

homilist, they were quite concerned about constraints due to the parish's schedule of subsequent Masses. Very courteously they inquired: "Fr. Bernie, you are aware, surely, of the importance of **short**." While understanding that they meant brief, I still laughed inwardly. When you are my height (5 ft.3 in.), you are inclined to interpret everything on the basis of short! Like Zacchaeus, of New Testament fame (cf. Lk. 19:1-10), you seem always to have to climb higher in order

to see better. Nor am I alone. In some respect, many of us stand short and all of us from time to time fall short. And so Blessed Kunjachan, himself referred to as "the little priest," is a wonderful 'boost' for us. For he upheld that we are designed by God and destined by God for the loftiest vision. It is the vision which is at the heart of our baptismal vocation to make more clear and accessible the vast breadth of Christ's abiding mercy and peace.



PULIKKOTTIL JOSEPH MAR DIONYSIUS V (1865-1909) AND ECUMENISM

G. Chediath

Pulikkottil Yausep Cathanar, a priest from the Puthenkur Malankara community went to Mardin in 1864, when Mathews Mar Athanasius, having some Protestant tendencies, was ruling the Malankara community as its legitimate bishop. Yausep Cathanar influenced the Jacobite Patriarch Jacob II (1864-1871) and was ordained bishop in 1865 at Mardin, today's South Eastern Turkey. He was the second Malankara bishop ordained by the Jacobite Patriarch at Mardin, the first being Mathews Mar Athanasios (+1877), ordained in 1842 by Patriarch Elias II (1838-1847). At the time of his Episcopal ordination, in accordance with the custom of the Antiochene Jacobite Syrian Church, Yausep Cathanar took the name Mar Dionysius. Among the Puthenkur bishops, the first one who took a new name was Mar Thoma VI (1761-1808). In 1772, when he was re-ordained at Niranam Church by Mar Gregorios, a Jacobite bishop from West Asia, he took the name Mar Dionysius I. After him three leaders took the same name: Pulikkottil Mar Dionysius II (1815-1816), Punnathra Mar Dionysius III (1817-1825) and Cheppatt Mar Dionysius IV (1825-1855). The fifth leader who took the name was Yausep Cathanar, another bishop from the Pulikkottil family: Dionysius V.

Important Events during his life time

Several important events took place during his life time:

- (1) When he came back from Mardin as a bishop, he appealed to the civil authorities to recognize him as the legitimate bishop, but they declined to intervene. Then he wrote continuously to the Patriarch to intervene and act against Mar Athanasios, the ruling bishop.
- (2) Mathews Mar Athanasios ordained in 1868 Thomas Cathanar, the son of Abraham Malpan, as his coadjutor and named him Thomas Mar Athanasios.
- (3) The Jacobite Patriarch, Peter III (1872-1894) came to Kerala in 1875, visited the civil authorities and procured the withdrawal of recognition from them, excommunicated Mar Athanasios, convened a Synod at Mulanthuruthy (1876) and changed the course of events of the Malankara Puthenkur Church into a new direction.
- (4) The Patriarch divided the *Malankara Edavaka* (diocese) into seven small dioceses and ordained six new bishops after getting from them total submission and allegiance to him.

- (5) He wanted similar letters from all the parishes, but he could not get it.
- (6) He formed a *Syrian Christian Association* and a *Managing Committee*, according to some, to curtail the authority of the Malankara Metropolitan.
- (7) With the Synod of Mulanthuruthy and Patriarch Peter III, the Puthenkur community got alienated from the Pazhayakur community; the former removed the vestiges of their century old traditions and the East Syriac script and introduced in all the parishes the West Syriac liturgical traditions.
- (8) Mar Dionysius conducted civil litigation for ten years (1879-1889) against Mar Athanasios, the leader of the Reformed Jacobites. It ended in the Royal Court Judgment in 1889 and the Reformed Jacobites had to leave the Church and form a new community, which later was known as the Mar Thoma Church.
- (9) Mar Dionysius entered into vigorous ecumenical relationship with the Catholic Church with the help of Nidhiry Mani Cathanar, a renowned Pazhayakur priest.

