

SAPTHATHI GREETINGS TO THE PRIMATE OF THE MALANKARA CHURCH

(Dr Yakob Mar Irenaios Metropolitan)

Kunnamkulam has given birth to four distinguished hierarchs in the Malankara Orthodox Church. Three of them are renowned as the Primate in its twenty century old history. The first of these Church leaders was Ittoop Ramban (later Joseph Mar Dionysius Pulikkottil I, who was a “Maharshi” in letter and spirit - a brilliant example of the rare fusion of Yogi and Church leader. in fact the ancient idea of a Church leader, which has gone deep in to the Nazrani psyche, is the Church father has to be a sanyasi par excellence, and a benign administrator and guardian and defender of faith. mar Dionysius was an “Ihidoyo” a solitary monk serving the Church. the belief of the people was that the head of the faith community was with the power to bless or curse. and so, the people listened to him and obeyed him as the representative of Christ. this was actually a unique understanding regarding. It is not surprising that God has chosen to start the first ever Organized theological Seminary in the Malankara Church, for the systematic preparation of Orthodox clergy.

The second hierarchs who merits our attention is, Joseph Mar Dionysius Pulikkottil II, the founder of Parumala seminary and the Mar Dionysius Seminary, Kottayam. A man of rare leadership qualities, and intellectual acumen, This celebrated Malankara Metropolitan was called to lead the Church through difficult times. He was victorious in resisting the falsely “reformatory” teachings of the group, inspired by the Protestant missionaries. And it was he who hand picked the next Malankara Metropolitan - SABHA BHASURAN Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius to be his successor to lead this ancient Church.

The third in line, is the present Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan, His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Paulos II, sitting on the Apostolic Throne of St Thomas. This Holy Father was chosen by his predecessor, the late lamented Catholicos Didymos I. One special feature about this hierarch is that he was elevated to this position at a relatively early age, when compared to a couple o this immediate predecessors. The rich experience, the Holy Father had gained as an official of the MGOCSM, has enabled him to understand and appreciate the young minds of the Malankara Church in the 21 century. It is hoped that this unique aspect will possibly go a long way in illuminating his style of administration

The Church is steadily growing and expanding its boundaries across the globe. The challenge before the present church leadership is to equip the faith community to comprehend and appreciate the challenges in the modern world, and confront them intellectually and as guided by the Holy Spirit.

During his six year old reign, our Bava has evinced an appreciable interest in the integrity and development. O father Church adopting the twin principles of Continuity and Change. The church has been threats and persecution like situations throughout its history, not exactly from people of other faiths, but from “Christians” themselves - the Roman Catholics and the Protestants and out of measure from the Syrian Patriarch. The situation still persists, and our Bava we hope and pray will give intelligent leadership in meeting such challenges and reaching out to the young Malankara Orthodox, across the globe. He is a man of prayer and a loving personality. The schedule of meditations and contemplation which he practises to this day, shall see him through this arduous responsibilities. His Holiness has earned a name and fame as an Orthodox Ecumenical Leader in such a short tenure, a feature that is appreciated by all.

We all thank God for this Holy Father, his life and mission, and pray God to give him long life and divine guidance to follow the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors , and newly define Orthodoxy in present day India.

My humble greetings to the Holy Father on his Saphthathi celebrations!