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Dharmaram Mission Seminar, November 2011 ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS AND EVANGELIZATION

The Dharmaram Mission Seminar, on the evangelization and missionary activities of the St Thomas Christians of the Syro-Malabar Church, took place at Dharmaram College Campus, Bangalore, 22-24 November, 2011. This mission seminar was organized and conducted by the Dharmaram Institutions, under the auspices of the Syro-Malabar Central Committee for the Mission Year & the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Research Centre, Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church. This mission seminar took place in the backdrop of the global Year of Evangelization of the Church and the Syro-Malabar Mission Year (2011-2012). The first ever mission territory *ad gentes* for the Syro-Malabar Church, outside the proper territory, the Chanda Mission, was evangelized and initially developed by the CMI missionaries from 1962. In the Golden Jubilee year of the beginning of Chanda Mission, Dharmaram College together with Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK), Christ University & the Syro-Malabar Parishes of Bangalore, organized this national mission seminar. Hence, the theme of the seminar was *St Thomas Christians and Evangelization*.

The year 1962 became a 'historical mile stone' in the evangelization history of India. On 31 March, 1962, under the guidance of the Roman authorities, the Indian Ecclesiastical set up provided an extra territorial virgin landscape, Chanda Mission, for evangelization by the Syro-Malabar Church of India. Chanda Mission was carved out of the then Nagpur diocese in central India. The missionary undertaking at Chanda was entrusted to the CMI Congregation and Rt. Rev. Januarius CMI was appointed Exarch of the new Mission. Soon a young team of CMI missionaries from the CMI Congregation, who were trained at Dharmaram College, Bangalore, took up active missionary work and social development activities. Several Syro-Malabar women religious congregations fielded their enthusiastic missionary sisters as well at Chanda. Mar Januarius Palathuruthy CMI, first Exarch/bishop, was the architect of Chanda Mission. The success of that young group of Dharmaram-trained missionaries from the Syro-Malabar Church was so path-breaking as to encourage the ecclesiastical authorities to entrust three more such new territories, Satna, Sagar and Ujjain, for

evangelization work by the Syro-Malabar Church in 1968. This second batch of mission territories also achieved top level evangelization goals that further inspired the ecclesiastical authorities to entrust two more such mission territories, Bijnor and Jagdalpur, to the Syro-Malabar Church in 1972, and all those territories were made dioceses as well in the same year.

The sessions and dynamics of the seminar were envisaged as a dialogical engagement between veteran missionaries, some first and second generation Christians from the Chanda and Adilabad missions, catechists, veteran and budding missiologists of India, students of ecclesiastical Faculties & Major Seminaries together with seasoned theologians who are actively engaged in missionary formation in India. This seminar envisaged a review of the present evangelization modes and current challenges so as to explore and mould new patterns and approaches in the current socio-cultural and political scenario of India. Dr. Joseph Cheriampatt MST, secretary, Syro-Malabar Central Committee for the Mission Year, Dr. Sebastian Naduthadam, Secretary, Syro-Malabar Liturgical Research Centre (LRC), were facilitators for the seminar.

The inaugural session of the seminar was at 02.30 pm on Tuesday 22, November 2011, at the BJTM Hall of Dharmaram College. The seminar was inaugurated by His Beatitude Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Inaugural session was presided over by Very Rev. Fr. Jose Panthaplamthottiyil CMI, Prior General of the CMI Congregation. Rev. Dr. Thomas Aykara CMI, Rector, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, welcomed the gathering and all the participants and resource persons of the mission seminar. Bishop Mar Joseph Kunnath CMI (Adilabad) and Rev. Sr. Guna CMC (Wardha) proposed felicitations to the whole programme. Mar Gregory Karotemprel CMI, Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Rajkot, delivered the Key-Note address of the mission seminar and Dr. Francis Thonippara CMI, President, DVK, proposed vote of thanks.

