

By the grace of God and by the approval of the Holy See
from the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos

Blessings

to the Metropolitan-Archbishop, Metropolitans, Coadjutors,
Rambans.

Priests, Deacons, Religious and the Faithful



Prot. No.CPL 3/2015

Praise be to the Triune God,
self-existent, almighty, eternal and consubstantial!

**Subject: The Post Centenary Silver Jubilee (125th year) of
the birth of the Yakob Mar Theophilos of
venerable memory**

Most Rev. Metropolitans, Rev. Coadjutors, Rambans,
Priests, Deacons, Religious and the beloved Faithful in Christ!

Prayerful greetings and blessings of the Easter season!

On 27 June 2015, we celebrate the 59th Feast of
Commemoration of the saintly Metropolitan Yakob Mar
Theophilos, the first Metropolitan of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla,
who in devotion to God and in zeal, toiled for the formation
and growth of the Reunion Movement, as the right-hand man
of the Servant of God Metropolitan Mar Ivanios, in the Post

Centenary Silver Jubilee Year of his birth. The
'*Kochuthirumeni*' who was known as the 'Angel-like Bishop'
was accepted and revered as a saint. The counsel, prayer and
tapas of Bishop Mar Theophilos were a strong support for
Metropolitan Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios to fashion
and nurture the Bethany *Sanyasa* Movements, the Malankara
Reunion Movement and the Malankara Syrian Catholic
Hierarchy. May the Post Centenary Silver Jubilee Year of the
birth and the Feast of Commemoration of the venerable Prelate
who by the sanctity of his life illumined the face of the
Malankara Syrian Catholic Church be an occasion to imbibe
the virtues that shone forth in him and to give thanks to God!

Bishop Yakob Mar Theophilos was born on Thursday,
26 February 1981, as the first-born son of Mr Abraham
Tharakan and Ms Achamma of Olassa Kalapurackal family, an
offshoot of Cherppunkal Mattathil Family. On Monday, 16
March 1891, at the Church of Kallunkathara Rev. Fr Ouseph
Chalassery baptised and anointed the child with Holy Myron
giving him the name Yakob. Rev. Fr Mathutharakan
Kalapurackal was the Godfather. He learned the alphabets from
the nearby *Asankalari*. For elementary education he was sent to
the Primary School Olassa. He continued his education at the
MD Seminary Kottayam. He was appointed a teacher in his
alma mater MD Seminary from where he meritoriously
completed matriculation. He, who was a model of devotion to
God, character, punctuality and teaching skills, was pleasing to
all and revered by them. At that time, he lived with Fr PT
Geevarghese Panickaruveetil, who was the Principal of MD
Seminary.

Considering the special interest and request of the
parishners of Olassa, Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar

Divannasios Vattasseril ordained Yakob a Deacon. Thereafter, he continued teaching in MD Seminary and the formation to priesthood under MA Achan. At that time, for the uplift of the Malankara Nazrani Community, MA Achan decided to accept the invitation to be a Professor in Serampore College. MA Achan decided to resign from the post of the Principal of MD Seminary and accepted the professorship in Serampore College as it would pave the way to educate some Priests and Deacons there. Deacon Yakob who knew the mind of MA Achan, his Guru, gave up teaching at MD Seminary and went to Serampore. He passed Intermediate from the Serampore College and joined the Honours' stream. While at Serampore College as a Professor, MA Achan, gathered together the Deacons interested in *sanyasa* and began to lead a monastic life and prepared for founding an Ashram. When MA Achan resigned from Serampore College and returned to his native place for establishing the Ashram, Deacon Yakob also discontinued his studies for Honours and came back to join the Ashram together with the Guru. Deacon Yakob was with Fr PT Geevarghese in erecting the Ashram, in codifying its rules and to undergo formation to initiate the Bethany Ashram Movement. Deacon Yakob who continued his priestly formation again was ordained Priest in 1924. The Superior of the Ashram appointed him the first Guru of the Ashram. On 27 December 1927 Fr Yakob made the *mahatvrita* (solemn vows) and became a Ramban. The Holy Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Church convoked on 19 December 1928 decided to ordain Rt Rev. Ramban Yakob as the Episcopo of Bethany and on 14 February 1929 His Holiness Geevarghese Baslios I Catholicos ordained him Bishop with the name Theophilos. Thereafter, Mar Ivanios, the Metropolitan of Bethany entrusted

him the (supervision of) Bethany Churches. He exercised this ministry residing at the Bethany Bishop's House.

On 20 September 1930, at the Bishop's House in Kollam, together with Metropolitan Mar Ivanios, Bishop Mar Theophilos also reunited and came into communion with the Universal Catholic Church. The canonical provision of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Hierarchy was done on 11 June 1932. On Monday, 6 November 1933 the Eparchy of Tiruvalla came into existence canonically. Bishop Yakob Mar Theophilos was enthroned as its first Bishop. He began the administration of the Eparchy residing at the rented house 'Kuzhiyil Veedu' situated at the east of St John's Metropolitan Cathedral and belonging to Kuttan Pilla, a Hindu friend. Indeed! A true disciple of Jesus the Lord who was born in a manger, who slept on the way side, who travelled by the boat of Peter, who died on the wooden cross erected between heaven and earth and who was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to someone! The ministry of the Gospel of Reunion that began in a rented house, without an inch of land or a saving of a Rupee began to produce fruits of thirty, sixty and hundred fold. The Lord made Bishop Mar Theophilos, 'his devotee' an instrument, to lay firm foundation for the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church in Central Travancore. Thousands got converted and received the Gospel and reunited and came into communion with the Universal Church. The foresight he had and the leadership he gave to erect parishes and to establish churches for them, to make the service of priests available to them, to construct the administrative centre for the Eparchy, to make canonical provisions in accordance with Canon Law, to codify the statutes of Eparchial administration, to establish ashrams, to form the

