

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

History of societies, nations, religions and Churches is also shaped by prophetic and charismatic persons, who at critical times offered able leadership and effective guidance, enlightening and inspiring their adherents with right perspective and ideological paradigm. The scientific progress, economic development, socio-cultural advancement and spiritual heritage which we enjoy today are the fruits of the strenuous efforts of our several farsighted ancestors, who dedicated themselves to study, research, socio-cultural revolution or heroic religious life, even risking their own lives and challenging unjust systems and establishments.

Venerable Mar Thomas Kurialacherry is one of such charismatic persons who immensely contributed to the spiritual and cultural progress of the Syro-Malabar Church and civil society through his extraordinary life, relentless activities and heroic practice of virtues. This is all the more evident from the fact that on 2 April 2011 Pope Benedict XVI officially acknowledged that Mar Thomas Kurialacherry had exercised the Christian virtues in a heroic degree during his lifetime. This means that he was fully imbued with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (love of God and love of neighbour) as well as the cardinal virtues, also called moral virtues, namely prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, and those connected with them.¹

This papal act was the culmination of the prescribed canonical procedures in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. After a thorough study of the *Positio super virtutibus*, the Promoter of Faith and eight theological consultants of the

¹ Cf. Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, Prot. N. 1520, Changanacherren., Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Thomae Kurialacherry (1873-1925), *Decretum super virtutibus*, Roma 2011.

Congregation in the meeting held on 26 March 2010,² and then the cardinals and bishops (members of the Dicastery) in the ordinary session of 15 February 2011 unanimously recognized Kurialacherry's heroic practice of all Christian virtues.³

The scope of this small book is only to highlight some traits of his saintly personality as a model of authentic Christian life for the emulation of the people of God and to evaluate some relevant themes, succinctly expounding his vision and mission. In this work, based mainly on original sources, as far as possible we will permit Kurialacherry himself to articulate his ideas through the copious citation of his writings.

In the first chapter the biographical profile of Kurialacherry is presented against the ecclesial and socio-cultural background of his time. The second chapter outlines his Eucharistic vision, the pivot on which his whole life turned and the centre on which all his ideas converged. In this chapter we also consider how the Adoration Congregation continues to live the same Eucharistic spirituality, bequeathed to it by the founder. The third chapter, devoted to the motto of Kurialacherry: "Renew everything in Christ", explores the design and main activities of Kurialacherry for the profound renewal of Christian community and the society at large. The book ends with a general conclusion, which provides a synthesis of the main themes considered in the three chapters.

² Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, Prot. N. 1520, Changanacherrensis, Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Thomae Kurialacherry (1873-1925), *Relatio et Vota*, Roma 2010.

³ Cf. Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Decretum super virtutibus*, 5.

Chapter One
VENERABLE KURIALACHERRY'S
BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE: THE COURSE OF A
SAINTLY LIFE

Introduction

The greatness of the life and activities of a person can be correctly understood, only if it is evaluated in the light of the socio-cultural and religious circumstances in which he lived. In this chapter, first we provide some indications about the ecclesial, liturgical and spiritual situation in Kerala up to the time of birth of Venerable Kurialacherry. Historical and ecclesial events concomitant with the course of his life will be indicated at the appropriate place, in so far as it is necessary. The main scope of this chapter is to attempt a succinct articulation of his biographical profile, especially highlighting those aspects of his multifarious personality which could provide the Christian faithful of our time with an authentic model of Christian life and sanctity.

1. The Church into Which Kurialacherry Was Born

According to the vigorous, living and constant tradition, the Apostle Thomas, who confirmed his faith in the Risen Lord proclaiming him Lord and God (*Jn 20: 28*), reached South India in the middle of the first century and disseminated the Christian faith there. He converted several thousands to Christ and founded seven Christian communities, which later developed as the Church of St Thomas Christians.

Like the other apostles, according to tradition St Thomas also ordained some sacred ministers to succeed him in the Christian communities that he had established. Later,

however, for various historical, ecclesiastical and canonical reasons and for several centuries, the St Thomas Christians had to depend on the catholicos-patriarch of the Church of the East in the Persian Empire for the appointment and consecration of bishops. Most probably from the fourth century onwards bishops came from the Church of the East, which also basically shared the same Thomistic liturgical and spiritual heritage.

With the Synod of Diamper in 1599 the hierarchical relationship of the Church of St Thomas Christians with the patriarch of the Church of the East was terminated and Latin jurisdiction under the Portuguese Patronage was imposed upon the archdiocese of Cranganore (Angamaly). The government of the Latin Jesuit bishops of the Patronage led to the *Coonan* Cross Oath (oath at the slant Cross) in 1653 and the subsequent schism, which gradually led to the splintering of the Indian Eastern Church.

As a consequence of such tragic events, from 1663 to 1886 even the Catholic St Thomas Christians were divided between two conflicting and competing Latin jurisdictions: the archdiocese of Cranganore under Portuguese patronage and the vicariate apostolic of Malabar (officially named Verapoly in 1845) under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide. Leonard Mellano of St Luis OCD, the last vicar apostolic (1868-1886) of Verapoly, governed the vicariate when Thomas Kurialacherry was born.¹

At that time the Eucharistic liturgy (Qurbana) existed in a highly latinized form with many modifications, omissions and interpolations mainly made by the Synod of Diamper (1599) and Bishop Francis Ros SJ, the first Latin bishop of

¹ For details, P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India*, Kottayam 2010, 122-139.

the St Thomas Christians (1599-1624).² In connection with the holy Qurbana, the Eucharistic bread and wine, the manner of holy communion, liturgical year and calendar, liturgical vestments, religious feasts, fast and abstinence, sacred art and architecture, etc were all modified in tune with Western customs.³

In accordance with the order of the provincial council of Goa (1585) and the Synod of Diamper, the Latin Ritual was translated into Syriac and was introduced in Malabar. In fact the theology, liturgy and discipline of the sacraments were completely replaced by those of the Roman tradition. For ordinations, consecration of churches, blessing of the holy oils and other episcopal ceremonies the Roman Pontifical was used in the language of Latin, since the Latin bishops did not know Syriac.⁴ The Divine Office was of East Syrian tradition, but with the modifications and corrections made by the Synod of Diamper. Almost all the sacramentals, paraliturgical ceremonies and popular devotions were conducted with Roman liturgical books translated into Syriac, sometimes with local adaptations.

At that time the liturgical, spiritual and ecclesial life of the Catholic St Thomas Christians was almost completely in

² P. J. Podipara, "The Present Syro-Malabar Liturgy: Menezian or Rozian?", *OCP* 23 (1957) 313-322; J. Vellian, "The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church", in G. Nedungatt, ed., *The Synod of Diamper Revisited*, Rome 2001, 175-181 & 185-191; P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, Kottayam 2008, 85-154.

³ Cf. P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 155-209.

⁴ P. Palath, "The Sacraments of the Church of St Thomas Christians in India and the Synod of Diamper", *Ephrem's Theological Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2 (October 2007) 121-146; *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 2005, 115-129; J. Vellian, "The Synod of Diamper and the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church", 181-184 & 190-193.

harmony with the Latin tradition. The Syro-Malabar Church strictly followed the medieval post Tridentine liturgical vision and spiritual tradition as they existed in Latin Church, before the liturgical movement in the West and the Second Vatican Council. Hence it would be anachronistic to attribute a markedly oriental vision or specifically Eastern ecclesial spirituality to people of that epoch, especially to priests and bishops who had received a strictly Latin formation.

2. Birth and Early Childhood of Kurialacherry

Into such a historical and ecclesial situation, Thomas Kurialacherry was born on 14 January 1873 at Champakulam (which belonged to what was then the vicariate of Verapoly), the sixth child of Chacko Kurialacherry and Annamma Valliyara. The child was baptised in his parish church at Kalloorakat on 21 January 1873 and was named Thomas. He received his elementary education in the village school, called Kalari, where he learned under a tutor to read and write the vernacular language Malayalam and some elementary arithmetic. His Christian education he received at home, under the guidance of his pious parents, so that by the age of five he had learnt all the Christian prayers. His uncle Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry (senior), who was leading a retired life in the parish, was also helpful in his Christian formation. This priest taught him the prayers of the sacred liturgy, which were in Syriac, so that at the age of five he was able to recite the prayers of the Qurbana. In fact, the child began to serve regularly at Mass with devotion and reverence.⁵

⁵ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 261.

3. A Model Student (1882-1889)

After his elementary education in Kalari and some private tuition in English, Thomas Kurialacherry continued his studies in the government school at Changanacherry (1882-1885). In 1886 he joined St Ephrem's English school (established in 1885) at Mannanam, run by the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), and so he had to stay in the house of one of his relatives close to the monastery. Even at that tender age he began to centre his life on the Eucharist and would go to the monastery chapel every day to assist and serve at the holy Mass. Subsequently, at the age of 14, Thomas was admitted to the boarding house attached to the St Ephrem's school and so he found more time to pray even during his free time. Since he was a model for his schoolmates in learning, diligence, obedience and docility, he was made the prefect of the borders.⁶

After a year the school also offered optional courses in Syriac and Latin languages for those who aspired to the priesthood and Thomas also volunteered to study them, demonstrating thus his intention to become a priest. Even at that time he was eager to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament. In brief, he began to cultivate a special devotion to the Eucharistic Lord and used to make visits to the Blessed sacrament during his free time. When the Marian sodality was started in the school, Thomas was appointed its prefect and he successfully accomplished this task for three years. Another glimpse of his sincere efforts to foster spiritual life is evident from the fact that the young student Thomas chose a spiritual director from among the fathers of the monastery, Fr. Stephen Thayil; even after the completion

⁶ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 21-22 & 261-262.

of his studies at St Ephrem's school he continued his relationship with this spiritual director.⁷

In the meantime the ecclesial situation in India had also changed. On 1 September 1886 Pope Leo XIII established the new Latin hierarchy in India and the vicariate apostolic of Verapoly was elevated to the status of an archdiocese of the Latin Church. Consequently all the Catholic St Thomas Christians were enrolled in the Latin archdiocese of Verapoly. As a result of several petitions and concerted efforts, with the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887, Pope Leo XIII separated the Eastern Catholics from the Latin Christians of the archdiocese of Verapoly and constituted for them two Syro-Malabar vicariates apostolic: Trichur and Kottayam (later named Changanacherry). On 23 August 1887 the Pope appointed two non-Carmelites, Fr. Charles Lavigne SJ, titular bishop of Milevum and vicar apostolic of Kottayam and Fr. Adolf Medlycott, titular bishop of Tricomia and vicar apostolic of Trichur.⁸ From that time on, the Catholic Church of St Thomas Christians began to be officially known as the Syro-Malabar Church.

4. An Exemplary Seminarian (1890-1899)

Kurialacherry studied at St Ephrem's (then only a middle school) for four years and distinguished himself as a studious, pious and disciplined boy. At the age 17, he successfully completed the standard VII and the Vicar Apostolic Bishop Charles Lavigne, taking note of his good conduct, exemplary character and authentic piety, on 10 December 1889 selected him from among the boys aspiring to the priesthood, to be sent to the Propaganda College in Rome. On 18 January 1890 Bishop Lavigne conferred on

⁷ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 23-24, 262-263 & 333.