During the inaugural session the brief history of the missionary activities of eight veteran missionaries from Chanda and Adilabad dioceses were highlighted with honour and felicitations. They were honoured with *ponnada* and memento. The missionaries are, Fr. Joseph Manjaly CMI (Adilabad), Fr. Joseph Velampampil CMI (Adilabad), Fr. Jeevan K.D. (Chanda), Sr. Baseleus CMC (Chanda), Sr. Lissy Jose F.C.C. (Chanda), Sr. Divya SJB (Chanda), Shri. Kisan Mohan Tirankar (Chanda), Shri. Devaraj (Adilabad).

In the inaugural session the website of the *Association of the Supporters of Syro-Malabar Mission* that functions under the leadership of Mar Gregory Karotemprel CMI, chair person of the Syro-Malabar Mission Secretariate, Kakkanad, was inaugurated by His Beatitude Cardinal Mar George Alencherry.

During the sessions of the following two days of the seminar twelve scholarly papers were presented by eminent scholars from all over India and discussions were conducted. As a whole this seminar had a participation of

little more than four hundred participants from all over India including a good number of local participants. The papers presented were, *Biblical and Early Christian Foundations of Evangelization and the Thomas Christians of India*: Dr. Andrews Mekkattukunnel (Paurasthya Vidya Peetham, Vadavathoor); *Witnessing to Christ in the Indian Context: The Missionary Life of St. Thomas Christians*: Dr. Francis Thonippara, CMI; *Evangelization in India through St. Thomas Christians*: Dr. Xavier Kochuparampil (Diocese of Kanjirappally); *Mission Ad Gentes and the Pastoral care of Migrants according to the II Vatican Council and the Codes of Canon Law*: Dr. James Pampara, CMI; *The Symbols of Christian Identity: The Seven Point Program of Chanda Diocese introduced by Late Bishop Januarius CMI*: Dr. Varghese Puthuparampil, CMI; *Religious Extremisms and Evangelization*: Dr. Vincent Kundukulam (Pontifical Institute, Aluva); *Mission as the Cutting Edge of Theology*: Dr. Anto Karokaran, CMI; *Proclaiming Christ in Indian Language: Pluralistic India and Evangelization through Dialogue and Inculturation*: Dr. Saju Chackalackal, CMI; *Migrant St. Thomas Christians in India and Abroad: A New Way of Evangelization*: Dr. Augustine Tharappath, CST; *The Vocation and Mission of the Syro-Malabar Laity Today*: Dr. Joby Koottumkal, MST; *Missionary Vocations of Syro-Malabar Church and the Globalized Society*: Dr. Josey Thamarassery, CMI; and a vision paper: *Joyful Sharing of Mar Thoma Margam: The Roadmap for Evangelization*: Dr. Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI.

On all three days of the seminar there were panel discussions involving experts from the direct evangelization fields, missionary formation centres and experienced Catechists, Liturgiologists and Family Life counselors. The following were the resource persons on the panels: Bp. Joseph Kunnath CMI (Adilabad), Mr. Yogapathi (Chanda), Fr. Varghese Kottoor CMI (Bijnor), Sr. Sysomi Puthenpura FCC (New Delhi), Mr. Anascarius Tirkey (Jagdarpur), Fr. Davis Varayilan CMI (Rishikesh), Fr. Sebastian Thundathil CST (Neapal), Fr. Mathew Uthirakulam (Satna), Sr. Nirmala CMC (Aluva), Sr. Liss Grace SD (Bangalore), Fr. Sebastian Naduthadam (LRC, Kakkanad, Kochi), Fr. Jacob Marangattu CMI (Rajkot), Mr. Sabu George (Bangalore), Sr. Bhavya CHF (New Delhi), Ms. Rose James (Bangalore).

On all days the seminar programmes started with the concelebrated Syro-Malabar divine liturgy in English/Hindi. The concluding session was presided over by Mar Sebastian Vadakkal MST (Ujjain) in which Fr. Noble Mannarath CMF and Sr. Bhavya CHF presented their evaluation on the dynamics and proceedings of the whole seminar. Fr. Thomas Kollamparampil CMI, the local organizer of the seminar thanked all concerned Syro-Malabar Church authorities and committees of the Mission Year celebrations; all participants, resource persons and organizing committees were also thankfully remembered. The papers and proceedings of the seminar will be eventually published in a book form.

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