



MAR THOMA NAZRANI SANGHAM

AN ASSOCIATION OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS

Reg. No. ALP/TC/150/2023

The whirlwind in the Ernakulam Angamaly Archdiocese, as prophesied by His Holiness Pope Francis, has indeed come true !

Reji Elamatha
President - MTNS

Dear Bishops of the Ernakulam Angamaly origin and serving in other Syro-Malabar dioceses,

On behalf of Mar Thoma Nasrani Sangam (MTNS), I, the President Reji Elamatha, wish to respond to your dissent note which you have made public. The said note, jointly authored by Mar Ephrem Nariculam, Bishop of Chanda; Mar Jose Chittooparambil CMI, Bishop of Rajkot; Mar Jose Puthenveetil, Auxiliary Bishop of Faridabad; Mar Kuriakose Bharanikulangara, Archbishop of Faridabad; and Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath, Bishop of Mandya, was addressed to the Major Archbishop. It was consciously leaked out in the public domain, disregarding the dignity expected of Catholic Bishops and showing little regard for the collegiality among Bishops.

By choosing to air your grievances in such a manner, your excellencies have undermined the internal cohesion of our Syro Malabar Church and Catholic Church in particular. Your action demonstrated a lack of discretion befitting your office. You have opted for a confrontational approach that risks further division among the faithful.

It is a pity that your immature action suggests a disregard for the pastoral sensitivity required in addressing sensitive matters within our Church. It is troubling that you resorted to a public declaration that do not reflect the decorum expected of you .

It is also suspected that the dissent letter was prepared by dissident priests and that you were coerced into publishing it under your names. But you Bishops have not come forward denying your role. Moreover it is known that Fr Kuriakose Mundadan already declared before the visual media that some Bishops were preparing dissenting note. Therefore it is not an extrapolation that the dissent note was prepared by the dissident and rebel priests and you Bishops ratified it without thinking the repercussions. It is also condemnable that Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara , Bishop of Faridabad came before the visual media opposing the decisions of the Supreme Pontiff and the Holy See. He even criticised the Synod of Bishops in which he is a member.

Our understanding is that your excellencies did bow down to the relics of the Martyrs when you became Bishops. Right ??

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Panadan Ventures Pvt. Ltd., CUSAT, Kalamassery, Kochi, Kerala 682022

PHONE: +91 94475 65750, +91 98479 41096

marthomanazranisangham@gmail.com

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Have you ever meditated on its meaning? Do you, believe and understand the universality and Collegiality of the Bishops???

Do you not realize that your episcopal status and its superiority are above the local, parochial interests of Ernakulam ?

Are you trying to play with regional spirit within the Universal and Catholic Church?

We, as faithful understand that you have to declare your allegiance to the Holy Father and the Head and Father of the Syro Malabar Church. However, your public discourse of dissent (it is public because one of you choose to leak the content) is to defame the Syro Malabar Church.

May I ask you whether you have any conviction about the declaration of faith you made when you were ordained? Are you not raising objections to the directives of Holy Father and the Holy See?

We, the faithful are deeply appalled by the actions of you in openly criticizing the directives of the Holy See and our Permanent Synod. The Circular issued by the Major Archbishop and the Administrator of the Archdiocese, which was approved by the highest authorities of Vatican, is intended for the greater good of our Church. It is shocking that you, despite being fully aware of all facts, would question and accuse Vatican State Secretary, the Prefect of the Eastern Congregation of churches, and the Papal delegate appointed by the Holy Father. (Refer to your dissent letter para 4.

Some of you may have personal scores to settle with ABP Mar Cyril Vasil, as he was deputed to take undertakings of allegiance to the Holy See and support for unified Holy Qurbana).

Such blatant defiance against the Holy See is a serious offense as per our knowledge goes, and can lead to severe consequences, including excommunication.

We urge you Bishops to reconsider your actions, respect the decisions of the Holy See, and apologize publicly.

We hope you understand that allegiance to the Pope and the Major Archbishop is tied to the collective responsibility of the Synod.

Isn't the said letter a declaration of no confidence in the Synod, of which you five Bishops are members?

Isn't the said letter also a declaration of no confidence in the Major Archbishop, who is responsible for implementing Synod decisions, and also in the Pope, who has repeatedly requested that the Synod's decision be accepted and implemented as soon as possible?