⁸ For details, P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India*, 141-154.

him the sacrament of Confirmation and the order of Tonsure; he was also given the priestly cassock. In accordance with the bishop's orders he started his journey on the same day and reached Rome on 21 February 1890. On the following day he was admitted to the IX section (*Camerata*) of Propaganda College, which was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate.⁹

Thomas, who was greatly devoted to the Blessed Mother, considered it a great blessing of divine providence that he was admitted in the section dedicated to the Mother of God. In order to express his great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the young seminarian Thomas, at his own expense, installed a beautiful painting of her in his section at the Propaganda College and decorated it beautifully.¹⁰ The superiors as well as his classmates esteemed the enthusiastic seminarian so greatly that he was known in the community as a "small saint", "an angel" 'a smart boy' etc. With regard to the exemplary life of the seminarian, the Rector of Propaganda College, Msgr Camassei wrote to Vicar Apostolic Lavigne already in September 1892:

The Seminarian, Rev. Thomas Kurialacherry is an angel by his behaviour, piety, obedience to the Superiors and the observance of the rules and constitutions. He has become the first among the Malayalee youngsters studying in the Propaganda.¹¹

Because of his good character and spiritual maturity he was also appointed as the 'Promoter of the confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus' in the Propaganda College. He propagated and promoted the devotion to the Sacred Heart among his fellow seminarians. He dedicated himself

⁹ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 26-27.

¹⁰ The photo of Kurialacherry, together with the said picture is reproduced in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, between pp. 26-27.

¹¹ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 558 & 573.

completely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through Mary to grow in perfection and to attain union with God. He wrote in his spiritual diary on 8 November 1894:

From today onwards I offer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through Mary, all that I have: my soul, mind and intellect, my bodily health, study, virtues and finally even my breath. If I have any achievement, I will believe firmly that it is through the intercession of the holy Mother. From today onwards, I have firmly resolved to live for their sake.¹²

Considering his piety, devotion and exemplary life, in 1896 he was appointed the prefect of his section, an office which he held for three years to the satisfaction of all concerned (1896-1899). As we have already seen, Thomas Kurialacherry from his younger days began to lead a Eucharistic centred life and cultivated Eucharistic piety through adoration. He used to serve at the holy Mass from his fifth year onwards and continued to do so until the day before his ordination. When he was a seminarian in Rome it was his custom to visit the perpetual adoration chapel of the nearby convent and spend time before the Eucharistic Lord. It was in this chapel, when he found the sisters of the convent in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament singing melodious hymns, that he received the divine inspiration to start an adoration congregation in his homeland.¹³

The nascent Syro-Malabar Church was also on the path of progress at that time. On 28 July 1896 with the apostolic brief *Quae rei sacrae* Pope Leo XIII reorganized the territory of the Syro-Malabar Church and constituted the three vicariates of Trichur, Changanacherry and Ernakulam. The Pope also appointed three native priests as vicars apostolic: John Menacherry as titular bishop of Parai and

¹² *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 184.

¹³ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 27-29 & 263-265.

vicar apostolic of Trichur, Mathew Makil as titular bishop of Tralli and vicar apostolic of Changanacherry and Aloysius Pareparambil as titular bishop of Tiana and vicar apostolic of Ernakulam.¹⁴

Thomas Kurialacherry received the order of subdiaconate on 25 July 1898 and of diaconate on 1 November of the same year. With regard to his exemplary life during his training in the seminary, it suffices to read the entry under conduct and remarks in the register of Propaganda College, where he stayed for nine years:

He is truly the best in all respects. He was a diligent Prefect companion. He has cultivated piety in the highest level. He is the most suitable person for the mission.¹⁵

The well prepared deacon Thomas Kurialacherry was ordained to the priesthood on 27 May 1899 in St John's Lateran Basilica by Bishop Francesco Cassetta, vicar of the Pope for the diocese of Rome. With the letter of 26 September 1899 Cardinal Mieczyslaw Halka Ledochowski (1892-1902), Prefect of Propaganda Fide presented the new priest to Mar Mathew Makil, the then vicar apostolic of Changanacherry:

Day before yesterday Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry, alumnus of Urban College from February 1890, departed from Rome to Malabar...His moral conduct was always so praiseworthy as to merit the esteem and affection of his superiors and alumni. As he is now returning definitively to that Vicariate, I warmly recommend him to the charity of Your Excellency.¹⁶

¹⁴ P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India*, 159-165.

¹⁵ "Vere optimus in omnibus. Fuit diligens Praefectus contubernalis. Pietatem summopere coluit. Ad missionem aptissimus". *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 453.

¹⁶ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. I, 33.

While bidding farewell to his alma mater, he recorded in the diary of Propaganda College: "I go from the church of St Peter. My end will also be here".¹⁷ After visiting all the important sanctuaries in Italy he embarked on a ship for his return voyage from Trieste on 3 October 1899 and safely reached Changanacherry on 1 November 1899.¹⁸

5. A Saintly Priest (1899-1911)

After visiting Mar Mathew Makil, vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, Kurialacherry stayed in his home parish of Kalloorkat (Champakulam) for about three months, striving to refresh his Syriac, the liturgical language of the St Thomas Christians and exercising his priestly ministry in the parish. After this initial preparation in his home parish, he exercised his pastoral ministry as vice-rector of the boarding attached to St Berchmans' School Changanacherry (1900-1901) and then as pastor of the parishes of Chennankary (1901-1902), Kavalam (1902-1906), Koilmuk at Edathua (1906-1910) and finally in his own parish Champakulam (1910-1911).

During these ten years of priestly ministry he brought peace and order to the parishes settling disputes and quarrels. He induced the faithful to live a fervent catholic life, centred on the Eucharist and especially on the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, sought the lost sheep and led them back to the bosom of the Church, diligently administering the sacrament of penitence, and he strengthened and encouraged pious associations and confraternities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He was also concerned with the evangelization of the low castes and the reunion of the

¹⁷ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 2, 383.

¹⁸ For details concerning his pilgrimage to Italian sanctuaries and the return voyage, see his book *Romayathra (Journey to Rome)*, Mannanam 1901, 150-185.

separated brethren. He took great interest in the socio-cultural development of the people, providing them with facilities for education and laying particular stress on the education of girls, which was virtually neglected at that time. He also endeavoured to transmit the infinite love of God to the poor, the needy, to all even at risk to his own life, so much so that his parishioners called him an “angel”, “dove” or “holy priest”.¹⁹

For the spiritual renewal of the parishes, he introduced one-week spiritual retreats and Eucharistic adoration. He also re-organized the Franciscan Third Order, codifying better rules and ensuring their active participation in parish activities. The Vicar Apostolic Mathew Makil, knowing of Fr. Thomas’ interest in the Franciscan Third Order, appointed him superior of the Order in the vicariate, which had about 30 centres. When he was parish priest in Kavalam, he decided to construct a new church at Champakulam which he named St Peter's Oresalem church. The foundation stone of the church was laid on 20 February 1903 and it was blessed on 29 September 1909. He had a twofold scope in establishing this church on his family property, which was his patrimony, namely, to be a chapel of perpetual adoration when the congregation he had in mind was created, and to be a place of worship for the Harijan Christians (low-castes), whom he had converted to the faith, since at that time they did not enjoy full freedom in other churches.²⁰

¹⁹ For more about his priestly ministry, see *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 37-60; Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Relatio et Vota*, 24, 14-15, 60 & 68; *The Apostle of the Holy Eucharist*, Souvenir of the birth centenary of Servant of God Thomas Kurialacherry, revised English Edition, Aluva 2003, 58-60; S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry: A Visionary of Eucharistic Devotion*, Aluva 2008, 47-55; K. C. Chacko, *The Vigilant Shepherd*, Alwaye 1986, 32-36.

²⁰ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 2, 46; S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 63-66.

As we have indicated, already during his seminary formation in Rome Kurialacherry had received the divine inspiration to found a religious congregation for women in his country so that they could lead a life centred on the Eucharist and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. During his ministry as a parish priest he also made preparations for the future religious congregation, with the assistance of Philomena Vallayil (later Sr. Mary Francesca de Chantal), a young widow, who led an ardent Christian life and was a member of the Franciscan Third Order. In addition to Philomena, who was considered the first member, he selected a few more candidates and cared for their education and religious formation.²¹

The Vicar Apostolic Mathew Makil rejected Thomas' repeated requests for permission to start the new congregation and suggested to him that the candidates he had already selected could join any of the three already existing religious institutes in the vicariate – Congregation of Mother of Carmel (CMC), Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) and the Visitation Congregation – or he could start a new branch of any of these. However, Fr. Thomas was determined to have a separate congregation for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In such circumstances, seven years later and with the permission of the Vicar Apostolic, on 8 December 1908 Fr. Thomas gave the religious veil of postulants to six of the senior aspirants in the parish church at Edathua. On 17 October 1910 the permanent residence of the candidates was completed at Champakulam, close to the Oresalem church and was blessed by Fr. Kurialacherry after which the candidates began to reside in the new house.²²

²¹ S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 55-56.

²² For more about the initial stages of the Congregation, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 75-85; *The Apostle of the Holy Eucharist*, 36-44;

6. Vicar Apostolic of Changanacherry (1911-1923)

As we have already seen, when Pope Leo XIII constituted the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry on 28 July 1896, the Southist Priest Mathew Makil was appointed titular bishop of Tralli and vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, although the vast majority of the priests and faithful belonged to the “Northist community”. The appointment of Makil as vicar apostolic provoked grave turmoil, agitation and troubles in the vicariate of Changanacherry, which continued for more than fourteen years.²³ In such circumstances, the three Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic, Makil, Menacherry and Pareparampil, after long discussions and consultations, with the letter of 1 March 1911 unanimously proposed three solutions to the Holy See for radically eradicating all kinds of discords. They presented as the first and the best solution the erection of a new vicariate in Kottayam exclusively for the Southists, the transfer of Makil to this new vicariate and the appointment of a Northist as the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry.²⁴

The general meeting of Propaganda Fide for the Affairs of the Oriental Rite, held on 31 July 1911 evaluated the whole situation and considered various options for a lasting and stable solution and decided to erect the new vicariate of Kottayam exclusively for the Southist community, to transfer Mar Mathew Makil to this vicariate and to appoint

S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry, 57-69*; Delphina, “Bishop Kurialacherry: the Founder of the SABS”, in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, Aluva 2010, 88-93.

²³ For details, P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam: Acts and Facts*, Kottayam 2011, 64-173.

²⁴ ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. n. 30391, Summary, no. 1, pp. 1-5; also in ACO, Fascicolo Prot. No. 495/33, *Malabaresi Affari Generali*.

Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry as the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry.²⁵

Kurialacherry was selected as the most suitable candidate not only because of the excellent profile which emerged from the records kept in Propaganda College, but also because his name was found in the list of three candidates (*ternus*) separately presented by all the three then vicars apostolic of the Syro-Malabar Church and hence the general assembly concluded that he enjoyed universal esteem and respect in Kerala.²⁶ Vicar Apostolic Mathew Makil, who presented him as the most worthy and best candidate, with another letter solicited for his appointment, since he was a successful and zealous pastor as well as a lover of peace.²⁷ It is worth noting that even those who were opposed to Makil in one of their letters to the Pope, presented Kurialacherry as their first candidate.²⁸ This demonstrates that, as a lover of peace and harmony, he was an acceptable person to all concerned.

On 28 August 1911 Pope Pius X approved all the aforementioned decisions of Propaganda Fide without any modification.²⁹ Thus with the apostolic brief *In Universi*

²⁵ Cf. ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, 15 and additional notes, 1-2; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 173-174.

²⁶ ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391; for the letters of Mathew Makil, John Menacherry and Aloysius Pareparambil presenting candidates, see ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, summary, nos. 3-5.

²⁷ Letter of Mathew Makil, 30 July 1911, in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 417.

²⁸ Letter of the Northist Clergy of Changanacherry to Pope Pius X, 20 October 1905, ACO, Fascicolo Prot. No. 495/33, *Malabaresi Affari Generali*.

