

Presidential Address of
His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, the Supreme Head of the
Universal Syrian Orthodox Church
at the
JACOBITE SYRIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
Kothamangalam - October 25, 2008

In the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the one true God Amen.

Our beloved brother-in-Christ His Beatitude Baselios Thomas first Catholicos, Your Graces, Very Rev Corepiscopos, Very Reverend Dayroye, Reverend Priests and the representatives from different parishes of our Church in Malankara.

We are extremely happy to preside over the Jacobite Syrian Christian Association at this historical place of Kothamangalam, where the tomb of Mor Baselios Yeldho exists. We remember, during our last visit, God gave us the opportunity to convene the meeting of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Association at Mulanthuruthy. We would congratulate you all for all the achievements of the church until now. When we stand here, we recall that, it was the late lamented Patriarch Peter the Fourth of blessed memory, who organized the Jacobite Syrian Christian Association in 1876, and paved the way for a democratic system in our Church in Malankara. India is the largest democratic country in the world. It is proper that our church in India also adopt the path of democratic way of functioning. The particular feature of our church's administration is that we maintain both Episcopacy and democracy in a balanced manner. We are happy to see that the church in India is progressing under the eminent leadership of our brother in Christ, His beatitude Thomas First Catholicos. The great organizing capacity, dynamic leadership and vision of his Beatitude have opened a new era in our church. Formulation of 2002

Constitution and election to the different bodies there-of, were an epoch-making event in the recent history of our Church in Malankara. This has provided a new identity and energy to our Church. When we participate in this meeting let us all re-affirm our historical, canonical, theological and liturgical connection with the See of Antioch. All of you should continue to work together under the spiritual guidance of his Beatitude and the other metropolitans in India for your spiritual prosper and for the progress of our church. The Working Committee and the Managing Committee should work along with The Holy Synod in a well-disciplined manner, for the prosperity of the Holy Church. We should be well equipped to face the challenges of the modern times. The Holy Church should stand always as a corrective force in the society. Then only we can effectively witness our Lord to the society around us. We admonish you to be transparent in your dealings and not to give any chance for allegations or corruption, nepotism or selfishness in our Church matters.

Since we have many new Metropolitans and new Dioceses in our Church in Malankara, we think it is necessary to give some guidelines for the effective functioning of the church.

1. As you know, each Diocesan Metropolitan is directly accountable to the Holy Regional Episcopal Synod, headed by His Beatitude the Catholicos. All the bishops should respect and obey the Catholicos and cooperate with him in the administration of our Church in Malankara, as its Regional Head.
2. Each diocese in Malankara, has to be strengthened under the leadership of its Metropolitan.
3. Each Diocesan Council should adopt proper projects that are helpful for the progress of that particular Diocese.

4. The Managing Committee and the Working Committee of the Church, in which all Dioceses have representation, will monitor the progress of each Diocese.

5. At the centre you should have a General Fund generated from different sources. And a part of that should be distributed to all dioceses according to their necessity. More care should be given to those Dioceses which are in their early stage of formation and is in need of financial support.

6. We want to remind you all that, it is not building the parishes, but building the faith-based community that is needed today. Hence adopt the ways and means by which we can educate our people in the Faith and Traditions of our Holy Church. Protect and safeguard the Faith that has been handed down to you by our forefathers. Watch carefully, against any penetration of perverted doctrines and teachings among our people.

7. Educated and well-trained Clergy is an asset of our Church. So priestly education is very important. By the Grace of God, our Church has got a well-reputed Seminary here. We advise all the Dioceses to make use of it by offering scholarships and financial aid to the seminarians. Also there should be regular in-service training given to the Clergy at the Diocesan level.

Dearly beloved,

There is a social dimension also for the Church. We see in the book of the Acts of Apostles, the nature of the early Christianity which was sharing their property and wealth with all others who were needy among them. It is our Christian responsibility to share the love of God to our society especially with those who are marginalized and discriminated. There are so many social issues around us to respond. We would recommend a 'social action forum' to analyze any social issues and to recommend a

clear stand of the Church on that particular issue. If we want to be a witnessing community, we should be ready to fight for justice in the society. It is very unfortunate to see that some people are looking for just name and positions only. We need to be more alert and responsive to the social evils, otherwise it will gradually deviate us from our call of Christian witnessing. Christian Church has always been known for its charity works. And we are happy that our Church in India has many orphanages, hospitals, old age homes, centers for mentally challenged, rehabilitation centers etc.. We also have other educational institutions to cater to the needs of the people. But we should not forget our primary aim which is to serve the Lord by serving the people.

We are going through a period where peace is disturbed and destroyed in many places around the world. Only when a man's relationship with God is proper, he can enjoy real peace of mind. Only a God-fearing man can face the challenges of life boldly. A man who accepts God as his creator and accepting and following our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will be able to see his fellow beings also, as the children of God, and love them as his brothers and sisters. Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves. And where there is love there will be peace. That is peace with God, peace within us and peace with our neighbours. We all have to work with unity to achieve peace in this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ declares, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God”** (St: Mathew 5:9). Let us all strive to be at peace with God and with one another and become worthy children of God.

May this gathering enable us to materialize this vision.

May God bless you all.