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The Introductory Words and the Homily of George Cardinal Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, for the Liturgy of the Episcopal Ordination and Installation of Bishop Joseph Srampickal in Preston, on 9 October 2016.

Introductory Words

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ and respected Civil Dignitaries,

We are all assembled today to celebrate the erection of the Eparchy of Great Britain for the Syro-Malabar Faithful and the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Joseph (Benny Mathew) Srampickal. This is a day of thanksgiving to God and rededication of ourselves for the service of the People of God. It is a matter of joy not only for the Syro-Malabar Faithful in Great Britain but also for the whole Church in this great country. The new eparchy will join hands with the Episcopal Conferences of England and Wales and of Scotland. The Eparchy of Great Britain will serve the Syro-Malabar Faithful in total communion with the Catholic Church of Latin rite and of other Oriental rites in Great Britain. You can very well see this spirit of communion now in this celebration also, with the presence of eight Bishops including Archbishop Malcolm Patrick McMahon, O.P and Bishop Hlib Borys Sviatoslav Lonchyna and another eight Bishops from India, including Archbishop Mar Mathew Moolakkatt, OSB and Archbishop Joseph Perumthottam.

Let us thank God, first of all, for this gift of the new Eparchy and the new Bishop. I thank in a special way the Episcopal Conferences of England and Wales and of Scotland for having wholeheartedly supported the new ecclesiastical structure for the mission of the Syro-Malabar Church in Great Britain. Bishop Michael Campbell deserves our special thanks for the personal interest he has shown for this pastoral project and also for granting us St Ignatius Church, Preston, of his diocese as a gift to the Syro-Malabar Church. We have renamed it St Alphonsa Church and the Apostolic See has elevated it to be the Cathedral of the new Eparchy. Dear Bishop, Michael Campbell, you have shown great interest in the process of the erection of the new Eparchy together with the Apostolic See and the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church. Thank you very much!

I also remember with thanks Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue, former Bishop of Lancaster, who also promoted the growth of the Syro-Malabar Church in this diocese and appointed Jesuit priests as pastors. As I understand, it is Fr Joseph Thaiparampil SJ who celebrated for the first time Syro-Malabar Qurbana in St Ignatius Church. The service rendered by the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Evangelization and Pastoral Care of the Migrants headed first by Bishop Gregory Karotemprel CMI and then Bishop Sebastian Vadakel MST and their secretaries is to be remembered with never ending gratitude.

This is also the time to remember with gratitude all the priests, coordinated by Rev. Fr. Thomas Parayadiyil MST and others according to the directions of the respective Bishops, in one way or other rendered pastoral care to the Syro-Malabar Faithful in different parishes and institutions, until now. And I earnestly request all the priests and the permanent deacon, presently serving the Syro-Malabar Faithful in Great Britain, to cooperate wholeheartedly with the new Bishop according to the canonical regulations of the Church.

Let us have these thoughts in our minds when we enter into the liturgy of the Episcopal Ordination and the Holy Qurbana. Today the Church commemorates blessed John Henry Newman in the liturgy, although today being Sunday, there is no solemn celebration. When the Bishop-Elect venerates the relics of Saints at the beginning of the Ordination Liturgy, he will venerate also the relic of blessed John Henry Newman together with the relics of Saints and Blesseds of the Syro-Malabar Church. Now I invite you all to participate in today's celebration with recollected minds and prayerful hearts.

Homily

The Gospel that we heard in the Ordination Liturgy is a proclamation of two passages, one from St Mathew and the other from St John, combined together. First of all let us turn our minds to the admonition given to the Bishop that his riches are to be heaven. It is not for any worldly motive that the Bishop gives his pastoral leadership of a local church. The passage that follows from St Mathew points to the profession of faith of St Peter upon which our Lord Jesus gives him authority over his Church. "And I tell you, you are the Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you

the keys of Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt. 16: 18-19).