²⁹ ACO, *Acta* 1911, vol. 41, 12, Prot. N. 30391, additional note, 3; also ACO, *Ponenze* 1911, 557-558; P. Pallath & G. Kanjirakkatt, *Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam*, 179-181.

dated 29 August 1911 the Pope separated all the Southist parishes and churches from the vicariates of Changanacherry and Ernakulam and erected the new vicariate of Kottayam exclusively for the Southist community.³⁰ With two decrees dated 30 August 1911 Mar Matthew Makil was transferred to the new Southist vicariate of Kottayam and Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry was appointed titular bishop of Pella and the vicar apostolic of Changanacherry.³¹

Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry received the papal bull appointing him bishop of Pella and vicar apostolic of Changanacherry on 15 October 1911. According to the decision of Propaganda he was consecrated bishop on 3 December 1911, the feast of St Francis Xavier, by Apostolic Delegate Ladislao Michele Zaleski (1892-1916) at St Antony's Church of Kandy in Sri Lanka.³² After the consecration, Kurialacherry returned to his native place Kalloorkat on 7 December 1911 and the first formal function he performed was the vestition of the five pioneer members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on 10 December 1911. Thus he formally and canonically founded the Congregation, the realization of his dream, cherished since he had been at the seminary in Rome. He officially took charge of the vicariate of Changanacherry on 15 December 1911, declaring the motto of his episcopal ministry: "Renew everything in Christ".

³⁰ For the apostolic letter *In Universi*, see Canc. Brev. Ap. Pius X an. 1911, Divers., lib. IX, pars 2, p. 607; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents concerning the Catholic Church in India*, Kottayam 2004, 198-201.

³¹ The decree appointing Thomas Kurialacherry as vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 273-274.

³² At that time there was only one Apostolic Delegate for all the countries in the Indian subcontinent, designated by the general name "East Indies", which included also Sri Lanka. Kurialacherry had to go to Kandy for the episcopal consecration, because the Apostolic Delegate had his headquarters there.

When Kurialacherry became vicar apostolic, the vicariate of Changanacherry was in a very desolate situation, without any progress in spiritual or temporal affairs because of the struggles between different ethnic groups and especially because of the lack of any collaboration between the Northist community and the Southist Vicar Apostolic Mar Mathew Makil. After the separation of the Southists and the creation of the new vicariate of Kottayam for them, the vicariate of Changanacherry enjoyed a new start under the able leadership of Mar Thomas Kurialacherry. Despite the lack of financial resources after the separation of the two communities, he succeeded in laying down a solid spiritual, socio-cultural and religious foundation for the vicariate, based on gospel principles and the perennial values of equality, justice and fraternity of all Christian faithful.

7. First Bishop of Changanacherry (1923-1925)

Considering the progress of the Syro-Malabar Church after the appointment of native vicars apostolic, upon the recommendation of the 'Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church', by the apostolic constitution *Romani Pontifices* of 21 December 1923 Pope Pius XI established the Syro-Malabar hierarchy, elevating the vicariate of Ernakulam to the rank of metropolitan see and constituting the vicariates of Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan dioceses.³³ Thomas Kurialacherry, until then titular bishop of Pella, was appointed the first bishop of the diocese of Changanacherry.

After the constitution of hierarchy, he governed the diocese of Changanacherry only for a year and five months. Kurialacherry had a severe attack of rheumatism in 1917 and

³³ The apostolic constitution *Romani pontifices*, AAS 7 (1924) 257-262; P. Pallath, *Important Roman Documents concerning the Catholic Church in India*, 206-219.

was confined to bed, but with medical care he managed to survive the crisis. In spite of the illness he made his third round of pastoral visitation in 1923, and completed it on 23 March 1925.³⁴

In March 1925 he announced his programme of a pilgrimage to Rome, on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of 1925, proclaimed by Pope Pius XI. He concluded his pastoral letter of 7 March 1925, written in preparation for the feast of St Joseph, with words that resounded like a kind of farewell:

I entrust the diocese and each one of you in the hands of St Joseph, the Master of the Holy Family and the Patron of the Church and wish that we all find eternal peace in the divine Heart of Jesus through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin our Mother and St Joseph and most cordially impart to you all my blessing.³⁵

On 18 March 1925, before commencing his journey, he offered his last Mass in the cathedral church. During the sermon, he indicated that this was his last Mass and asked pardon of the people for any offence he might have committed against them.³⁶ Before leaving for Rome he visited the monasteries of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and the convents of the sisters and bade farewell to all. He wrote his last pastoral letter on 18 March 1925, in which he reminded all that “a good life is necessary for a happy death”, and advised them “to love the sacred Heart of Jesus always more and more”.³⁷

³⁴ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 273.

³⁵ Pastoral letter 112; *MTKES*, 535.

³⁶ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 274-275.

³⁷ Pastoral letter 113; *MTKES*, 539-540.

8. Last Days and Death in Rome (1925)

On 18 March 1925 Kurialacherry started his last journey with his secretary Fr. James Kalacherry, and after an arduous voyage, reached Rome safely on 29 April. As already indicated, the main purpose of his journey was to participate in celebrations of the holy Year 1925. He visited many churches, met a few cardinals and he had also an audience with Pope Pius XI on 13 May 1925. He also participated in the canonization ceremonies of St Therese of Child Jesus in St Peter's Basilica on 17 May 1925. At the invitation of the Rector of the Propaganda College, Kurialacherry celebrated his last holy Mass in the chapel of the College on 27 May 1925 morning, on the occasion of the twenty-sixth anniversary of his sacerdotal ordination.³⁸

After the Mass, during the breakfast his serious uraemia became fatally worse and he fainted. He was taken to the Hospital "Fate Bene Fratelli" on the island in the Tiber. There he breathed his last on 2 June 1925, after receiving the "last sacraments" in the presence of Mar Augustine Kandathil, Archbishop of Ernakulam and many priests and seminarians. Pope Pius XI sent his special blessings through his secretary. As he had written in the diary of Propaganda College before his departure for India, he died in the eternal city of Rome, the centre of the Catholic Church.

On 4 June 1925 he was solemnly buried in the vault reserved for the Propaganda College in the municipal cemetery of Rome (Cimiteri Monumentale al Verano), in the presence of cardinals, bishops, priests, seminarians and some lay people. The casket containing the mortal remains of Kurialacherry was taken from Rome to Kerala by his

³⁸ For details regarding his last days, death and burial, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 273-281; S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 101-109.

successor Mar James Kalacherry and was reinterred in the sanctuary of the cathedral church in Changanacherry on 25 July 1935. Thus the course of his saintly life, that orbited around Rome and India, happily terminated, leaving aside an example of authentic Christian life and sanctity which will enlighten and stimulate generations to come.

Chapter Two

THE EUCHARISTIC VISION OF VENERABLE MAR THOMAS KURIALACHERRY

Introduction

As we have already indicated, after the completion of the prescribed procedures in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on 2 April 2011 Pope Benedict XVI approved the fact that Mar Thomas Kurialacherry had exercised the Christian virtues in a heroic degree during his lifetime. In truth Venerable Kurialacherry's heroic practice of virtues and his whole life and activities hinged on the holy Eucharist, the mystery of love and faith. Hence, in this chapter we shall try to highlight his profound Eucharistic vision, which has a triple dimension: celebration, adoration and action. We also expound his concept that even the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is centred on the Eucharist and briefly evaluate how the Adoration Congregation lives the Eucharistic vision of Kurialacherry until the present day.

1. The Triple Dimension of Kurialacherry's Eucharistic Vision

Even many years before Vatican II, which declared that the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life,¹ Venerable Kurialacherry realized this fact and strove to promote a Eucharistic centred life among the priests, religious and other Christian faithful. He taught that the holy Qurbana, the greatest of all other sacraments, is the centre and focus of the entire divine worship, just as the sun is in

¹ Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 10.

the midst of stars, the heart in a human body and a pond in a garden.² Through Eucharist, medicine and food of human beings, they reach God, enter into communion with him and become partakers of the divine nature.³ Now we highlight the triple dimension of the Eucharistic vision of Kurialacherry.

1.1. Eucharistic Celebration

The first aspect of the comprehensive Eucharistic vision of Kurialacherry is the stress laid on the diligent and devout celebration of Qurbana after due preparation. With regard to the centrality of the Eucharist and the need for appropriate preparation for a fruitful celebration, in the common circular written to the clergy on 1 June 1916 he accentuated:

The best way to communicate with God with purity of heart is the holy Eucharist. For, the holy Eucharist is called the great “holy Communion”. Among the liturgical celebrations, this Sacrament shines like the sun among the stars in the firmament. Since the priest becomes completely united to Christ, the fountain of all graces, through this Sacrament, there is no limit to the graces and blessings that he can receive. Therefore, with how much faith, fear, piety and love should you offer the holy Mass! When the Mass is offered without proper faith and devotion hastily and finishing it taking not even half an hour, how much does it diminish the faith and piety of the people? If the priest who offers the Mass does not possess sufficient faith and devotion, how can we expect these in the people who see it? Therefore, in order that the priest may celebrate the Mass with proper preparation and effectiveness he should devote the morning time to meditation and silence and should recite

² Pastoral letter 47; *MTKES*, 258-259.

³ Cf. Pastoral letter 47; *MTKES*, 258-260.

with enthusiasm and in the proper way, the prayers before and after Mass.⁴

With regard to the obligation of the priests to celebrate the holy Mass, he reiterated: “The priest has to celebrate the Mass not only for his spiritual good, but also for the entire Church. When a priest is ordained, he is under obligation and has the right to celebrate the Mass for the living and the dead”.⁵

Kurialacherry’s advice to the priests with regard to the proper and uniform manner of celebrating the Eucharist according to the prescriptions and rubrics in the approved liturgical books is relevant even today. After underlining the necessity of learning Syriac, the liturgical language of the Syro-Malabar Church at that time, he enjoined:

The Mass and the other sacraments must be celebrated according to the prescribed instructions given in the manual of rubrics, *Thukasa*. In this regard, nobody is allowed to introduce anything new or to act as he pleases. In the sung Mass nobody is allowed to leave out anything from what is meant for singing. It is essential that you show special interest to see that Liturgy is celebrated in the same way in all churches. This cannot be changed according to the will and pleasure of any one.⁶

This directive anticipates the instruction of the Second Vatican Council which prescribes that, with the exception of the legitimate authorities of the Church, absolutely no one else, “not even a priest, should disruptively add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his or her own”.⁷ The

⁴ *Idayante Sandesam (The Message of the Shepherd)*, Alwaye 1987, 14-15; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 60.

⁵ *Idayante Sandesam*, 32; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 72.

⁶ *Idayante Sandesam*, 27; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 68-69.

⁷ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 22; Cf. CCEO, cc. 668 §

principle enunciated by Kurialacherry, applied to the present circumstances of time, indicates the liturgical celebration according to the rubrics, norms and directives contained in the typical edition of the liturgical books, approved by the synod of bishops and promulgated by the major archbishop, after a prior review of the Apostolic See (CCEO c. 657). All bishops, priests and other clerics are obliged to celebrate liturgy according to the prescriptions of the approved liturgical books and the decisions of the synod for safeguarding the basic liturgical unity and ecclesial communion of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Just as the priests have the obligation to celebrate the Eucharist in the right manner, so too must the faithful participate diligently in the Qurbana. He repeatedly insisted on the frequent or daily participation of the faithful in the Qurbana and the worthy reception of holy Communion in order to obtain the transforming power of the Eucharist.⁸ In the pastoral letter of 22 February 1916, after speaking about the necessity of the Word of God and the “living bread” for overcoming temptations, he stated: “Hence I desire and order that, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the frequent holy Communion should be increased in all the parishes and I encourage all the vicars to take care of this. Dear brothers, in this critical predicament of this world, for its salvation, there is no other remedy than the Lord Jesus, who is the Lord of all the graces”.⁹

Similarly Kurialacherry instructed the adoration sisters to participate daily in the Eucharistic liturgy with due awareness of the mystery celebrated and to receive the holy Communion with due preparation, devotion and reverence.

2 & 674.