-2-

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For these reasons, we ask you, do you deserve to remain in your positions? Introspect and talk to yourself and step down if you don't want to apologize publicly.

During your Episcopal ordination, you took an oath similar to this:

"I swear to the successor of Peter, the head of the Universal Church, the Pope, with all my heart, to obey. I promise to be in complete submission to the Head and Father of our church, the Major Archbishop, according to the laws of the Church, in all matters."

Submission to the directives given by the Pope and the Synod is essential for your faithfulness as Bishops. This commitment involves not only the personal interests but also, your adherence to the authority of the Pope and the Holy See.

The primary episcopal responsibility is to lead your people, who clearly belong to the Lord, with care. To lead means to walk upfront, embodying pastoralism. This involves guarding against potential attacks from the enemy and ensuring victory over them. *However, you act like cowards trembling before dissident priests espousing parochialism because, perhaps they may have incriminating dossier with them.*

What is the most important episcopal duty: Teaching and guiding those who have gone astray. Right?

But it appears you have failed to teach true Catholic faith and Doctrines of the Church and also failed miserably to lead those who have strayed from the true liturgical heritage of faith and fellowship in the Syro Malabar Church. You yourselves are not convinced in these matters, we suppose, from your dissenting note.

Let me address the key points of your dissent note. I will focus on the most significant aspects, as the letter contains numerous factual errors, unecclesiastical matters, and contradictions to the teachings of the Church.

Dear Excellencies from Ernakulam, where were you for the past 24 years? As custodians of the Liturgy and Syro-Malabar Bishops of the Eastern Syriac tradition, why did you fail to provide proper and adequate catechesis to your family members and faithful? Are you trying to deceive us? Are you unaware that the decision to unify the Holy Qurbana began with the 1999 Synod?

You are requested to review the documents from that time, and you'll see that those among you were expected to educate priests, nuns, and the laity, and to implement the unification according to the Synod's decision as soon as possible.

-3-

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Have any of the bishops who signed the above dissent letter spoken a single word to enlighten the faithful during these 24 years?

Didn't you read the letter from Pope Francis to the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese? *He explicitly and prophetically wrote, as the Vicar of Christ, "Do not sow the wind and reap the whirlwind."*

Why did you, (dissenting bishops)—including you five and those behind the scenes, close your eyes and ears to his words?

stated in Hosea 8:7, you are now reaping the whirlwind. The Word of God in Jeremiah 30:23 warns that this whirlwind will strike those, and their supporters, and their families if they do not repent and return.*

Dear five and those behind the scenes, please be informed that the faithful are more aware and knowledgeable than you might assume they are. They know what a Bishop ought to be.

Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), Canon 178: stipulates, "Bishops, as successors of the apostles, exercise in the churches entrusted to them the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing."

Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), Canon 199 §1: "A bishop is to teach and illustrate to the faithful, in the name of Christ, the doctrines of faith and morals."

Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO), Canon 201 §1: "A bishop, in exercising his office, is to foster and safeguard the unity of the universal Church."

Your actions are inconsistent with these fundamental responsibilities, thereby undermining your legitimacy as true Bishops of the Catholic Church.

Dear Excellencies, in light of the Pope's two specific letters and one explicit video message addressing this matter, it is evident that His Holiness has provided clear guidance and ample opportunity for dialogue and resolution.

You express consolation at the Pope's tone and his call for dialogue to safeguard unity, yet your actions have not aligned with this directive.

Despite having the accountability, as members of the synod, to collectively address this issue

-4-

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and propose a viable solution, you have neither offered constructive opinions nor sought a settlement. Instead, you support division in the Church.

The claim that a serious circular was issued without the synod's opinion is misleading. The directives from the Holy Father are binding and were not merely suggestions open for debate. The responsibility to adhere to and implement these directives rests on you as Bishops.

Moreover, it is disingenuous to now lament the lack of a synodal decision when there has been a consistent failure on your part to engage meaningfully in the process.

The circular issued by the Major Archbishop and the Apostolic Administrator is a reflection of the Pope's clear instructions, meant to uphold the unity and integrity of the Church.

Your Excellencies, the statements you have made in the dissent note, reflect a profound misunderstanding of both canonical law and the authority of the Supreme Pontiff.

