue to be faithful Marthoma Nasraneees in Great Britain.

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*,

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Yawsep Srampickal

Bishop, Catholic Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain

NB: This Pastoral letter must be read on 30th of November 2025 in all parishes/missions/proposed missions of the Eparchy during the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* (If Holy *Qurbana* is not celebrated on 30th of November 2025, this should be read on the nearest Sunday when Holy *Qurbana* is celebrated).