⁸ Cf. Pastoral letters 4, 11, 12, 13, 38, 42, 47, 85, 100, 109; *MTKES*, 32, 71, 80-81, 87, 224-225, 241, 258-260, 421, 478, 520-521.

⁹ Pastoral letter 11; *MTKES*, 71.

For this purpose the new sisters should be instructed, from the very beginning of their religious life, about all matters concerning the divine liturgy of the Church, the nature of each liturgical period and the meaning of the mysteries commemorated in various liturgical seasons.¹⁰ In brief, Kurialacherry desired the priest's devote and rightful celebration of the Eucharist, conscious participation of the religious and other faithful in the Qurbana and worthy reception of holy Communion.

1.2. Eucharistic Adoration

As Archbishop Joseph Powathil rightly observes, "For the Easterners the greatest Eucharistic devotion, the deepest Eucharistic adoration, is the liturgical celebration itself".¹¹ In fact, the Eucharistic celebration is the supreme act of divine worship, since it is the commemoration and reenactment of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ on the cross and hence there cannot be any adoration on earth superior to this. Moreover, if the Bl. Sacrament is not effected by Eucharistic celebration, no subsequent adoration is possible.

Adoration is in fact a natural consequence of the Catholic doctrine of real presence of Christ in the Bl. Sacrament. It is the normal and spontaneous attitude of the devotee in the presence of his Lord and God. Pope Benedict XVI highlights the intrinsic relationship between Eucharistic celebration and Eucharistic adoration: "In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; Eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the Eucharistic celebration, which is itself

¹⁰ Founder's Constitution, Part I, chapter 8, nos.1-3; *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, Aluva 2009, 44-45.

¹¹ J. Powathil, "The Vigilant Shepherd", in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 20.

the Church's supreme act of adoration".¹² Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which enables the Christian faithful to remain constantly in the presence of the Lord and to enter into mystical communion with him, is a kind of continuation and lesser extension of the aforementioned supreme worship.

The Syro-Malabar Qurbana, besides being the supreme act of worship as in the Eucharistic liturgy of other traditions, from the very beginning to the end, is full of prayers, hymns, anthems and refrains, expressing ceaseless adoration and incessant worship to Lord our God. In the Qurbana angels and people together sing out the glory of God: "holy, holy, holy are you" and offer worship to him "together with holy Cherubim and Seraphim". Throughout the Qurbana the priest and the assembly (often with the response, Amen) offer glory, honour, thanksgiving and worship (adoration) to the holy Trinity or to Lord Jesus Christ.¹³ In fact, the whole Anaphora of Addai and Mari, which reflects the Judaic thanksgiving prayer during the paschal meal, is praise, thanksgiving, glorification and adoration of God for creation, incarnation, redemption and eschatological salvation.¹⁴ Hence, active, conscious and full participation in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana is the supreme, perfect and angelic adoration possible for human beings on earth.

¹² Pope Benedict XVI, post synodal apostolic exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*, Vatican City 2007, no. 66.

¹³ For example, cf. *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, Trivandrum 1989, 4, 9, 11-12, 26, 30, 35, 37-38, 42, 45, 47, 59-60.

¹⁴ Cf. P. Yousif, "The Divine Liturgy according to the Rite of the Assyro-Chaldean Church", J. Madey, ed., *The Eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East*, Kottayam-Paderbom 1983, 215-226; S. Jammo, "The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari: A Study of Structure and Historical Background. *OCP* 68 (2002) 11-30; V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana: The Eucharistic Celebration of the Chaldeo-Indian Church*, Kottayam 1998, 226-234.

However, the Syro-Malabar Qurbana itself witnesses that thanksgiving and adoration should be offered to God not only during the Eucharistic celebration alone, but also “now, always and forever”, as all the aforementioned prayers and hymns repeatedly state. For example, in the concluding priestly prayer of the hymn “Lord of all”, it is stated: “O my Lord, we are bound *always* to thank, adore and glorify you, Lord of all, forever”.¹⁵ Similarly, the priest’s first thanksgiving prayer after the holy Communion on Sundays and feast days explicitly asserts: “It is fitting, O Lord, every day, it is right at all times, it is just at every hour that we give thanks to, adore and glorify, the revered name of your majesty”.¹⁶ Real Christian life requires constant awareness of the divine presence, ceaseless adoration of God and never-ending thanksgiving to him, since he created the world by his grace, its inhabitants by his mercifulness, bestowed great grace on mortal human beings and showered upon them great favours, for which they can never thank him enough.¹⁷

Venerable Kurialacherry, who always celebrated the holy Qurbana with due preparation and ardent devotion, continued the worship of the divine majesty “now, always and forever” by living always in the awareness of God, especially by Eucharistic adoration. From his earliest days he cultivated devotion to the holy Eucharist, which he intensified during his seminary formation in Rome and assiduously practiced during his priestly and episcopal ministry. Naturally he endeavoured to propagate this devotion among the priests, religious and faithful. With regard to the priests he explicitly affirmed:

¹⁵ *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, 12.

¹⁶ *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, 59.

¹⁷ Cf. G’hanta 2 & 3, *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, 37-38 & 42.

One can never be a good priest if he has no devotion to the holy Eucharist. The devotion to the holy Eucharist should be the centre of all other devotions...The celebration as well as the ministration of the holy Eucharist is the natural and the primary ministry of a priest.¹⁸

Evidently, as we see below (no. 3), Kurialacherry wanted to see devotion to the Eucharist in all religious, especially in the sisters of Adoration Congregation. He promoted among them 13 and 40 hours of adoration, “holy hour”, perpetual adoration and frequent visit to the Bl. Sacrament.¹⁹

During his pastoral ministry as a priest and then as a bishop he also strove to promote the Eucharistic devotion among the Christian faithful by organizing confraternities and Eucharistic adoration in the parishes, including 13 and 40 hours of adoration. He revealed to his “beloved children”:

The greatest virtue that I desire to promote among the faithful, my beloved children, is the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. There is no other means so powerful as to impress deep in us the remembrance of the passion of our Lord, than the Blessed Sacrament ...Experience is the best proof that shows how we are spiritually nourished and filled with peace by receiving holy Communion.²⁰

The devotion of the faithful to the Eucharist entails their frequent participation in the Eucharist, holy communion and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In brief, on the basis of his experience, Kurialacherry propagated the Eucharist devotion among the priests, religious and other Christian faithful as the best means to live constantly in the presence of God and to grow in authentic spiritual life.

¹⁸ *Idayante Sandesam*, 41-42; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 77-78.

¹⁹ Cf. *The Apostle of the Holy Eucharist*, 29-31.

²⁰ Pastoral Letter 8; *MTKES*, 49-50.

1.3. Eucharistic Life or Action

Rightful celebration and ceaseless adoration of the Eucharist lead one to Eucharistic life or action for the salvation of mankind and progress of the world, since “the supreme sacrament of the Eucharist reveals the depth of Jesus’ love to mankind”.²¹ Jesus who declared that, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s own life for one’s friends” (*Jn* 15, 13), sacrificed himself on the cross for the salvation of man, concretely demonstrating the profound love of God, and the Eucharist is the celebration of this sacrifice of love. In fact, Kurialacherry teaches that the holy Qurbana, the memorial and enactment of the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, is the greatest manifestation of the supreme, infinite and boundless love of God, which is revealed in the sacrifice on the cross through the total self gift of himself and is perpetuated through the eucharistic body and blood of Christ.²² About the love of God manifested in the Eucharist he exclaims:

Behold, God’s love reveals to us the boundaries of its omnipotence. God can do nothing beyond this. He gives himself totally to us by conjoining human heart with God’s heart, human soul with the Holy Spirit, and human body with God’s body. He himself becomes an eternal oblation for the reparation of the sins of the world.²³

For him the Eucharist, in which our Lord completely donates himself to human beings, is the greatest manifestation of infinite divine love and hence it impels all Christians to become “Eucharist”, through acts of Christian charity and self-sacrifice. With regard to the centrality of the

²¹ Pastoral letter 4; *MTKES*, 31.

²² Cf. Pastoral letters, 41, 81, 85, 100; *MTKES*, 236, 404, 419-420, 476.-478.

²³ Pastoral letter 100; *MTKES*, 476.

Eucharist as divine love and its relation to the life of Christians he asserted:

The Eucharist, the institution of love – which immerses human hearts in the immensity of divine love, revealing the infinite love of God towards each one of us, and which, through the total self gift of Our Lord for all human beings under the species of bread, strongly induces human beings to concrete acts of mutual love – truly contains not only the Bible and the whole Christian teaching, but also heaven itself...because the beatitude of heaven is the very same God.²⁴

The Bible and the whole teaching of the Church are contained in the Eucharist, because their essential content is love: love of God and love of neighbor.²⁵ Such boundless love experienced in the Eucharist provokes in man a twofold reaction: profound love and gratitude towards God and genuine charity towards the neighbor. The profound thought of Kurialacherry concerning the twofold Christian love corresponds to the teaching of St John: “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another” (I *Jn* 4, 8-11).

In fact, the infinite love of God which Kurialacherry experienced in the Eucharist, prompted him also to become oblation through acts of charity towards the needy, sick and poor. He advised the Christian faithful also to do the same:

²⁴ Pastoral letter 100; *MTKES*, 478.

²⁵ Cf. *Mt* 22: 34-40; *Mk* 12: 28-34; *Lk* 10: 25-28; I *Jn* 4: 7-21.

We should remember that the only means to love God and to cleanse our hearts is to love our brethren. In order to be everything to everyone, love every one, pray for everyone, and do good to everyone always and everywhere; help others considering them as yourself and console the sore-hearted; and finally try to disseminate the light and life of the Gospel to all those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death.²⁶

Not only from the writings of Kurialacherry, but also from his way of life and his deeds we understand that for him devotion to the Eucharist was not an excuse for a kind of flight from the world, but a source of true strength for active engagement in it aiming at its integral renewal, sustainable development and genuine progress. Though he was a man of Eucharistic adoration, he did not spare any of his forces in his work for the all-round well-being of his community and civil society at large. Those who truly celebrate the Eucharist and really adore the Eucharistic Lord comprehend and experience the greatest love of God embodied in this sacrifice and consequently will be compelled to reciprocate God with incessant love and share the divine love with their neighbours, especially with the poor, sick, aged and marginalized.

2. The Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart

According to Kurialacherry the Eucharist is the supreme manifestation of the love of God, also because the pierced heart of Jesus, the symbol of that divine love, is present in the Eucharist. He considered the Eucharistic devotion as the centre of all other devotions, among which he gave prime importance to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In fact, in 13 pastoral letters Kurialacherry

²⁶ Pastoral letter 113; *MTKES*, 538; English trans. in S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 138.

wrote about the nature, purpose and importance of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.²⁷ He teaches that the spiritual birth of the faithful, all the spiritual blessings, as well as the true Church and sacraments proceed from the pierced Heart of Jesus on the Cross, together with water and blood.²⁸ The Eucharist is the enactment and commemoration of the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and all such divine miracles which the Sacred Heart accomplished for the redemption of lost human race.²⁹

The ejaculatory prayer which Kurialacherry proposed to the sisters of the Adoration Congregation as one of the means to maintain constant union with Jesus, evidences also the relationship between the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart. At the strike of the clock, the sisters have to pray:

Praise and honour, to the Eucharistic heart of Jesus forever and ever; Sacred Heart of Jesus present in the most holy and divine Sacrament, may your kingdom come; Divine Heart of Jesus that suffered the agony of death have mercy on all those who die today; Blessed be the immaculate conception of the Bl. Virgin Mary; Most Sacred Heart of Jesus everything for your sake.³⁰

In fact, Kurialacherry did not make any distinction between the devotion to the Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred heart, since he believed that Sacred Heart is present in the Eucharist. He wrote: “The Sacred Heart of Jesus has given us boundless blessings through the Blessed Sacrament,

²⁷ See Pastoral letters 1, 2, 4, 13, 21, 29, 31, 41, 49, 61, 85, 102, 113; *MTKES*, 5, 8-13, 31-32, 84-85, 132-136, 182-183, 189-191, 236, 266-267, 322-325, 419-420, 485-489, 537-538.