While it is true that the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) does not envisage automatic excommunication (*Latae sententiae*) in the same manner as the Roman Catholic Church, it is essential to recognize the unique authority vested in the Pope. (CCEO), c. 43:

This canon underscores the Pope's supreme authority over all matters of faith, discipline, and governance within the Church. His decisions are not subject to alteration by any other ecclesiastical authority, including the *Signatura Apostolica* or any synodal body.

The decisions conveyed through the circular issued by the Major Archbishop and the Apostolic Administrator are rooted in these fundamental principles. They aim to preserve the unity and integrity of the Church's liturgical practice, as mandated by the Holy See.

The Role of Excommunication

Excommunication, while a severe measure, is not a concept eradicated by the Second Vatican Council. Instead, it is a disciplinary action meant to protect the integrity of the Church and guide those in error back to the fold. The Pope retains the right to enforce such measures when necessary for the greater good of the Church.

Your reference to *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* (Art. 2) must be understood in the context of safeguarding the sanctity of the sacraments and the ecclesial community. The Holy Father's directives in this matter are consistent with his role as the guardian of the Church's unity and doctrine.

The Supreme Pontiff possesses the authority to bypass or suspend canonical provisions if he

-5-

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deems it necessary for the Church's welfare. This prerogative underscores his ultimate responsibility for maintaining ecclesiastical order and unity.

Your queries and objections appear to stem from a selective interpretation of canon law and underestimation of the Pope's supreme authority. It is imperative to acknowledge that the directives issued are not mere suggestions but binding decisions from the highest ecclesiastical authority.

Your Excellencies, it is troubling to see how lightly you have interpreted the directives of the Holy Father.

Your argument that the current issues revolve around a mere rubric downplays the gravity of the situation and the extensive efforts that have been made to resolve it over the past many years.

Pope Francis has directly addressed this matter multiple times, emphasizing the need for unity and obedience. His directives are not mere suggestions, but authoritative decisions aimed at preserving the integrity and unity of the Church.

The decision to unify the mode of Holy Qurbana dates back to the Synod of 1999. Over the past 24 years, there have been numerous attempts to educate and catechise the faithful on this matter. The resistance from a segment of the clergy and laity, particularly from the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, has persisted despite these efforts. This historical context shows that the issue is not trivial but deeply rooted in a lack of adherence to ecclesiastical authority.

While ecclesiastical sanctions for penal actions are indeed meant to be medicinal, they also serve as necessary measures to preserve the sanctity and unity of the Church. The persistent disobedience and dissent among certain clergy and laity in Ernakulam-Angamaly have necessitated stronger disciplinary measures. The aim is not to punish but to bring about repentance and reconciliation. Why they are not able to do it?

benevolence involves guiding the faithful towards unity and obedience to the Church's teachings. Allowing persistent disobedience under the guise of benevolence undermines the Church's authority and leads to greater division. The role of a good pastor is not only to be kind but also to uphold the doctrines and disciplines of the Church for the spiritual well-being of the faithful.*

*The resistance to implementing the rubric as decided by the Synod and the Holy See has caused confusion and division in the global Syro Malabar Church. This ongoing dissent is not a simple matter of conscience but a significant disruption to the unity of the Church. As bishops, it is your duty to lead by example in obedience and unity, rather than sowing seeds of discord. The medicinal character of penal sanction is indeed important. However, when repeated efforts to correct disobedience through dialogue and education fail, more stringent measures become

-6-

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necessary. The aim remains the same: to heal the division and restore unity within the Church.

Your Excellencies, your mention about the dissent of 12 bishops, all from the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, represents a very small minority within the broader Syro-Malabar Church. This group has repeatedly challenged the traditions and liturgical heritage of our 2000-year-old Church. The Syro-Malabar Church is unique as it is the only autonomous sui iuris Eastern Church that has remained united with the Catholic Church throughout its history. Other Eastern churches have either reconciled or reunited with Rome later. This historical context underscores the importance of preserving our liturgical heritage.

Pope Francis, in his address on May 13, emphasized the importance of fostering our great heritage according to the teachings of the Catholic Church and the Vatican Council.

Despite this clear directive, you continue to align with dissident priests from Ernakulam-Angamaly, whose main aim appears to be undermining the Syro-Malabar Church and its Synod. This behavior suggests a hidden agenda to diminish the Synod's powers and the Major Archbishop's authority by creating issues and portraying the Synod as incapable of maintaining its sui iuris status. You seem to be, in collusion with the dissidents, want to suppress the Synod and have the Vatican take over full administration.

