



A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE EPARCHY OF MAVELIKARA

Heavenly Patroness: Blessed Virgin Mary

Amalagiri Catholic Bishop's House

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Short History

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church has entered a new era with the erection of the new Eparchy of Mavelikara. In consultation with the Holy See, the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Malankara Catholic Church held in November 2006 took the decision to create the Eparchy of Mavelikara to carry out effective pastoral care for the faithful in the north-western part of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum. The Holy Synod proposed Mavelikara, the birthplace of Servant of God Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, the founder and father of the Reunion Movement in the Malankara Church in Kerala, as the See from which the new Eparchy can take its name. His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Baselios Catholicos, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, by the decree Prot. No. 1/2007, made the

formal declaration of the new Eparchy on 01 January 2007 in the Metropolitan Church at Pattom, Trivandrum, in the presence of all the Metropolitans of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. His Grace Joshua Mar Ignathios, the then Auxiliary Bishop and Proto Syncellus of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum, has been appointed the Metropolitan of the new Eparchy of Mavelikara.

The official inauguration of the Eparchy of Mavelikara and the Installation of His Excellency Most Rev. Joshua Mar Ignathios as its first Bishop were held at St Mary's Church, Punnamoodu, Mavelikara on 16 February 2007. The Holy Qurbano was celebrated by the newly elected Major Archbishop-Catholicos and the Installation was officiated by the Administrator of the Church His Grace Most Rev. Dr Geevarghese Mar Divannasios. The Eparchy of Mavelikara comprises of the presbyteral districts of Mavelikara and Kollam and parts of the presbyteral districts of Chengannur and Adoor. This coincides with the civil districts of Alappuzha minus the portions that belong to the Archdiocese of Tiruvalla and parts of the civil districts of Kollam and Pathanamthitta. The patroness of the Eparchy is Mary, the Mother of God.

The Cathedral of the Eparchy is St Mary's Church, Punnamoodu, Mavelikara. Ever since his sacerdotal ordination in 1978, His Grace Joshua Mar Ignathios has been carrying out excellent ministry in the various parishes and mission stations of the Major Archieparchy of Trivandrum. The present Malankara missions and institutions in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, owe much to the vision and commitment of His Grace Joshua Mar Ignathios for their present stature and rapid growth. The Metropolitan has had an excellent academic career including a doctorate in Educational Administration from the Madras University, Tamil Nadu. He is known as an eloquent preacher and powerful speaker and has an admirable command of many languages, including Malayalam, English and Tamil. He is known for his organizational capabilities too. Besides his manifold commitments in his home Eparchy, he serves the Indian Church in his capacity as a member of several commissions of the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference (KCBC) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), including the Labour Commission and Education and Culture Commission of the CBCI. He served the

Church of Kerala as the President of the KCBC from October 2009 -13th December 2010. He was the Chairman of Department of Special schools under the KCBC. At present he is the Chairman of Commission for Vigilance and Harmony, Chairman of the Human rights forum, and Vice Chairman of KCBC commission for Temperance. He serves the Indian Church as the Chairman of Education and Cultural Commission of CBCI. He is the CBCI representative to NEG FIRE (New Education Group- Foundation for Innovation and Research in Education) as the governing board member. He serves the Syro Malankara Catholic Church as the Chairman of Synodal Commissions for Social action and Laity. He is the President of MITHRA trust in Madras. He is also the trust member of Nilackal Ecumenical trust. He serves the general public of Kerala as the Chairman of *Madyavirudhajanakeeyamunnani*. The *Shashtipoorthy* celebration of His Grace was held on 29 January 2010 at Amalagiri. The 125th birth anniversary of Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, Servant of God, was celebrated, on Sunday, 23 September 2007 at Puthiacavu-Mavelikara, the home parish of Archbishop Geevarghes Mar Ivanios. The parish hall of the church at Kallumala was temporarily converted and arrangements were made to use it as the Minor Seminary of the Diocese till the new seminary buildings would be constructed. The blessing and formal inauguration of the minor seminary was on Sunday 03 June 2007. The foundation stone of the new seminary buildings is laid on 8th October 2007 at Kallumala. The new minor seminary building was blessed on 28 January 2012 by His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos, the Major Archbishop of the Malankara Catholic Church in the presence of the Metropolitans of the Malankara Church. The foundation stone of the Amalagiri Bishop's House was laid on 07 June 2007 at Punnamoodu, Mavelikara. A landmark in the history of the Eparchy was the blessing of the new Bishop's House. It was blessed on 29 January 2009 by His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos in the presence of Bishops of various Churches, cultural and political dignitaries, clergy, religious and faithful. The foundation stone of the new office complex for the Social Apostolate of the Eparchy (Chethana Integrated Development Society), was laid on 03 March 2008 and the formal inauguration of Chethana was on 01 May 2010. The official inauguration of the Chethana Training Centre was on 28 November 2013. Yet

another humble initiative of the Eparchy is the *Alphonsa Agadhi Mandiram*, a home for the destitute. The foundation stone of the home for the aged was laid on 19 October 2009 by His Grace Joshua Mar Ignathios and its blessing was on 20th April 2010. The blessing of the foundation stone of St Mary's Cathedral by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI was on 09 September 2009 at Vatican, and the foundation stone for the same was laid by His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos on 29 January 2010. The solemn consecration of the Cathedral was on 19-20 September 2013 by His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos at the gracious presence of Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Salvatore Pennachio, and all Malankara Metropolitans and Metropolitans of Latin and Syro Malabar Churches. The Eparchy of Mavelikara proudly hosted the 83rd Reunion Celebrations which took place on 18-21 September 2013. The solemn Inauguration of the Mar Ivanios Arts and Science College in Mavelikara, the new venture of the Diocese in higher education field, was on 27 July 2015. St. John Maria Vianney Clergy home at Kallumala was blessed on 05th July 2016 by His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis.

Various Christian Churches – the Malankara Orthodox Church, the Jacobite Church, the Marthoma Church and the Church of South India – are present in the jurisdictional area of the new Eparchy and they are carrying out active ministry here. The new Eparchy can definitely strengthen and accelerate the common Christian witness in the region. Promising and at the same time challenging pastoral, ecumenical, educational and socio-economic ministry awaits the new Eparchy. The new Eparchy has excellent scope in her ecumenical apostolate precisely because of the powerful presence of so many Christian denominations in the region. The western coast of the Eparchy, which is also the western coast of the state of Kerala, poses serious challenges to the socio-economic and educational apostolate of the Eparchy as the people in this region need special attention and care. The region demands innovative programmes and the required infrastructure, as several sections of the population lack educational, economic and cultural development. Besides Mavelikara being one of the cultural centres of the state of Kerala, the new Eparchy can hope to make considerable contributions in this regard too. Various Apostolates (Catechetical, Social, Family, Biblical, Laity, Educational, Youth, Ecumenical and

Dialogue, Dalit, Vincent De Paul, Labour, Media and Communications, Jesus Fraternity, and Temperance) organize their ministries in six ecclesiastical districts in order to realize the vision of the Eparchy.