²⁸ Pastoral letter 8; *MTKES*, 182-183; cf. *Jn* 19: 34.

²⁹ Pastoral letter 41; *MTKES*, 236.

³⁰ Founder's Constitution, part I, chapter 1, no. 2; *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, 28; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 89 & 95.

where he is present concealing his heavenly glory and thus enabling us to approach him freely. He remains here as our father, shepherd, friend, doctor, light, life, way and the source of all graces. He becomes our spiritual nourishment in this divine mystery”.³¹

Again emphasizing the close relationship between the Sacred Heart and the Eucharist and the Christ centric dimension of the said devotion, he stated:

There is close connection between the devotion to the Eucharist and the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is actually the piety in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which is ablaze with his infinite love for mankind. The holy Eucharist is only a wonderful manifestation of this infinite love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a special form of devotion to Jesus. Therefore this devotion is the root as well as the essence of all other devotions. There is no devotion greater than this. It is not necessary to say how much devotion a priest should have towards the Sacred Heart since he has to be a model to others in this love for Jesus Christ.³²

Kurialacherry advised the adoration sisters to greet or address each other saying, “Praised be the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus” and the sisters continue the same practice even today.³³ In his directives to the adoration sisters written on 4 September 1920 he said: “The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament are particularly consecrated to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and hence they should always be keen to

³¹ *Isoyude Thiruhudaya Vanakkam*, 26, English trans., *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 266.

³² Circular letter to the clergy, 1 June 1916, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 78.

³³ Cf. S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 94 & 125.

please that Sacred Heart every way possible”.³⁴

The Syro-Malabar Qurbana makes a particular remembrance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and somehow demonstrates the relationship between the two. During the preparation of the Eucharistic gifts the priest pours a little water into the chalice in the form of the cross saying, “One of the soldiers came and pierced the side of our Lord with a spear; and immediately there came out blood and water and he who saw it has born witness, and his witness is true”.³⁵ The Synod of Diamper attested that during the Qurbana, after the fraction and signing the priest made an opening on the half of the host upon the paten with the nail of his right thumb,³⁶ which symbolized the piercing of the side of Jesus with a spear by one of the soldiers (*Jn* 19: 34). The Synod condemned this ceremony as a Nestorian heretical practice, but it still exists in some missals of the Assyrian Church of the East.³⁷ In any case, the connection between the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart is somehow maintained in the Qurbana.

The teaching of Kurialacherry that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is present in the Eucharist is in tune with the official doctrine. The Catholic Church holds that in the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained’.³⁸ Since the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained, it is evident that the Sacred Heart is also present.

³⁴ Directives to the Sisters, 4 September 1920, in S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 95.

³⁵ *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, 24.

³⁶ Session V, part 2, decree 3.

³⁷ For details, P. Pallath, *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, 160-163.

³⁸ Council of Trent, session 13, 11 October 1551, chapters 3-4, N. P.

3. Adoration Congregation and the Continuation of the Eucharistic Vision of Kurialacherry

As we have already seen in the first chapter, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS) was officially established on 10 December 1911 with the vestition of the first five members. The first four aspirants who completed the novitiate made their religious profession before Kurialacherry on 18 March 1916. However, Philomena Vallayil (Sr. Mary Francisca de Chanthal), who was considered the first member and collaborator, was not chosen to make the religious profession with the other members. She made the profession privately before the Bishop in his private chapel on 21 August 1916.³⁹

3.1. A Congregation, both Contemplative and Active

The early history of the Adoration Congregation is inextricably intertwined with the life of Kurialacherry and we have given some indications in the first chapter. From the very start of the pioneer community Kurialacherry also gave some rules and regulations aimed at training the aspirant members in the Eucharistic spirituality and in the basics of religious life. After the religious profession of the first group, along with the aforementioned directives, in 1917 Kurialacherry gave the “Rules of St Augustine” as the basic law of the new congregation. In 1918 he compiled the constitution for the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, consisting of three parts: nature and purpose of the congregation, formation and administration. The said

Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, London 1990, 695; *Catechismo f the Catholic Church*, no. 1374.

³⁹ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 90-91.

constitution, known as the Founder's Constitution was printed in 1921, for the first time.⁴⁰

After referring to the two kinds of religious institutes in the Catholic Church, contemplative and active, he stated that he wanted to combine the good aspects of both in the Adoration Congregation: "Now, your congregation has both these aims, namely the perfection of divine love through prayer and contemplation and by the observance of religious vows and by the frequent reception of the sacraments, and service to the brethren for their spiritual and temporal welfare in due order as it befits your state of life".⁴¹ Evidently the principal devotion the founder desired to see in the sisters was Eucharistic:

Besides, as the congregation of the Bl. Sacrament, it is the devotion to the Bl. Sacrament that specially shines in you. Therefore, you should be vigilant that you daily grow in this devotion and instil in others, the same. Therefore, you who have joined the Adoration Congregation, should learn from the Eucharistic heart of Jesus the infinite love he has manifested to us through the Eucharist, his humility and meekness and thus become the worthy spouses of Jesus in Bl. Sacrament.⁴²

As this passage underscores, for Kurialacherry adoration of the Bl. Sacrament is not simply a piety, but it has existential consequences, since it is a means for the transformation of

⁴⁰ Cf. *Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, Aluva 2003, xiii-xiv; for the constitution compiled by Kurialacherry, *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, 27-111.

⁴¹ Founder's Constitution of 1918, part I, chapter 1, no. 1, *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, 27; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 94.

⁴² Founder's Constitution of 1918, part I, chapter 1, no. 1, *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, 27-28; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 95.

the entire human person. True adoration consists not only in prayers and hymns, but also in learning from the “Eucharistic heart of Jesus the infinite love” and living the spiritual values represented by the Eucharistic mystery.

Kurialacherry wanted the Adoration Congregation to be not only contemplative through Eucharistic devotion, but also active through service to the people. So according to the intention of the founder the specific purpose of the congregation was to sustain the spiritual and cultural edification of society through the contemplative and apostolic dimensions of life.⁴³ There is no wonder that he indicated the education and formation of girls and women as one of the main apostolates of the Congregation.⁴⁴

3.2. A Glance at the Growth of the Congregation

By the time Kurialacherry died in 1925 the Congregation had 9 houses in different parts of the diocese of Changanacherry, with 121 professed members, 13 novices and 35 postulants. There were schools attached to every convent for the education and formation of girls.⁴⁵ After the death of the founder the Congregation extended to different parts of the Changanacherry diocese, which at that time consisted of the present eparchies of Palai and Kanjirapally. On 30 April 1930 the successor of Kurialacherry, Mar James Kalacherry appointed Sr. Philomena (Punnappadath) as the first Mother General of the Congregation.⁴⁶

⁴³ Cf. Febronia, “Global Transformation through the Mediation of the Eucharist”, in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 85.

⁴⁴ Cf. Founder’s Constitution, part III, chapter 10, no. 2; *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, 103; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 102; S. Perreppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 168.

⁴⁵ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 97.

⁴⁶ Cf. Perreppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 113-114.

Gradually the Congregation spread to different dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church, but it was functioning as independent units under various eparchial bishops. In 1963 the various units of the Congregation was unified under one superior general. On 11 February 1968 the Apostolic See approved the revised constitution of the Congregation and raised it to the status of pontifical right.⁴⁷ The constitution, twice revised and approved after the Second Vatican Council, was again amended in tune with the Eastern Code and was approved by the Apostolic See on 28 July 2003. In the course of time the Congregation spread not only to all the dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church, but even to the Latin dioceses in India and abroad. The Congregation now numbers about 5000 members in 17 provinces, 5 regions and 570 houses, and has reached 105 dioceses, covering all the Indian states and all the continents except Australia.

3.3. Eucharistic Life at Present

Still today the sisters of the Congregation live the charism of their founder, which consists of active participation in the Eucharistic celebration, the supreme act of worship, and unceasing adoration of the Bl. Sacrament, combining in an appropriate manner the contemplative and apostolic dimensions of religious life. The present constitution of SABS clearly states: “Our spirituality is the Eucharistic spirituality centred on the Holy Eucharist and the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It consists in our becoming holocausts in order to give life to others”.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The decree raising the Congregation to the pontifical status can be found in *Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, ix-xi.

⁴⁸ *Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, 2-3.

A simple glance at the constitution of the Congregation demonstrates that the triple dimension of the comprehensive Eucharistic vision of Kurialacherry, namely Eucharist celebration, Eucharistic adoration and Eucharistic action, is maintained even today. The constitution explicitly states: “Holy Eucharist, celebrated and adored every day is the source and summit of our experience...As the Eucharist, the supreme act of worship Jesus offered to the Father, becomes the centre of our life, our religious commitment grows in its identity and perfection”.⁴⁹ According to the constitution, the specific charism of the Congregation is devotion to the holy Eucharist, which consists of active participation in the Eucharistic celebration and unceasing adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, cultivating a deep personal attachment to Jesus in the holy Eucharist.⁵⁰

Such Eucharistic spirituality and contemplation of the infinite love manifested in the Eucharist enable the members to become “holocausts” in order to give life to others, bearing witness to the ineffable love of God and sharing it with others through various activities and services. The apostolic activities of the Congregation encompasses different fields such as: Eucharistic apostolate, mission and evangelization, education and formation, healing ministry and social service.⁵¹ Thus, emulating the model of life set by Kurialacherry, the Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament have adopted a way of life, consisting of a fitting combination of adoration and action, contemplation and apostolate, prayer and work, aimed at the spiritual and

⁴⁹ *Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, 4.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, 2-3.

⁵¹ Cf. *Constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, 47-57.

material progress of the Christian community and civil society.

Chapter Three
“RENEW EVERYTHING IN CHRIST”: THE
MOTTO OF VENERABLE KURIALACHERRY
AND ITS REALIZATION

Introduction

As we have already seen, at the moment of the episcopal consecration, Kurialacherry adopted as his motto: “Renew everything in Christ”. Because of his constant eucharistic life in the presence of the Lord he recognized that a profound renewal was required among the St Thomas Christians in accordance with evangelical principles. In keeping with his motto, at the very start of his episcopal ministry he revealed his intention to proceed with an all-round renewal of the vicariate and indicated those fields which needed profound transformation: life and discipline of the clergy, efficient governance of parish churches and pastoral ministry, transparency and accountability in the administration of temporal properties of the parishes, institutes of consecrated life, Christian family and spiritual renovation of the faithful, general secular education, religious instruction of children and new converts, reunion of separated brethren and evangelization of non-Christians, confraternities and associations, as well as various dimensions of the socio-cultural life of the people.¹ In this chapter we consider only some aspects of his comprehensive renewal programme, which had much beneficial influence for the transformation of Christian community and which have some relevance even today.

¹ Cf. Pastoral letters 1 & 4; *MTKES*, 4-5 & 16-36; Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Relatio et Vota*, 6, 15, 32-33 & 95; for details, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 99-138.