'*Viswasasakshyasangham*' the association of the Laity for the formation of missionaries, a precursor of today's MCA, etc. are part of history. Even though his health condition did not permit him to give a long spell of leadership, the land where the present St John's Metropolitan Cathedral is situated, the first Cathedral, the land where the Pushpagiri Medical College and other institutions are situated, the Cherupushpagiri, the Bishop's House and the Minor Seminary for priestly formation, the land where the Bethany Ashram Tiruvalla is now situated and the Holy Redeemer's Monastery constructed there, the churches at Thottabagam, Vennikulam and Ayroor with sufficient land and other conveniences that can hold the number of faithful that increased manifold times thereafter, the St Joseph's Printing House Tiruvalla still hold in limelight the era of his ministry. The life of discipline and order of prayer and *tapas* that he led as he withdrew from active ministry due to ill health is a spiritual source for the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church even today. The 'Angel-like Bishop' went to his eternal abode on Wednesday, 27 June 1956. His mortal remains were entombed in St John's Cathedral Tiruvalla. Then on, many pilgrimage to his tomb and receive blessings. I am happy to testify my personal experience that his intercessory power is strong.

Self-sanctification and the renewal of the Church were the aims of Bishop Mar Theophilos who followed his Guru Metropolitan Mar Ivanios like a shadow. He aspired to stay always close to Mar Ivanios, his Guru. When Mar Ivanios resigned as Principal of MD Seminary Mar Theophilos gave up teaching and followed Mar Ivanios to Serampore; when Mar Ivanios returned to the native place giving up professorship in Serampore Mar Theophilos followed him giving up his studies

for Honours; when Mar Ivanios went to Perunadu to found Bethany Ashram Mar Theophilos followed him; when Mar Ivanios came off Mundanmala planning reunion with the Catholic Church seeking ecclesial perfection they were together; together they proceeded to Bishop's House Kollam; on establishing the Hierarchy of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church, he was with Mar Ivanios as Suffragan Bishop. Mar Theophilos had as much relationship, devotion and obedience to Mar Ivanios as Apostle Mar Thomas, who said, "Let us go and die with him" (Jn 11:16), had towards his Guru.

Mar Theophilos was committed to serve under the pastoral leadership of Metropolitan Mar Ivanios and in accordance with the traditions of the Eastern Churches when the Malankara Syrian Catholic Hierarchy was established with the Archieparchy of Trivandrum and the Eparchy of Tiruvalla. His wish was to lead the ecclesial unit committed to his care according to the vision of Mar Ivanios, the learned theologian and prophet of his time. In the liturgy of priestly ordination in the Malankara Church, the celebrant gives a counsel to the candidate: "... with them, you shall hold on to the High Priest, the Pope of Rome, the successor and representative of Peter, the Head of the Apostles and to me." Mar Theophilos in his life followed literally this counsel. This relationship was the root cause of the growth and success of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church at its beginning. Today too, the strength of our Church is the strong bond of relationship and communion with the Father and Head of our Church and among the Most Reverend Metropolitan, Reverend Priests, Religious and the People of God.

The virtues of simplicity, humility, obedience, mercy and prayer life shone forth in Mar Theophilos. Even when

others considered him ‘Angel-like’, Mar Theophilos, like St Paul the Apostle, who considered him as the “very least of all the saints” (Eph 3:8) and like David who considered himself as insignificant (Psalms 22:6) humbled himself and respected others as greater than him. Bishop Yakob Mar Theophilos had in his life the same thought of our ancestor Jacob, “I am not worthy of the least of the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant” (Gen 32:10). Mar Theophilos always acted according to the will and direction of his Guru and gave respect to him.

He specially took care to be simple and to be in solidarity with the poor and the least. From the inception of the Eparchy of Tiruvalla he gave emphasis not only to reunion but also to the preaching of the Gospel and the service of conversion. He was vigilant to go down to the marginalised and the oppressed of the society and cared to commune them with the Church, a communion in the love of Christ. He took care to appoint them as his helpers and collaborators.

It is divine providence that the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla, which Mar Theophilos planted and watered, is hosting the 85th Reunion Anniversary Celebrations in the year in which we celebrate the Post Centenary Silver Jubilee of his birth and the Diamond Jubilee of his death. It is very meaningful that the main venue of the celebration is the soil of Thirumoolapuram, where Metropolitan-Archbishop Mar Ivanios did *tapas* and prayed with tears.

We shall be grateful to God for all the blessings He showered upon the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church, especially on the Archieparchy of Tiruvalla through Bishop Mar Theophilos of venerable memory. May the example of the life of the saintly Mar Theophilos give us a living directive and

inspiration! We shall continue to take refuge in the blessings and intercession of our beloved father in faith Mar Theophilos.

May all these be fulfilled through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and the College of Apostles, especially of our Father and Apostle St. Thomas and all the saints. Amen

Your humble servant in the Lord

Sd/-

✠ Baselios Cardinal Cleemis
The Major Archbishop-
Catholicos
of the Syro-Malankara Catholic
Church

20.05.2015
Catholicate Centre
Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram

Our Father in heaven...

NB: Read this pastoral letter on the forthcoming Sunday during the Holy *Qurbano* in all our parishes, mission centres and centres of worship and must be published in all our publications/Media.