



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS BEATITUDE ISAAC CLEEMIS THOTTUNKA
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF TRIVANDRUM OF THE SYRO-MALANKARS**

*"Redemptoris Mater" Chapel
Monday, 28 May 2007*

*Your Beatitude,
Faithful Brothers and Sisters,
Those of the Syro-Malankara Synod,*

I am pleased to welcome you on your first visit to Rome since your election as Major Archbishop of the beloved Catholic Syro-Malankara Church. I am most grateful to Your Beatitude for your affectionate and respectful greetings, and I thank you sincerely for your eager wish to “see Peter” (cf. *Gal* 1:18). Together let us give thanks to God for this providential opportunity to confirm that bond of communion with the See of Rome of which your community is justly proud.

My thoughts turn to the distinguished Pastors that the Holy Spirit has called forth to lead your people to rediscover unity with Peter’s Successor. I think especially of Mar Ivannios, who in 1930 solemnly professed the Catholic faith, and set out generously upon an ecclesial path rich in blessings. This made it possible for my predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, to raise the Syro-Malankara Church to the level of a Major Archbishopric in February 2005. The Venerable Cyril Mar Baselios, Metropolitan *sui juris* of Trivandrum of the Syro-Malankars, thus became your first Major Archbishop. In this capacity, he travelled to Rome to represent the Malankara community, as the Church and the world took leave of that beloved Pontiff, who had since been called to the Father’s House. Soon afterwards, Mar Baselios himself was to follow him. Today we sense the closeness of these unforgettable Pastors, as the Syro-Malankara Church continues her generous mission, filled with confidence in God’s grace.

The precious heritage of your ecclesial tradition was placed in the hands of Your Beatitude

through the act of canonical election conducted by the Fathers of the Syro-Malankara Synod. May the Lord grant you an abundance of spiritual gifts so that this heritage may continue to bear much fruit, according to the Lord's will.

As Peter's Successor, I happily confirmed the Synod's decision. Now the universal Church, together with all those who belong to your ecclesial tradition, is counting upon Your Beatitude to ensure that the Malankara community can proceed along a twofold path. On the one hand, through faithfulness to the Apostolic See you will always participate fully in the universal breath of the one Church of Christ; on the other hand your fidelity to the specifically Eastern features of your tradition will enable the whole Church to benefit from what in his manifold wisdom "the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (cf. *Rev 2:7 et passim*).

In your capacity as Head and Shepherd of the Syro-Malankara Church, Your Beatitude has been entrusted with the mission of leading and sustaining the Christian witness and ecclesial life of the faithful of that noble Church throughout the vast Indian Sub-Continent and the other regions where Syro-Malankara Catholics are found. At the same time you are seeking to address the major challenges that present themselves at the start of this Third Christian Millennium. Now is a time of new evangelization, a time of constantly renewed and convinced dialogue with all our brothers and sisters who share our Christian faith, a time of respectful and fruitful encounter between religions and cultures for the good of all, and especially the poorest of the poor. Our commitment to evangelization needs to be constantly renewed, as we strive to build peace, in justice and solidarity, for the whole human family. May you always draw strength from the Lord and from the collegial support of your Brother Bishops —the members of the Synod. Please assure them of my prayers and convey my special greetings to them on the happy occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Syro-Malankara hierarchy.

We are still breathing the atmosphere of Pentecost and we wish to linger with the Holy Mother of God and the Apostles in the Upper Room of Jerusalem, docile to the action of the Spirit. To the Holy Virgin I entrust my prayers for Your Beatitude and for the whole Syro-Malankara Church, asking that the gift of the Spirit may continue to nourish and strengthen you as you bear witness to the Gospel of Christ. With these sentiments I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, my Venerable Brother, and to all the sons and daughters of the Syro-Malankara Church.

Thank you, God bless you.

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