Ecumenical Activities of Mar Dionysius

The following is a very brief observation regarding the ecumenical activities of Mar Dionysius V, the great champion of communion ecclesiology during the 19th century in the Malankara Church. He aimed at the visible communion and he believed that the ecumenical activities should start from the grass root level, and that they should not be limited or restricted to the level of the hierarchy alone. Although he could not realize

his ardent desire and vision, he gave the vision and impetus to his successors and they succeeded in 1930 in realizing the corporate communion of two Apostolic Churches, separated for 300 years (1653-1930).

Mar Dionysius and Nidhiry Mani Cathanar were very close friends. Both of them had the same ideas and visions regarding the unity of the St. Thomas Christian community and had several plans for its realization. But all their plans and attempts were foiled by the missionaries who had vested interests and the high officials who acted in accordance with their reports and ignored the aspirations of the native Christians. To some extent the missionaries also informed Rome regarding the ecumenical aspirations of Mar Dionysius. Mar Dionysius visited the local missionary bishops and the Apostolic Delegate at Ootty and at Kottayam. But when the Western missionaries saw that the hierarchical authority would be recognized by Rome, they turned their plate. From that period onwards they tried to keep the two sections alienated one from the other.

Mar Dionysius and Nidhiry Mani Cathanar wanted to register a society called *Nazrani Jathyaiika Sangham* for joint activities and closer collaboration on all levels of ecclesial life, including a common college for the education of the members of the two communities. In 1887 they prepared the bye-laws for the project. They bought a plot of land at Kottayam, the Woodland Estate from Mr. Darrah. But before the project came into existence and operation, the authorities in the Catholic Church crushed it in accordance with the Western mentality of those days. After the failure of the movement, the two sections

began to drift apart and move into two directions. The Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly and a certain Antiochene bishop, Mar Athanasios by name, were responsible for this alienation. The Western missionaries propagated the idea that the Puthenkuttukar were heretics and schismatics, while the Antiochene prelate instilled in the minds of the Jacobites an anti Roman attitude and propagated the false idea that the Coonan Cross Oath was against the Pope of Rome. Still, not all the leaders had such misrepresentation about the other group.

Pulikkottil Mar Dionysius did not like several of the activities of the Jacobite Patriarch at the Synod of Mulanthuruthy (1876), because the activities of the Patriarch were aimed at reducing the authority of the Malankara Metropolitan.

- (1) He did not like the division of the *Malankara Edavaka* into seven dioceses and the appointment of six bishops.
- (2) He did not like the demand of the Patriarch for letters of total submission in all matters both from the new bishops and from all the parishes.
- (3) He did not also like the formation of the *Syrian Christian Association* and the *Managing Committee* aimed at reducing the authority of the Malankara Metropolitan.
- (4) He did not also like the idea of the Patriarch to make the Puthenkur section of the Thomas Christians part of his Jacobite Church.

It was in fact this Patriarch who made this Church *Jacobite*. One cannot strictly speak of the Puthenkur community as *Jacobite Church* before the Synod of Mulanthuruthy.

Collaboration with the Catholic Church

In his attempt to keep the Church away from Protestantism and to preserve the authentic Orthodox faith and traditions, handed down by the Fathers, Mar Dionysius tried to move closer to the Catholic Church. His ecumenical attempts should be viewed in this background. He had several correspondences with the Apostolic Delegate in India. He even went to Ootty in the company of Nidhiry Mani Cathanar to discuss ecumenical matters with the Apostolic Delegate. At one occasion, when the Delegate came to Kottayam, he visited him and continued the discussions. He approached also the Latin missionaries in the land.

It is said that one can see among the documents of Nidhiry the drafts of the letters of Mar Dionysius and the details regarding the letters from the Apostolic Delegate. It was Nidhiry who used to translate the letters of Mar Dionysius from Malayalam into the other languages. Both of them together aimed at the betterment of both the communities of the Thomas Christians. Mar Dionysius demonstrates very clearly his ecumenical vision in his letters.

His Demands

In his correspondence and contacts and visits, he made the same demands of his predecessors for an eventual communion with the Church of Rome: 1) The authority of the bishops over their faithful should be preserved. 2) Changes should not be made in the liturgical traditions. 3) Married clergy should be recognized. 4) The use of leavened bread should be allowed. 5) On the basis of these conditions, the Malankara Church would

enter into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and recognize the Pope as the head.