1. Pastoral Ministry for Renewal

Right from the beginning of his administration Kurialacherry initiated strenuous efforts for the profound renewal of the vicariate, centred on Christ as, in him “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (*Col 1: 19-20*). In spite of relentless activities and the bodily sickness which often disturbed him especially during his later years, during the 13 years of his administration he wrote 113 pastoral letters to priests, religious and the faithful, and roughly 75 circulars on particular themes. The pastoral letters, which can be considered as a compendium of dogmatic and moral principles, enshrine solid Christian doctrine and contain comprehensive directives and valid proposals for renewal in all the aforementioned realms of ecclesial life.²

Another means he adopted for the renewal of everything in Christ was pastoral visitations of the vicariate, which at that time was very vast, consisting also of the present dioceses of Palai and Kanjirappally. When he began the administration of the vicariate there were 94 parishes and 38 filial churches, which increased to 114 and 72 respectively towards the end of his ministry. During the 13 years and 6 months of his governance he made three rounds of well-prepared pastoral visitations of all the churches, undertaking laborious journeys since the means of transport at the time was bullock carts and country boats in the water-logged areas.³ Through such visits he hoped to achieve the spiritual renewal of the parishes and to rectify eventual defects and shortcomings in parish administration. With

² Cf. *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 139-145.

³ For details, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 147-161.

regard to the spiritual preparation, before starting his first pastoral visitation, in the circular of 6 August 1912 he wrote:

Remember that beyond the material preparations for the reception and pastoral visitation, I wish to see that you prepare yourselves spiritually in order to receive me, as your father and spiritual head. This would give me greater joy. Hence those who have not made paschal confession and communion, let them immediately make it. If there is anything requiring restitution, let it be cleared as early as possible; let those who live in mutual enmity and hatred, get themselves reconciled as early as possible. If there is anyone with bad habits, like drinking and other evil tendencies, private or public, let them return to a correct living and receive holy Communion during the pastoral visitation.⁴

It is evident that he considered pastoral visitation as an occasion for spiritual renewal in the parish, reconciling those who had strayed, reinvigorating the faith of the weak and extirpating social evils. He paid attention to all sections of the people of God in the parish, especially children, the bed-ridden and the elderly.⁵

He was convinced that confraternities and associations would be of great help in bringing about the desired spiritual renewal in the vicariate. Thus he encouraged the parish priests to start the confraternities of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart and of the Rosary, the Franciscan Third Order and associations like Mar Thoma Dasa Sangam for catechism in villages. Moreover, he advised all the vicars to start the 13 hours adoration in their churches. He himself assigned the dates for the churches to

⁴ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 155.

⁵ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 152-154 & 413-414.

conduct the adoration, so much so that every day there would be the Eucharistic adoration in the diocese.⁶

2. Secular Education and Religious Formation of People

Kurialacherry had a profound and comprehensive vision of education, which consisted of the formation and enhancement of body, soul and all their faculties. He taught that man is composed of the basic elements of soul and body, and soul has the double forces of intellect and mind. Moreover man is called to the earthly welfare consisting of physical happiness and wisdom, and the celestial well-being, namely the vision of God and eternal beatitude. Hence he concluded that the education and upbringing of children should encompass and aim at all these aspects: body and soul, spiritual faculties of intellect and mind as well as earthly and heavenly wellbeing and fulfilment.⁷ In brief, true education, which embraces all aspects of human beings, is secular and religious, intellectual and spiritual, earthly and heavenly.

2.1. Secular Education

Since he understood the need for religious and secular education for human development, real progress and genuine renewal, he always endeavoured to promote educational facilities, particularly underlining the importance for the progress of society of the higher education of women, who were then confined to their homes.⁸ At that time higher

⁶ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 124-125.

⁷ Pastoral letter 28; *MTKES*, 172-173.

⁸ For more about his activities for the promotion of education, cf. *The Apostle of the Holy Eucharist*, 64-68; S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 165-170; K. T. Sebastian, "A Pioneer of Christian Education", in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 160-163.

education for women barely existed and they were excluded from the main stream of society. With regard to the deplorable state of women's education and the consequent initiative of Kurialacherry Augustine Kachiramattam stated:

It is highly deplorable that women's education was practically neglected in those days. Except for few privileged women of upper class families, no other woman was taught even to read and write. Nothing much could be expected of a society where women were kept illiterate and uneducated. Being ware of the immense influence of an educated woman in the development and well being of her community, Bishop Kurialacherry paved the way for the liberation of women from their social and cultural bondage.⁹

Even as a young seminarian, Kurialacherry wrote in his personal diary among the things he wanted to do in Kerala: "Start big schools for girls and teach them tailoring and similar subjects".¹⁰ After his return to Kerala and especially after his appointment as vicar apostolic he paid special attention to women's education. Since at that time there were no separate high schools for girls, in his great zeal for providing higher education for the emancipation and empowerment of women, Kurialacherry took the progressive step of allowing some of them to study temporarily in boys' schools at St Berchman's Changanacherry and St Aloysius' Edathua. Apostolic Delegate Zaleski reported this to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide as a tendency of modernism, and as a grave evil to be absolutely prohibited.¹¹ With the letter of 13 January 1916 Propaganda Fide indicated to

⁹ A. Kachiramattam, "A Relentless Crusader against Social Evils", in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 220-221.

¹⁰ Personal Diary, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 179.

¹¹ Cf. ACO, *Delegazione India, Soriani del Malabar 1883-1910*, Rubr. 109, vol. 2, Prot. No. 36987/1915; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 435-436.

Kurialacherry the “grave inconveniences” that could ensue from the “promiscuity of sexes” and required from him an exhaustive explanation for such mixed education.¹²

On 28 February 1916 Kurialacherry sent a response to the prefect of Propaganda Fide, stating that, due to the lack of separate high schools for girls, as an exception, he admitted a few selected girls in boys’ schools, because it was necessary for the emancipation of women and progress of the Catholic community. He explained that there was no danger in such “mixed schools”, since they were under the special vigilance of the Bishop and the girls were living in convents with religious sisters. Besides, in the schools, they were seated separately from boys and had no permission to speak with them.¹³

Afterwards, in full compliance with the mind of Propaganda, and in spite of financial difficulties, Kurialacherry took the initiative of constructing separate high schools for girls, encouraged all women’s religious congregations to start schools attached to their convents and ordered that girls be sent only to such schools.¹⁴ This was the origin of several girls’ high schools in the territory of the ancient vicariate of Changanacherry.¹⁵ Considering the great importance of women’s education, in the constitution of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament which

¹² Letter of G. Rollery, Secretary of Propaganda Fide, 13 January 1916, ACO, *Delegazione India, Soriani del Malabar 1883-1910*, Rubr. 109, vol. 2, Prot. No. 36987/1915; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 284-285.

¹³ ACO, *Delegazione India, Soriani del Malabar 1883-1910*, Rubr. 109, vol. 2, Prot. No. 37200/1916.

¹⁴ Cf. Pastoral letters 18, 28, 37, 51 & 84; *MTKES*, 120, 176, 221, 282-283 & 417-418.

¹⁵ Ironically at present separate schools for boys and girls are unthinkable in the West and are even considered as scandalous and detrimental to psychological growth and sexual education of children.

Kurialacherry personally compiled, he indicated women's education as one of the main apostolates of the sisters:

They shall establish girls' schools and teach the girls to read and write, cooking, needle work, music, painting and such other arts as found good for the society. They shall be trained in humility, modesty, gentleness, fortification, in the fear of God and other moral virtues, cleanliness, punctuality, good manners for a civilised behaviour...Thus you will help to renew the families, the villages and nations, and earn them effectively for God.¹⁶

He aimed at the holistic formation girls, which consists not only in rendering them literate, but also in training them for job-oriented arts and forming them in moral virtues and other good qualities necessary for a civilized life. With regard to the great importance of the education of women, in the pastoral letter of 3 July 1920 he affirmed:

Education of the boys should be separate from that of the girls. We are convinced that greater attention should be paid to the education of girls, because the proper upbringing of the children who are the future of the world and their moral conduct depend, to a great extent, on women. The children have a tendency to imitate the conduct of their parents, especially of the mothers, who are continuously in contact with them. For the proper training of children, and for improving their character, there are none more competent than mothers.¹⁷

After the reception of the aforementioned letter of Propaganda concerning "mixed education", Kurialacherry repeatedly reiterated that the education of boys should be separate from that of the girls". In spite of financial

¹⁶ Founder's Constitution, part III, chapter 10, no. 2; *Visudha Kurbanayude Aradhana Sanyasini Samoohathinde Pythrukam*, 103; English trans., *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 102.

¹⁷ Pastoral letter 51; *MTKES*, 282-283.

difficulties and other logistic predicaments he always strove to promote the formation of girls by the erection of separate educational institutions, since he considered women's education absolutely necessary for the future of the Church and the world.

2.2. Catechism and Religious Instruction

Since man is at the same time a spiritual and corporal being, education has also these two dimensions. In fact, Kurialacherry gave prime importance to the religious formation of the Christian faithful, through preaching, retreats and catechetical instruction. According to him secular education without faith in God and devoid of ethical and moral principles is detrimental to any society and the world at large.¹⁸ He believed that all the great calamities and disturbances in the world stemmed from the lack of knowledge of God and many crimes and immoral acts augmented due to the neglect of religious wisdom.¹⁹

Kurialacherry expounded the theological ground of religious instruction, based on the words of Jesus: "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent".²⁰ He explained the close connection between eternal salvation and the knowledge of God as follows:

God has created us so that we may know God, and love him and thus acquire eternal salvation. It is for this purpose that the Son of God became man and dwelt among us. The Word incarnate revealed himself and the eternal Father, and taught us the way of salvation. Unless we live according to what he taught us, we will not

¹⁸ Pastoral letter 18; *MTKES*, 116-117.

¹⁹ Cf. Pastoral letter 8; *MTKES*, 31.

²⁰ *Jn* 17, 3; cf. Pastoral letter 26; *MTKES*, 163.

acquire salvation, because as Christ revealed it, eternal salvation is to know God the Father, and Christ he has sent. We do acquire this knowledge through exhortations and religious instruction. In the degree in which we have this knowledge, we will be close to him and walk in the path of salvation.²¹

Given the prime importance of the knowledge of God for eternal salvation, good of the Church and for the welfare of the society, he often reminded parents, priests, managers of schools and teachers of their grave obligation to impart religious wisdom to the children.²²

For Kurialacherry, religious education is primarily the obligation of parents, who should impart religious formation to the children through their instructions, exhortations and above all through their exemplary life. According to him the parents, especially the mothers, are responsible to give the children a true Christian and Catholic formation. The mothers should teach them the prayers and explain to them their meaning. The parents should teach the children not merely by words and exhortation, but above all by their lives and lived examples. They should be living models to their children. They should teach and train them in the Catholic discipline.²³ He considered good Christian families as the first schools of education, and the religious formation of children as the most important obligation and apostolate of the parents, as the following statement evidences:

It is a well known truth that all serious and varied responsibilities of parents converge on the most

²¹ Pastoral letter 4; *MTKES*, 30-31; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 21.

²² Cf. Pastoral letters, 4, 12, 18, 26, 46, 88; *MTKES*, 31, 79, 117-120, 163, 256, 435-436.

²³ The exhortation of Kurialacherry in Pastoral letter 28 as summarized in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 101; *MTKES*, 176-177.

important obligation of bringing up their children. This is a holy office and task entrusted to them by God. Moreover, in accordance with the scriptural words, “woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel” (1 *Cor* 9, 16), how the apostolate of gentiles is assigned to Paul, so is this a holy apostolic work in the family entrusted by God to the parents. Those who accomplish it in a Christian manner, by the same fact fulfil the commandments and obtain salvation. It is in this sense that the words of St Paul to Timothy about mothers, ‘yet she will be saved through childbearing’ (1 *Tim* 2, 15) should be understood.²⁴

At the level of the parish the priests are especially responsible for religious instruction. In the circular letter written to the clergy on 1 June 1916 Kurialacherry asserted: “Preaching and catechism are two of the most important things a priest has to do for the salvation of souls. Our Lord’s last command was to go and teach the nations of the world. This shows the importance of preaching and the teaching of religion. It is not enough that a priest saves himself; he has to save others as well”.²⁵

The profound educational concept of Kurialacherry corresponds to the teaching of Vatican II, according to which the scope of education is to help young people “to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities”.²⁶ With regard to the educational role of the family also he anticipated Vatican II, which underlined that the task of imparting education belongs primarily to the family,

²⁴ Pastoral letter 28; *MTKES*, 171-172.