The passage from St John clearly shows that it is on Peter’s love, declared publicly, that Jesus grants him the service as pastor: “Feed my Sheep”. If Petrine authority is rooted in the faith of Peter, his pastoral service is entrusted on the basis of the love that he has for Jesus.

Lord Jesus Christ, “who, though he was in human form, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2: 6). “You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (Jn. 13: 14). So also as successors of Apostles, the Bishops are to be at the service of the people.

At present the mission of service and mercy is very much emphasized in the Church especially by Holy Father Pope Francis. The creation of the new Eparchy and the appointment of the new Bishop also can be better understood in this context of the Church. Therefore, the new Bishop’s apostolate has to be one of service and mercy. The motto he has taken is to ‘do the work of an evangelist’ (2 Tim.4:5). The work of an evangelist is one of proclamation and of witness. Jesus Christ himself also came to the world as a proclaimer of the good news of the love of God for the human kind. He announced it in the beginning of his ministry in the Synagogue of Nazareth. This proclamation included also the witness of love by the deeds. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:18). Let me recall here a simple but meaningful aspect of a recent element in the life of Bishop Joseph Srampickal that he was one of the Missionaries of Mercy appointed by the Holy Father during this Year of Mercy.

The Book of Revelation qualifies Jesus as the “faithful witness” (Rev. 1:4). So also the new Bishop has to be a proclaimer of the Word and a faithful witness to it.

In John 11:52, we read that Jesus was ‘to die for the nation, and not for the nation only but that he might also gather together into one the children of God who are

scattered abroad'. The mission of Bishop Joseph Srampickal is to gather all the Syro-Malabar Faithful scattered in different parts of Great Britain and to form them into a community of the people of God.

He has to give them the shape of a local church. To be an oriental church is not simply to have the celebrations of the Holy Eucharist in the Syro-Malabar rite and to assure the participation of people in it. It is much more than that. To be an individual *sui iuris* Church means to maintain and progress in its own liturgical traditions, catechesis, the theological exercises, ecclesiastical discipline, especially the role of laity in the administration of the parishes and ecclesial community and practices of spirituality in the family life pattern, especially the family prayer, the celebration of feasts, the rituals for the commemoration of the dead and the practice of fast and penance like the fast of Lent for 50 days, 25 days fast before Christmas, 15 days of fast before the Assumption, the 8 days fast before the feast of Nativity of our Blessed Mother and the three days fast.

If the Syro-Malabar Church has kept its faith tradition and has generated an ardent desire among its faithful, wherever they go, to keep up this faith tradition, it is because this Church has been safe guarding these elements of its particular ecclesial tradition. If they do not keep up this tradition in all its aspects it may not be able to produce the good effects that it has brought out during the past centuries. The fruits of the faith tradition of this great Apostolic Church are: integrity of family life, missionary zeal, continuous flow of vocations to priesthood and consecrated life and the presence of holy men and women, including canonized saints and beatified persons. If the migrant faithful are not assembled into a local Church as it has now happened in Great Britain, we may not be able to produce the same results from this community.

The Second Vatican Council in its Decree on *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* says, "The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church" (n.1)

“Means should be taken therefore in every part of the world for the protection and advancement of all the individual Churches and, to this end, there should be established parishes and a special hierarchy where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it. The hierarchs of the different individual Churches with jurisdiction in one and the same territory should, by taking common counsel in regular meetings, strive to promote unity of action and with common endeavor to sustain common tasks”(n.4)

From this it is clear why the Apostolic See is eager to give ecclesiastical provisions for the progress of Eastern *sui iuris* Churches in migrant communities.

I wish and pray that Bishop Joseph Srampickal, with the cooperation of priests, religious and laity will be successful in creating a community of faithful deeply rooted in faith and witnessing through their life, motivated by service and mercy, especially towards the poor. May the grace of the Lord grant also peace to the hearts and minds of people threatened by Terror and War in various parts of the world.

With these words I conclude this reflection. May God bless you all! Amen!