The decision to unify the mode of Holy Qurbana, made in the 1999 Synod, was aimed at preserving liturgical unity and integrity. Your repeated warnings and dissent notes were considered, but the Synod, guided by the Holy Spirit, moved forward with its decision to safeguard the Church's unity. The claim that uniformity comes at the cost of unity is misleading. True unity in the Church is achieved through obedience to its teachings and authorities, not by allowing persistent dissent.

The assertion that the current measures will lead to an erosion of faith and a severe law-and-order situation is unfounded and alarmist.

The goal of the Synod and the Major Archbishop is to restore unity and discipline within the Church, not to create division. The faithful have a right to a unified and reverent liturgical celebration that honours our rich heritage. As bishops, your primary responsibility is to lead the faithful in obedience to the Church's teachings and authorities, not to sow discord.

Further, your arguments attempt to obscure the real issues by introducing irrelevant factors like the land scam is highly dubious.

This is a deflection from the core matter of disobedience and dissent regarding the liturgical unification. The matter of the land scam has been settled, with the highest court in Rome, the Apostolic Signatura, finding Cardinal George Alencherry not guilty. It is disingenuous and

-7-

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misleading to bring this up now to justify your resistance.

*The Signatura Apostolica called for restitution by selling the properties that were appropriated as security for the loss. However, it is you bishops, along with the dissident priests, who have prevented the sale of these properties for your own selfish business and vested interests, aiming to crucify and humiliate the former Major Archbishop Cardinal Alencherry.

Your Excellencies, your insinuations suggest a plot to fragment the Church and establish a schismatic entity, which deeply concerns the faithful.

The dismissal of Archbishop Antony Kariyil was a result of rebellion and disobedience, and your rhetoric seems to support such dissent rather than fostering unity. It raises the alarming possibility that you intend to form a new church outside the Catholic Church, taking dissident priests with you. This suspicion is further fueled by the potential for you to continue a non-Catholic episcopal ministry and ordain dissident priests like Fr. Mundadan.

The faithful are not blind to these tactics. Your actions and statements have only fueled suspicion that there is a hidden agenda to undermine the Syro-Malabar Church's unity and heritage. Instead of addressing the core issues of obedience and unity, you attempt to divert attention with baseless accusations.

This kind of rhetoric suggests that your ultimate aim may be to disrupt and divide the Church, potentially leading to a schism.

The faithful deserve better leadership that aligns with the teachings of the Church and the directives of the Holy Father.

I want to conclude my counter reply with the following questions to the Five Bishops as well as to the Synod ?

In the past, when the head of the Church was publicly humiliated, where were you? We have ample evidence proving that Mrs. Anna Shiby, a close associate of the dissident priests and a member of the radical group AMT, burned an effigy of Cardinal Alencherry. The Cardinal's Sash used for the effigy was reportedly provided by then Auxiliary Bishop. This incident was witnessed by a curia member.

Why did you remain silent when the effigies of Cardinal Alencherry, the head of the Church, and Cardinal Sandri, the prefect of the Eastern Churches, were burned by the dissident priests at the Renewal Centre by AMT goons in March 2022?

-8-

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Where was your voice when forged and fake documents were created against the Major Archbishop and the Latin Bishops by these dissident priests?

You pretended not to notice when dissident priests and AMT goons insulted Apostolic Administrator Mar Andrews.

Why did you remain quiet when Papal Delegate Archbishop Cyril Vasil was nearly manhandled and had bottles thrown at him?

What was your response when Fr. Antony Narikulam, the brother of Bishop Ephrem Narikulam, led 33 priests in abusing the Eucharistic liturgy for 16 hours through the act of simulating the Eucharist in the Major Archbishop's Cathedral Basilica?

Your silence during these instances is deafening and speaks volumes about your commitment to the Church's unity and integrity.

Even when the ordination of some deacons by an Archbishop was done without the Laying on of Hands, you pretended not to know anything. Now that the letter from the so-called Ernakulam Bishops has come out, you are showing your usual indifference.

I will conclude by posing a crucial question to the Major Archbishop and the Synod Fathers: Why was the dissent note discussed when it was not part of the original agenda? Who authorized this discussion? Was it conducted with the knowledge and permission of the Holy See and the Papal Delegate?

Thank You

In Christ I remain

Reji Elamatha
President - MTNS
Date: 21/06/2024



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