



EPARCHY OF MISSISSAUGA

For the Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada

For The Glory of God

October 25, 2019

Port. No. 160/2019

Circular on the Experiences of the *Ad Limina* Visit 2019

Dear Rev. Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Prayerful greetings,

Thank you very much for your prayers for my journey to Rome for *Ad limina* visit. I write this letter to give you some information on my *ad limina* visit.

1. ***Ad limina Apostolorum***: This Latin expression verbally means visit towards the thresholds of Apostles. The spiritual implication is to venerate the tomb of Apostles Peter and Paul and to pay respectful homage to the Holy Father as the successor of Apostle Peter. This visit is obliged to be done once in five years and therefore also called *quiquennial* visit. 48 Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church made their *Ad limina* visit to Rome from 3 -14 October 2019. On Thursday, 3 October *Ad limina* visit of Syro-Malabar Bishops was formally inaugurated with the celebration of the Holy Qurbana on the tomb of Apostles Peter and Paul at 8.15 am. His Beatitude Major Archbishop George Cardinal Alencherry was the principal celebrant and our Bishops concelebrated with him. Afterwards we visited the Tomb of the Apostles and prayed for our Dioceses and for the Church. On the following days we celebrated Holy Qurbana in John Lateran Basilica (Tuesday 8 October), St. Paul's Basilica (Friday, 11 October) and Mary Major Basilica (12 October).

2. **Meeting with the Holy Father**: On 03rd October, after the Holy Qurbana celebrated on the tomb of St. Peter, we moved to the Papal palace to visit the Holy Father Pope Francis. We were received in the traditional Clementine Hall by 10.00 am. The officials gave us necessary information and instructions regarding the meeting with the Holy Father. By 10.30 am Holy Father Pope Francis came to the Hall. Our Major Archbishop greeted him with a shawl and presented him with a memento. He then introduced each Bishop to the Holy Father. Holy Father welcomed us warmly and explained the procedures of the meeting. This meeting was designed so informal way, like a family gathering where the family members sitting with their own Father. It was a heart to heart opening. We were allowed to ask anything, doubts, clarifications, criticisms and suggestions. Holy Father created an atmosphere of family and familiarity, fraternity and friendliness. Our Major Archbishop made a brief introduction about our Church, our strength and weakness, our dreams and horizons for the future. He expressed our gratitude to Holy Father in providing provisions outside India such as Chicago, Melbourne, Mississauga and Grate Britten and inside India such as Hosur and Shamshabad (the rest of India). He also promised our obedience and co-operation to

the Holy Father and Holy See. Archbishop Mathew Moolakatt was suggested to be moderator for the session. Holy Father spoke in Italian and his Secretary translated it to English. We could share our views in any language and secretary will translate to Italian. All sorts of interventions came in. There were doubts, clarifications, requests and suggestions. Holy Father opened his mind after each intervention. He was frank and sincere in responding to our interventions. He was so considerate to our demands and suggestions. We felt that he was teaching us how we can be more listening to our people. We were taken up his pedagogy of dialogue. He was putting into our hearts gifts of love, trust, mutual confidence, respect, affection and attachment. He created in our hearts the conviction that we all together form one Church of Christ. We experienced the theory of communion and co-responsibility in praxis. When we came out of the hall we had the satisfaction that we are not outsiders but part and parcel of one family. After the discussions, Holy Father paused for photos and gifted us rosaries. The meeting was over by 12.45 noon.

3. **Visit to the different Offices of Holy See:** Regarding the pastoral administration of the Holy See, there are five categories of Offices. In connection with the *Ad limina* visit, a discussion between bishops and the officials of these offices is customary. The purpose is to bring forth to the notice of concerned departments our pastoral context, concerns and issues. From the concerned office, they will update us their policies and programs. The Secretariat of State which co-ordinates all other departments is the most important of all. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State is the head of this Department. It is obligatory that all the bishops are to be present for the discussion with Secretary of State. All the Bishops visited this office on Saturday 5 October in the morning. The second category is various Congregations. Each of the 9 Congregations is headed by a Cardinal Prefect. Congregation for Divine Faith is the congregation that takes cares of matters regarding Faith and Morals. All Our bishops in two groups have gone there for discussions with them on 7th October in the morning. Our Church comes mainly under the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. All our bishops were invited to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches on Tuesday 8 October. This meeting was chaired by Cardinal Prefect Leonardo Sandri and assisted by Archbishop Cyril Vasil SJ. It was more in the style of discussions. This meeting was held in the auditorium of Casa Bonus Pastor and concluded with Lunch. We have visited all other Congregations according to its nature and our need. The third group departments are called Dicasteries. The fourth group of offices take care of judicial matters and they are called the Tribunals. The last category was Pontifical Councils. These visits to the Offices of the Holy See have really given us an updating the pastoral agenda of the Holy See and an on-going formation of their pastoral pedagogy.

