

Syro-Malabar Major Archbishop to celebrate Inaugural Mass in Preston to launch historic initiatives

2 October 2015



On the morning of Saturday 3 October 2015, at St Ignatius' Church Preston, His Beatitude Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry will celebrate a special Mass (*Holy Qurbana*) in the presence of Bishop Michael Campbell OSA of Lancaster, clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Lancaster together with clergy and faithful from the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. **The Mass will mark the liturgical blessing on the historic church and presbytery at St. Ignatius' which now serves as the worship, social and catechetical centre for Syro-Malabar Catholics across the city.**

The Major Archbishop who is travelling to Preston from Kerala, India on his way to the Synod of Bishops in Rome **will launch the two personal parishes erected by Bishop Campbell** in March to care for the pastoral needs of the Syro-Malabar faithful of the Diocese – one (*under the patronage of St Alphonsa*) for the Preston area and the other (*under the patronage of Ss Kuriakose Elias Chavara & Euphrasia*) for the remainder of the Diocese. It is understood that these Personal Parishes are the first in Europe to be erected for the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church – headed by the Major Archbishop - has now more than 4 million members worldwide and traces its origin to St Thomas the Apostle, who is said to have reached the shore of Kerala in 52AD. The Syro-Malabar chaplaincy in the Diocese of Lancaster was founded in 2004 by Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue and has, until this point, relied completely on various Roman Catholic parishes in Preston and further afield, to host their liturgies, social gatherings, meetings and prayer services.

Currently there are 107 Syro-Malabar young families involved in the Syro-Malabar Catholic community in Preston, 92 youngsters attend regular Sunday school catechist classes. There were 12 First Communions in 2004 and 10 Confirmations in 2013. Recently 8 family units have been formed as family-based Basic Christian Communities to support prayer and faith formation.



Congregation of the Mother of Carmel

THE FIRST INDIGENOUS WOMEN CONGREGATION ESTABLISHED IN 1866

Of particular joy is that during the course of the celebrations at St Ignatius', **the Major Archbishop will inaugurate the foundation in Preston of the Sisters of the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC)** – only recently arrived from Kerala. This marks the first foundation of a community of Syro-Malabar Religious Sisters in Great Britain.

Bishop Campbell commented:

“I am delighted that we have the Major Archbishop coming to us to bless St Ignatius' church for its new Syro-Malabar mission in Preston, to inaugurate the two new Personal Parishes and to launch our CMC Sisters in their apostolate.

Please God, the Syro-Malabar initiatives in this Diocese will, with the Lord's blessing and our support, continue to go from strength to strength!

Issued on 2 October 2015.



Notes:

1. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is in full communion with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.
2. A full report of the Mass and celebrations – with photos - will be posted on Bishop Campbell's *Blog* [here](#) or [here](#) – to appear this week **on Sunday**.
3. Please [click here](#) for *Frequently Asked Questions* about Personal Parishes and the Pastoral Care of the Syro-Malabar faithful and [here](#) for more information on these parishes in the Diocese of Lancaster.
4. The website for the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is: <http://www.syromalabarchurch.in/syro-malabar-church.php> and for the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) - their website is: <http://www.cmcsisters.org/>
5. For more information on all of the above please contact:
Fr Mathew J Choorapoikayil, Parish Priest, St Alphonsa Parish, St Ignatius Presbytery, PR1 1TT, Preston, Phone 0044 1772 396065 or Mob: 0044 777 2026235