Ponenza of 1888

On the basis of these conditions, the Pope should accept the Malankara Church to its communion. The report regarding the issue (*Ponenza* of June 1888)¹ indicates that the committee of Cardinals was positive regarding all the demands. According to the report, Rome was prepared to concede to all the demands for the sake of full communion. This document is at present in the Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Later in 1926, the application of the Malankara Synod to Rome through Mar Ivanios of Bethany was based on the demands of Mar Dionysius and its reply from Rome was based chiefly on this document of 1888.

Summary of the Document

It says, "During the last 20 years the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly Msgr. Leonardo Mellano and his auxiliary Msgr. Marceline Berardi have asked the Propaganda Congregation certain clarifications regarding the communion with the Catholic Church of the Jacobites, especially of the priests. Their Metropolitan, Mar Dionysius has shown great interest in this and in 1885 contacted through letters the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Antonio Agliardi." Moreover it speaks of the visit of Mar Dionysius to Msgr. Agliardi at Ootty. The clarification is given by the Cardinals on the basis of the reports of the Delegate and the questions received at Propaganda from the missionaries in Kerala. The report is an answer to the questions raised by them, regarding the

attitude of Rome at the communion of the Jacobites in Kerala. It touches on the letters and encounters of Mar Dionysius. The report makes it clear that Mar Dionysius was very much earnest about the communion with the Catholic Church.

The report contains details regarding the following items. It says (n.13): From 1868 onwards, especially from 1880, Mar Dionysius and some of his priests were repeatedly asserting that they are earnest for the communion with the Catholic Church. Since 1868 the Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly and his auxiliary were continuously writing about it. The Apostolic Delegate asked for detailed clarifications on this matter. The Cardinals got the information from the letters of the above bishops and the Delegate (n.14).

1. When the Jacobites become Catholics, will their baptism be recognized?
 2. Will the ordination of the Jacobite priests be recognized?
 3. Can the Jacobite priests who enter into communion function as parish priests?
- Mar Dionysius did not raise these issues during his conversations with the Delegate. The decision of the Cardinals was positive. But Mar Dionysius demanded that the hierarchy should be recognized. The authority of Mar Dionysius and the other bishops should be recognized.
4. Will the traditions of the Church be maintained or will they be changed? Mar Dionysius requested that they should not be changed.

¹ Archivium de Propagand Fide, Roma, Acta (a.1888) n.14. Ponzona del Em. Sig.Card. Isidoro Verga, p.271-309.

5. Will there be permission to continue to use the leavened bread in the Eucharist? Mar Dionysius did not raise this issue.
6. How will the married priests be treated? The decision was that they will be received together with their families. Those priests, who enter into communion as unmarried, should continue to live like that. Mar Dionysius in his conversation with the Delegate Apostolic made it clear that the future priests would be unmarried.
7. There should be an annual allowance for the maintenance of Mar Dionysius and the other bishops.
8. One or more monastic orders should come here and establish a College or Seminary to remove the ignorance of the people.
9. Copies of the Missal in Syriac and the Divine Office should be sent to Kerala. And together with them the books of St. Ephraem also should be sent.

The report mentions: Mar Dionysius asked Msgr Marceline Berardi in 1884 to procure for him from the Propaganda Fide five Missal and 50 copies of the Divine Office. Propaganda Congregation sent the copies to India and Msgr Berardi reports on 3rd May, 1885 that Mar Dionysius was celebrating the holy Mass with that Missal from Rome (n.31).

The report shows that the clarifications were not about the doctrinal matters but practical, disciplinary matters. The documents of the Vicar Apostolic and the Western

missionaries show that they were earnest in the beginning for the communion of the Jacobites. But when they saw that Rome was prepared to recognize the hierarchy and the integral traditions, the missionaries turned against them. Because they could not think of a separate hierarchy together with them or a hierarchy substituting them.