4. **The Silver Jubilee celebration of the Syro-Malabar community in Rome:** There are around 6000 Syro-Malabar Faithful scattered in Rome. It was in 1994 December this Migrant community was organized under a Parish by the Archdiocese of Rome. The Silver Jubilee celebration was held in Divino Amore Marian Pilgrim Church on Sunday 6 October. There was a solemn Holy Qurbana by Major Archbishop and in which all the Bishops and number of priests from our community concelebrated. There was an agape thereafter. The public meeting was



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inaugurated by Archbishop Cyril Vasil SJ. The cultural program done by the community was an artistic extravaganza.

5. **Visit to *Collegio Damasceno*:** There are around 70 priests from our Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches, who are doing their ecclesiastical studies in Rome, staying in *Collegio Damasceno*. We the Bishops were accorded with a reception in *Collegio Damasceno*. On Monday 7 October there was a Holy Qurbana celebrated by the Major Archbishop and all other Bishops in the college, followed by a solemn Dinner. Rev.Fr. Varghese Kurisuthara OCD Rector welcomed all of us.

6. **Pilgrimage to Assisi:** On Thursday 10 October all the Bishops had gone on a pilgrimage to Assisi. We have visited the tombs of St. Francis and St. Clare and all other important historical centres of Assisi. It was an emotional as well as an experiential pilgrimage for all the Bishops.

7. **The Blessing of *Domus Mar Thoma*:** On 12th October Saturday, the long cherished dream of a Procura for the Syro-Malabar Church in Rome came realized. It is an office of Co-ordination of Syro-Malabar Church in Rome. It is a common house for all the Dioceses and Religious in Rome for their contact with the Holy See. It will work as a reference point and liaison office in Vatican. The Procurator of the Church Bishop Stephen Chirapanath is a connecting link for our Church to the Holy See. The Blessing ceremony started with Holy Qurbana celebrated by all the Bishops with the Major Archbishop at 9.30 am. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches blessed the new house in the presence of our Major Archbishop and all the Bishops of our Church. There was a long raw of VIPs present on the occasion.

8. **Reception to Bishops by Sri. Sibi George, Indian Ambassador to Vatican:** There is diplomatic relations between India and Vatican. Sri. Sibi George is the Indian Ambassador of India for Vatican. Ambassador hosted a dinner to all the Bishops on Saturday 12th October. It was attended by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sri. V. Muralidharan and Sri. T.N. Prathapan, M.P. from Trichur.

9. **Canonization of Blessed Mariam Thresia:** On Saturday 12 October, the Indian community held a Night Vigil in the Basilica of Maria Maggiore in preparation to the Canonization of Blessed Mariam Thresia. The vigil prayer was presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the congregation for the cause of Saints. On Sunday, 13 October at 10.00 am was the Canonization ceremony, together with other four Saints. St. Peter's Square was packed with an enthusiastic gathering of the faithful from India. The people from Kerala thronged and gladly danced with Our National Flag and the photo of St. Mariam Thresia in the St. Peter's Square. The new saints were introduced by the prefect of the Congregation for the cause of Saints and he requested the Holy Father to include them in the list of Saints of the Catholic Church. Holy Father Pope Francis accepted the request along with the thunderous clapping of the people of God and declared all the five including Blessed Mariam Thresia in the list of saints. Later the litany of all

saints was sung in which the names of the new saints were included. Thanks giving Holy Mass was celebrated by the Holy Father together with almost 50 Cardinals, more than 300 Bishops and thousands of priests and the religious. It was really a proud moment for all from India most especially the large crowd of Holy Family Sisters and hundreds of Syro-Malabar pilgrims present in the square. On the next day i.e. Monday 14th October there was a thanksgiving Holy Qurbana celebrated in the Basilica of St. Anastasia, Rome at 10.30 am. It was also attended by a large number of Syro-Malabar faithful who had gathered for the canonization of St. Mariam Thresia.

10. **Conclusion:** The *Ad limina* visit was a unique spiritual experience for all of us. We were refreshed spiritually and anointed by a new Pentecost. We felt the strength and solidarity, we belong to an Apostolic Church united to the See of St. Peter through the Holy Father and different dicasteries of Holy See. All these days of pilgrimage, in a very special way, I have remembered our Diocese of Mississauga and all of you and prayed for all our Fathers, Sisters, children, youngsters and parents.

May God bless you all through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, St. Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church and St. Thomas our Patron.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by a stylized name.

+ Mar Jose Kalluvelil
Bishop of Mississauga

P.S. Please circulate among the faithful for prayers and information.