²⁵ *Idayante Sandesam*, 34-35; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 73.

²⁶ Vatican II, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis*, no. 1.

where the children are taught to know and worship God and to love the neighbour.²⁷

3. Crusade against Socio-cultural Evils

Kurialacherry's programme of renewal also included different aspects of socio-cultural life. As a social reformer, he strove to extirpate superstitious customs, drug addiction, immoral practices, iniquitous cultural programmes, as well as cheap publications contrary to a good moral life and human values.²⁸ In this section we consider only two main points: the efforts of Kurialacherry for the elimination of caste elements and racial discrimination among Catholics, and his war against the plague of alcoholism.

3.1. Elimination of Caste among the Christians

The ancestors of the St Thomas Christians who had embraced Christian faith from different religions and races formed a single community and all of them enjoyed the same dignity, privileges and rites. When the South Indian society was restructured according to caste system, after the tenth century the indigenous Christian community also became inadvertently part of the spontaneous evolution and began to be considered by other groups as one of the high castes with special privileges and incomparable prerogatives. This was a consequence of the compartmentalization of the South Indian society and an extreme level of cultural adaption and natural contextualization for self-existence and survival. Soon people began to regard the Christian community as a *jati* and its royally privileged national head, the archdeacon of all India as *Jathikkukarthavian*.

²⁷ Vatican II, *Gravissimum educationis*, no. 3.

²⁸ Cf. S. Pereppadan, *Bishop Thomas Kurialacherry*, 170-172; A. Kachiramattam, "A Relentless Crusader against Social Evils", in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 216-226.

Gradually the caste system with its rules of pollution and touch began to be practised among the Christians, but only with regard to their external relationship with other low castes. Inside the community there was no significant caste difference: all the St Thomas Christians, including new converts, irrespective of their ethnic origin, different kinds of occupations, financial status and natural complexion enjoyed equal dignity, rights and privileges. According to the Portuguese historian Antonio de Gouvea St Thomas Christians practiced the rules of pollution and touch, not because they accepted it as an ideology, but only for practical purposes, namely to preserve their privileges and to maintain contact with the high caste Hindus and kings, necessary for trade and commerce.²⁹

The Synod of Diamper, which labelled many of the inculturated elements as pagan practices and extirpated most of the innocent Indo-oriental traditions, contrary to what many believe, did not consider caste as incompatible with the Christian faith, nor abolished it. The Synod decreed that since the Christians, “by reason of their being subject to infidel princes, whom they are forced to obey in all things, wherein the faith is no ways concerned” and since they could not conduct any trade or communication with the people of higher castes if they touched those of the lower rank, they “may in all places thus lawfully observe it (caste), where there are Nairs or any of the better sort, or where it is likely they may be, or may come to hear of it...”.³⁰ The

²⁹ Cf. A. De Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Menezes...*, Coimbra 1606, 63 & 74; P. Malekandathil, ed., *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, Kochi 2003, 258 & 282-283.

³⁰ Session IX, decree 2.

Synod encouraged the conversion of low castes, but also ordered the erection of new churches for such converts.³¹

Archbishop Menezes, who subjugated the St Thomas Christians with the help of local kings and princes and who had to safeguard the military and commercial interest of Portugal, could not make any legislation that would have displeased the said authorities and jeopardised the spice-trade conducted by the Christians among the high castes for the advantage of Portugal. History demonstrates that after the Synod of Diamper, with the conversion of many low castes, the caste differences became acute in the Christian community, engendering discrimination against new converts and Dalits, who were not even permitted to enter some of the churches.

At the time of Kurialacherry the “new Christians”, mainly from the low castes, did not freely mingle with the traditional Christians and were not permitted to sit close to the latter in the churches. In some parishes the new converts could receive holy Communion only at the entrance of the church and not at the common rails. After describing the grave situation of the low castes, outcastes and untouchables among the Hindus, Kurian Mathothu describes the situation of the new Christians as follows:

Often they were not allowed to enter the church along with others. They were allotted separate places in the church. Sometimes they had even to remain outside the church. Even in cemeteries they were segregated. Such was the situation in the schools also.³²

In addition to ill-treatment of the Dalit Christians and new converts, there existed also division between the Southists

³¹ Session VIII, decree 35.

³² K. Mathothu, “A Friend and Liberator of the Dalits”, in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 230.

and Northists in the vicariate of Changanacherry and frequent skirmishes between them, so much so that some considered these communities as two castes.

Being grieved by such tragic situation in his Church, as a young seminarian Kurialacherry wrote as the first of his 64 proposals for renewal: “Form local associations of bishops, priests and prominent laity to remove caste distinction among the Catholics”.³³ As soon as he returned to his motherland, he began to fight against caste system through his words, deeds and examples. He mingled with the new converts, visited their homes and ate with them challenging the Christian practices of that time. Thus, in accordance with the noble evangelical values of equality and dignity of all human persons, during his priestly and episcopal ministry Kurialacherry always endeavoured to eliminate discrimination against the Dalit Christians and other new converts.

After Kurialacherry had become vicar apostolic of Changanacherry, being informed of the fact that in the Koilmuk church new converts were not permitted to receive holy Communion together with the old Catholics, he issued the following order to the vicar:

There is no difference between the new Christians and the old Christians before God. Hence, it is not right that the old Christians have a special place in the church and the new Christians another place. Hence the new Christians too should receive holy Communion at the communion rails with the old Christians.³⁴

In brief, he fought against injustice and discrimination on the basis of caste and ethnic origin with the intention of creating a Christian community based on universal brotherhood of all

³³ Personal Diary, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 178.

³⁴ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 107.

the children of God. During his administration, the Bishop opened 24 catechetical centres annexed to the parish churches to instruct the neophytes.³⁵ In the same way he was also concerned about the welfare of the new converts, who were mostly from the lower castes.

3.2. Alcoholism as the Main Source of Evils

Kurialacherry was fully aware of the harms provoked by alcoholic drinks and so in strong words he admonished the faithful and invited them to abstain from this evil for the wellbeing of the family and society. In the pastoral letter of 8 September 1913 he wrote:

I am fully aware, as also you are, that alcoholic drinks cause serious harm. It impedes the real progress of the society, disturbs the peace in the family and endangers the family safety. Besides it causes perdition of souls, loss of wealth, serious disease and even murder. In short, it causes the violation of all the divine commandments and all kinds of crimes. We consider it one of our main duties to wipe out this devilish evil – the cause of all evils from the society.³⁶

In the pastoral letter of 1 March 1915 he depicted alcoholism as the most deplorable evil and a devilish poison. He admonished the faithful to avoid alcoholic drinks for transforming the families into happy paradises on earth for the peace and tranquillity of their hearts. He stigmatized the devilish effects of alcoholism as follows:

My brethren and dear children, once this poison enters inside, what malicious things does it operate inside? It is almost impossible to describe them. This evil kills the mind created in the image of God and pulls down man

³⁵ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 130-131.

³⁶ Pastoral Letter 4; *MTKES*, 25; English trans., *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 103.

from the high state in which he was created to the low state of animals. How many families has this devilish decoction ruined! Destroying the peace in the families how many hells has this devilish evil created of the noble families! How many unfortunate deaths it has caused! How many suicides! How many lovely and handsome youths have been turned ugly and cruel by this evil! How many couples have been separated and how many families have been shattered! The very life on earth has become so much a burden to some, so much so that they wanted to finish themselves. Briefly speaking alcoholic drinks induce man to all evil desires, and harden their hearts so much so that they fail to elicit an act of contrition even on death-bed.³⁷

As Kurilacherry stated, alcoholism obfuscates the intellect and mind, reducing human beings created in the image and likeness of God to the level of beasts, devastates families, provokes many murders and suicides, and thus degenerates the Christian community and cripples the society at large. The strong admonition of Kurialacherry is relevant even today, since the rampant culture of alcoholism is continuously widening its grips, dehumanizing individual persons, devastating families and crippling societies.

4. Evangelization and Spread of the Kingdom

Venerable Kurialacherry proposed all the aforementioned items, mainly for the renewal of the Christian community, whereas evangelization was intended for the spiritual transformation of the faithful of other religions, enabling them to know Christ, the true Redeemer and ennobling their cultures with the leaven of gospel values. Kurialacherry received his missionary formation at the Propaganda College and hence he manifested great

³⁷ Pastoral Letter 8; *MTKES*, 55; English trans., *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 103-104.

interest in the evangelization of his nation and the spread of the kingdom of God. Already as a seminarian he had in mind the evangelisation of his native people. One of the proposals he had noted in his diary at that time mentions starting “a particular congregation to work for the conversion of non-Christians”.³⁸ Returning to India after his ordination, he took every opportunity during his priestly ministry to preach the Gospel, especially to the low castes and Dalits many of whom he succeeded in baptizing.³⁹

4.1. Zeal for Evangelization

After the episcopal consecration, Kurialacherry endeavoured to ignite the priests, religious and faithful with the missionary spirit through exemplary acts, pastoral letters and circulars, reminding them of their grave obligation for evangelization. According to him, it is an obligation binding all, not only the priests and the religious, but also the faithful in general, because it is the command of Christ: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you’.⁴⁰ He considered the spread of the kingdom of God as one of the most important official ministries ensuing from his episcopal consecration and he prepared himself for this task.⁴¹

He denounced the general inertia and the culpable disinterest for evangelization prevalent among the St

³⁸ Personal Diary, in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 180.

³⁹ For more about his activities with regard to evangelization, cf. Febronia, “Zeal for Evangelization” & A. Karikulam, “Mar Kurialacherry’s Missionary Vision”, in Stella Maris, ed., *Shepherd of the Times*, 133-138 & 139-142.

⁴⁰ Pastoral letter 27; *MTKES*, 169.

⁴¹ Cf. Pastoral letter 68; *MTKES*, 351.

Thomas Christians at that time and often exhorted priests, religious and other Christian faithful about their grave obligation to extend the kingdom of God each according to his or her status and office.⁴² In accordance with the Catholic theological thinking of that time in the circular letter of 1 June 1916 he admonished the priests:

There are so many pagans living in our parishes and country sides and they live in the shadow of death and in danger of hell. The salvation of these people also has been entrusted to us. It may be possible to save them from damnation if we are ready to make some effort, sacrifice some money, and at times speak to them a word or two. We should feel ourselves ashamed of our indifference and laziness in this regard, when we think of the fervour of those foreigners who came here to work for the conversion of the pagans in this land...Let the salvation of souls be the ambition of a good priest and not high positions or accumulation of wealth. In their fervour for the salvation of souls and in imitation of Christ, priests must be prepared to sacrifice their position and their comforts in life.⁴³

He convincingly presented Apostle St Thomas, who travelled to so distant a land to enlighten the ancestors of the St Thomas Christians with the light of the Gospel and who embraced martyrdom for the sake of Christ and the Indian Church, as the best example which should stimulate these Christians for evangelization.⁴⁴ When he was seriously sick his greatest regret was that he felt he had not done enough to

⁴² Cf. Pastoral letters 27, 41, 50-51, 56, 68-69, 72, 77, 87-88, 96, 101-103, 108, 110; *MTKES*, 168-170, 237-238, 270-273, 284, 302-304, 353, 357, 366-368, 385-390, 430-431, 434, 464-466, 484, 486-488, 493, 513-516, 526.

⁴³ *Idayante Sandesam*, 36-37; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 74-75.