The missionaries were totally opposed to the *Jathyaiika Sangham*, envisaged by Mar Dionysius and Nidhiry Mani Cathanar. It is clear from the letters of Msgr. Leonardo Mellano on 27th July, 1887 and of the Apostolic Delegate of April 13, 1889.² Nidhiry, Mani Cathanar however, had a very different opinion about Mar Dionysius. In a document in Rome we can see the following: It was written by Nidhiry to Msgr. Aiuti, the Apostolic Delegate, who sent it to Rome: "Mar Dionysius is Catholic in his heart. But if he declares to be in the Catholic communion immediately, it will adversely affect the civil litigation with Mar Athanasius."³

From a letter of Msgr Aiuti to Rome on 30th March 1889: At the residence of Msgr Lavigne, at Kottayam, the Apostolic Delegate had an encounter with Mar Dionysius. The topic of the discussion was ecumenism and eventual communion with the Catholic Church. Msgr Aiuti asked Mar Dionysius: "After convening a kind of Synod of some of the bishops and priests, is it not possible to declare the communion with the Catholic Church?" Mar Dionysius replied: "My intention is to influence the vicars of the more numerous and prosperous parishes and the

² O. C. Archives S.C. Malabaresi 1878-1889. fol.1258rv.1275r.; Charles Payngot, *Nidhiry Achen Charitra-Rekhalil*, Kottayam 2004, p.42-43; *Malabaresi, idem*. Fol.1431r. Charles Payngot, *op.cit.*38-39.

³ *Malabaresi, idem*. Fol1355v.C. Payngot, *op.cit.*46.

priests who are more pro-Catholic and enter slowly into communion".⁴ Msgr Aiuti adds this too in his letter to Rome: "In his firm innermost thinking, he wants to make the Jacobites and Catholics of Malabar into one community and becoming its spiritual leader, to be the Patriarch of Malabar."⁵ Mar Dionysius' letter of August 11, 1888 to the Pope is now in the Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.⁶

Mar Dionysius and Nidhiry were very much disheartened at the failure of these attempts. On 16th November 1888 Nidhiry wrote to Msgr. Aiuti and explains the mind

of Mar Dionysius. Msgr. Aiuti sent that letter to Rome: "At last with a deep sigh and tears in his eyes, Mar Dionysius told me: 'My beloved Nidhiry Cathanar, let us not be disheartened. Let us hope that with the grace of the almighty God, our efforts during the past 12 years will eventually bear ample fruit. Together with that let us pray that those who are in the authority of the Catholic Church may get the light to realize that it is the appropriate time and the best means for the reunion of the Jacobite Syrians and Catholics.'" It was with a very heart that Nidhiry Mani Cathanar wrote this letter.⁷



⁴ *Malabaresi. cit.* fol.1402v; C. Payngot, 49-50.

⁵ *Malabaresi*, 1403r; C. Payngot, 50.

⁶ *Malabaresi cit.* fol.2049r-2052r. (in Malayalam) fol.2053r-2055r (tr. of Nidhiry); C. Payngot, *op. cit.* p.149-156.

⁷ *Malabaresi, cit.* fol.2058r-2059v. C. Payngot, p.54.

POPULAR PIETY IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Dr. Thomas Mannoorampampil

It seems to be a fact that the life of faith of some Christians is sustained by the forms and practices of piety, which they have felt more deeply, and actively than the liturgical celebration. But, as the II Vatican Council teaches: "Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can match its claims to efficacy, nor equal the degree of it" (SC 7). "Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (SC 10). "The liturgy, "through which the work of our salvation is accomplished", most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church." (SC 2).

But the liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. The preparation of the people takes place through the proclamation of faith and call to conversion.

This is mainly aimed at the non-believers. To the believers also the Church must preach faith and penance, prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded. (SC 9). They should come to the liturgy with proper disposition for a more fruitful participation in it. (SC 11). The spiritual life is not limited to the participation in the liturgy alone. They have to cherish personal and communitarian prayers. As saint Paul teaches, we must always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus (SC 12). It is in this context that the Council recommends popular devotions and pious exercises.

DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH

The history of the Church shows that there have been among the Christians various expressions of faith, of simple faith in God, of love of Christ, of invocations of the Holy Spirit, of devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, of veneration to saints etc. These expressions grew alongside the liturgy and are often referred to as popular piety. ^[1] It lacks a uniform terminology and therefore the Directory of popular piety ^[2] explains these expressions under four terminologies:

[1] Congregation for Divine worship and the Discipline of the sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy. Principles and Guidelines*, Vatican City, LRC publications No.4 (Kochi 2002) 9. Hereafter quoted as DPL.

[2] *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy. Principles and Guidelines*, LRC publications, No 4, Kochi 2002