⁴⁴ Cf. Pastoral letters 27, 50, 68, 88, 96; *MTKES*, 196-197, 271-272, 350-352, 434, 465-466.

spread the light of the Gospel. In his pastoral letter of 1 January 1918 he wrote:

The Incarnate Son, Jesus, out of his infinite mercy, has deigned to call our forefathers dwelling in the darkness of intellect and in the shadow of death to the light of faith in a miraculous way... Today, over 1900 years later, how great is our obligation, ours and yours, to show forth this light of faith to the millions who still remain in the dark. Remember that the light of faith is given to us not merely for ourselves to enjoy, but also for others.

Though I have reminded you of this obligation of evangelisation several times before, I feel that I have not sufficiently conscientized you of this obligation. At this time, when I feel that I am very close to the time when I am to render account of this before the judgement seat of Jesus Christ, our divine redeemer and the just judge, this thought makes me quite anxious. So I remind you once again of this: 'Go and teach them all what I have taught you', this what Christ had commanded of his Apostles, today concerns us, especially the bishops and the priests who are successors of the Apostles. It concerns also the faithful. Each one, according to the particular state of life, is bound to propagate the faith and help those who are engaged in the work of evangelisation. I remind you, this is an indispensable obligation incumbent on all.⁴⁵

In this passage, reminding the priests and the faithful of the infinite mercy of Jesus, who in a miraculous way called our forefathers to the light of the Gospel, based on the dominical command for the universal Christian mission, he highlights the obligation of all to sincerely endeavour for the evangelization of peoples.

In the pastoral letter of 3 July 1920, written after the conclusion of the second pastoral visit of the churches, not

⁴⁵ Pastoral letter 27; *MTKES*, 168-169; *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 34-35.

being satisfied of the missionary efforts of the priests, he admonished them to promote evangelization even spending a part of their own money:

We cannot but say that neither priests nor our laity have not yet paid sufficient attention with regard to the propagation of faith. As for priests ...it is fitting and would be a virtue, in line with their divine call, that they spend something from their own earnings and promote the propagation of faith. In the same way, by contributing according to their mite, they may help other priests who spend themselves in this salvific work and extend the kingdom of God in our midst. Such an activity is a very beneficial and virtuous act with regard to our salvation. Besides, it is also very conducive to the progress of our society.⁴⁶

Due to his zeal for evangelization the conversions considerably increased during his pastoral governance. From the quinquennial reports sent to the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide we understand that in 1913, when he began the administration of the vicariate there were 1200 new converts; whereas in the report submitted in 1920 they numbered 15,706.⁴⁷ Though the vicariate laboured under severe financial constraints, he was very generous in the case of the propagation of faith. On the occasion of his sacerdotal silver jubilee, he was offered a sum of Rs.18000/ and another amount of Rs.5000/ to purchase a motor car for his travels, but he donated the whole amount to the cause of evangelisation.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Pastoral Letter 51; *MTKES*, 284; English trans., *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 48.

⁴⁷ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 132-133.

⁴⁸ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 131.

4.2. The Aborted Project of a Missionary Seminary

As we have indicated, already as a seminarian Kurialacherry also had plans to start a missionary religious congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for men, who might devote themselves entirely to the work of evangelisation. After becoming vicar apostolic, he intended to start this religious congregation, together with a missionary seminary in Changanacherry for the proper missionary formation of priests, to be destined exclusively for evangelization. A suitable building was also constructed.⁴⁹ The decision of Kurialacherry was also motivated by the fact that despite his constant exhortations and encouragement priests were not very enthusiastic about the ministry of evangelization.

With the letter of 9 April 1918 Kurialacherry requested Apostolic Delegate Pietro Fumasoni Biondi to obtain permission from the Holy See for the official start of the project. The Apostolic Delegate forwarded the said letter to Rome, together with his negative opinion.⁵⁰ On 6 January 1919 the Apostolic Delegate communicated to Kurialacherry the unfavourable response of the Holy See as follows:

His Eminence Cardinal Secretary after duly praising your zeal for the extension of the kingdom of God, directs me to say that = (to) the S. Congregation does not seem necessary or opportune the opening of any new institution for the conversion of pagans. It is preferable that the conversion of the said pagans be attended to by the Latin missionaries, as, according to the practice hereto followed, the pagans who become Catholics

⁴⁹ See the letter of Kurialacherry to Apostolic Delegate Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, dated 9 April 1918 requesting him to obtain permission of the Holy See, in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 206-208.

⁵⁰ See the letter of Apostolic Delegate Pietro Fumasoni Biondi to the Prefect of Propaganda, Prot. no. 239, 20 April 1918, in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 436-443.

belong to the Latin rite. The Vicar apostolic of Changanacherry may exercise this zeal in promoting conversion of the numerous Jacobites who being of the Syro-Malabarese rite would *de jure* come to increase the number of the Christians entrusted to his care.⁵¹

In full compliance with the position of Rome he did not erect the said seminary or the religious institute, but he did not abandon the project of at least founding a missionary congregation, because the intention of the farsighted bishop was not the increase of “the number of Christians entrusted to his care”, but the spread of the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls.

During his lifetime he continued his endeavours for the missionary religious congregation and in his testament even allotted a sum of money for its realization: “The amount of money seen in the account of the Diocese as my earning is meant for evangelization and for the missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament we intend to found and for those whom we want to educate for the same and for their successors, Rs. 10,000/- should be given to the above said Congregation”.⁵² After his death this congregation was canonically erected in 1933 by his successor Mar James Kalacherry under the name “Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament”.⁵³

Subsequent history demonstrates that the constant admonitions, directives and example of Venerable Kurialacherry succeeded in engendering an irresistible missionary spirit among the faithful of the region –

⁵¹ Letter of Apostolic Delegate Pietro Fumasoni Biondi to Kurialacherry, 6 January 1919, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 3, 288.

⁵² Cf. The testament written on 9 April 1923, in *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 258; cf. also the testament written on 29 May 1918 after the attack of rheumatism in 1917, in p. 257.

⁵³ *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. 1, 257.

consisting of the present dioceses of Changanacherry, Palai and Kanjirapally – from whence several thousand priests, religious and sisters flocked to different parts of India carrying with them the light of the Gospel, even abandoning their Church and rite, as necessitated by circumstances before the Second Vatican Council.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

As a diligent student, an ideal seminarian, an exemplary priest and a saintly bishop Venerable Mar Thomas Kurialacherry shines out as a model of life and sanctity for the Christian faithful of all walks of life and of every status and office. His mode life, edifying examples and stimulating ideas surely contribute to the spiritual progress of the faithful and the religious heritage of the Church in India.

The Eucharistic vision of Kurialacherry cannot, as some think, simply be reduced to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament alone. It comprehends also various other aspects such as: rightful celebration of the Eucharist according to the prescription of liturgical books, frequent and even daily participation of the faithful in the Qurbana, worthy reception of holy Communion and internal transformation of the faithful in intimate union with the Lord, and above all, the Eucharistic life, consisting of becoming oblation and sacrament of salvation for others through total self-giving, the heroic practice of Christian charity and selfless service. The mode of life and writings of Kurialacherry demonstrate that he was a profound contemplative and a constant adorer, but at the same time, gaining strength from the Eucharistic Lord, he turned out to be a relentless activist, constantly thriving for the spiritual renewal and transformation of the Catholic community and society at large.

The Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament still faithfully live the spiritual heritage and the Eucharistic vision of Kurialacherry, updating them in tune with the contemporary liturgical, theological and ecclesiological developments, and thus contribute to the enhancement of religious and evangelical values, through an intense spiritual

life centred on the Eucharist. Based on the teaching and example of their founder, according to the spirit of the first constitution of 1918 the sisters of the Adoration Congregation have adopted an equilibrated model of life, consisting of a fitting combination of adoration and action, contemplation and apostolate, prayer and work, aimed at the spiritual and material progress of the Christian community and civil society.

As the vicar apostolic and first bishop of Changanacherry, Kurialacherry laid the foundation for a strong and vibrant Christian community in the region, based on traditional theological and moral principles in tune with the evangelical and human values of equality, fraternity and dignity of all Christians as children of God, but open to socio-cultural progress and human development through higher education, extirpation of injustices, and eradication of discrimination on the basis of caste, blood and ethnic origin. After the deplorable events and fifteen years of continuous agitation and troubles in the vicariate of Changanacherry, with the appointment of Kurialacherry as vicar apostolic, peace and harmony began to reign in the region, triggering a new wave of intense spiritual life and religious progress. Through his constant admonitions and vivid example he also shattered the inertia of the St Thomas Christians in the region with regard to evangelization, unleashing thus a new generation of courageous missionaries, imbued with a real thirst for the spread of the kingdom of God and ready to flock into the mission territories, regardless of insurmountable hurdles, enormous sacrifices and intense sufferings.

The teaching and admonitions of Kurialacherry concerning Eucharistic centred life, evangelization of peoples, general education and religious formation, as well as human development and socio-cultural progress are still relevant and beneficial to the Christian community and the

civil society. Despite the episcopal presence in India from the early centuries of Christian era, Thomas Kurialacherry is the first Indian bishop, whom the divine providence has destined to be officially declared Venerable by the supreme authority of the Church. We hope and pray that Our Lord Jesus Christ who preordained Apostle St Thomas for the evangelization of India, may grant us the grace to see this exemplary bishop, good shepherd of the people of God, zealous preacher of the Gospel, devout celebrant of divine mysteries, constant adorer of the Eucharistic Lord, courageous animator of consecrated life, constant promoter of human development through education and indefatigable crusader against socio-cultural evils, be elevated to the honours of the altar, for the spiritual stimulus of the Indian Church and the greater glory of God.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

1. *The Synod of Bishops of Catholic Oriental Churches*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome 1994, pp. 234.
2. *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity* (edited), Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome 1994, pp. 307.
3. *Church and Its Most Basic Element*, (edited), Herder Editrice e Libreria, Rome 1995, pp. 212.
4. *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church in India*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome 1996, pp. 245 (Indian edition, CICAR Changanacherry 1996).
5. *Local Episcopal Bodies in East and West*, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India (OIRSI), Vadavathoor, Kottayam 1997, pp. 573.
6. *La Liturgia eucaristica della Chiesa siro-malabarese*, Edizioni Messaggero Padova, Padova 2000, pp. 258.
7. *The Catholic Church in India*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome 2003, pp. 168.
8. *La Chiesa cattolica in India*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Roma 2003, pp. 192.
9. *Important Roman Documents concerning the Catholic Church in India*, OIRSI, Kottayam 2004, pp. 279.
10. *The Catholic Church in India*, revised, elaborated and updated second edition, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome 2005, pp. 198.
11. *The Provincial Councils of Goa and the Church of St Thomas Christians*, OIRSI, Kottayam 2005, pp.204.
12. *The Grave Tragedy of the Church of St Thomas Christians in India and the Apostolic Mission of Sebastiani*, HIRS Publications, Changanassery 2006, pp. 277.
13. *Die katholische Kirche in Indien gestern und heute*, Eos Verlag, St. Ottilien 2008, pp. 294.

14. *The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper*, OIRSI, Kottayam 2008, pp. 231.
15. *Matrimonio tra cristiani indiani: il rito nella Chiesa siro-malabarese*, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2009, pp. 166.
16. *The Catholic Church in India*, completely revised, updated and elaborated Indian edition, OIRSI, Kottayam 2010, pp. xiv +284.
17. *Iniziazione cristiana nella Chiesa siro-malabarese: liturgia, teologia, storia e riforma*, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2011, pp. 240.
18. *La Chiesa cattolica in India*, edizione riveduta, elaborata e aggiornata, Aracne Editrice, Roma 2011, pp. 296.
19. *The Origin of the Southist Vicariate of Kottayam: Acts and Facts*, OIRSI, Kottayam 2011, pp. 314 (together with George Kanjirakkatt).
20. *Venerable Mar Thomas Kurialacherry: The Man and His Vision*, 2012.