

Row over unified mass: Archbishop blocked at Ernakulam Basilica gate

Dissident group camps near the church and raises slogans seeking Mar Thazhath's return

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

THE row over implementing Syro-Malabar Church's uniform mass took a violent turn as Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath was blocked at the gates of Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral Basilica by a dissident group of Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese who are opposing it, on Sunday morning.

The dramatic incident unfolded when Mar Thazhath, who is also the administrator of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese, arrived at the Basilica in the morning to lead the mass.

Mar Thazhath decided to conduct the uniform mass on Sunday as it marked the commencement of the liturgical calendar. He had given prior information in this regard to the Vicar of the Basilica. Priests and faithful came out against the move and started an indefinite agitation on the premises of the Bishop's House.

It was around 5.30 am that Mar Thazhath arrived at the gates of the Basilica for conducting the mass that was to start at 6 am. Before his arrival, the dissident group camped near the church and raised slogans asking him to return. Later, they locked the gate of the Basilica from inside preventing the entry of archbishop's vehicle.

Soon, a group of faithful who supports the uniform mass also arrived at the place. To avoid a



The pro and anti-unified holy mass faithfuls hold demonstrations and protests outside St Mary's Cathedral Basilica in Kochi on Sunday | A SANESH



The (church) key will be returned when the matter is resolved at a meeting to be conducted by the district administration. It has to be ensured that no such violence takes place in future

Jayakumar Chandramohan, ACP, Ernakulam Central

confrontation, Mar Thazhath returned to Thrissur after waiting at the gates for over half an hour. The vicar of the Basilica then conducted the Sunday mass in the old (Mass facing the people) format.

Later, a group of activists who support the uniform mass entered the archbishop's house and vandalised the premises. Soon police officials arrived at

the spot and removed the protestors.

The police locked up the church as a preventive measure. Police also recorded the arrest of six persons under Section 151 CrPC (Arrest to prevent the commission of cognizable offences).

Jayakumar Chandramohan, ACP, Ernakulam Central, said that the church gates were

locked as a temporary arrangement. "The key will be returned when the matter is resolved at a meeting to be conducted by the district administration. It has to be ensured that no such violence takes place in future," he said.

The issue pertains to the decision of the Syro-Malabar Church synod in August last year to implement a unified form of holy mass across the church. However, Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese has not implemented the decision as it is staunchly opposing the unified mass.

The Hindu, 2/12/22

Priests demand reopening of St. Mary's Basilica

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A group of priests staged a protest in front of the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, the principal church of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church on Thurs-

day demanding that the basilica be reopened for Mass and prayers.

Father Sebastian Thalian, senior priest, said the demand would continue to be raised until the basilica was reopened.

The basilica was taken over by the police and

handed over to the district administration on Sunday following tension between two groups within the archdiocese over Mass. The groups were on the verge of a heated exchange on Sunday when the police intervened and took over the basilica.

Priests hold prayer meet outside church

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Priests of the Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese on Thursday held a prayer meeting outside the gates of the St Mary's Cathedral Basilica here which was locked down by police following clashes on Sunday.



The priests gathered at the archbishop's house and held a rally singing prayer songs till the cathedral gate where they held a

prayer meet. PRO of the Athiroopatha Samrakhana Samithi, an independent organisation of priests, said in a press note that the priests call for an immediate solution to current problems through the intervention of the government officials and the bishops of the synod.

On Sunday early morning, dissident activists of the Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese, opposing the Syro Malabar Church's new uniform mass had blocked archbishop Mar **Andrews Thazhath** at the gates of the church leading to a confrontation between the two sides.

Following clashes over the implementation of uniform mass in the archdiocese, the gate was locked by police on Sunday. A delegation of the Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese, including the vicar of the basilica church, had met with the district collector and city police commissioner on Monday and sought necessary actions for reopening the gates of the church.

The priests said that the laity's right to worship was being curtailed since the church's gates remained locked since Sunday.

Priests protest outside Mar Thazhath's room

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Priests of Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese on Monday protested against the apostolic administrator of the archdiocese, Mar Andrews Thazhath, by symbolically blocking the entrance to his room with red ribbons. The priests also pasted a document, which described his alleged ineligibility to occupy the office, on the door.

ERNAKULAM-ANGAMALY

The priests of the archdiocese had been resisting the implementation of a uniform style of Holy Mass here and the administrator was appointed to implement it. The priests, through a statement issued by Fr Jose Vaillikodath, said that they condemned the actions of the apostolic administrator, who was conducting day-to-day affairs under police protection by keeping the priests outside the gates of the archbishop's house.

Appointing an administrator to the basilica cathedral was a challenge to the archdiocese, they said. Fr Se-



AGAINST UNIFIED MASS: As part of the protest against Mar Andrews Thazhath, the priests pasted a document, which described his alleged ineligibility to occupy the office, on the door

HC extends police cover for archbishop

Kochi: Kochi: A high court bench of Justice Anu Sivaraman, in an interim order on Monday, extended the police protection granted to the life of archbishop Andrews Thazhath from protesters demanding a uniform mass at the Syro-Malabar Church, until December 22.

The order granting police protection was originally issued on December 5 after considering a petition filed by the 71-year-old archbishop. The court had also directed for issuing notices to Athirupatha Samrakshana Samithi and Almaya Munnetta Samithi, who were named as opposite parties in the plea. TNN

bastian Thaliyan said that they would resist the move to enforce unified mass in the archdiocese. The priests will gather at the archbishop's house after the Christmas Day mass and relaunch an indefinite protest there, he added.

Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral Basilica was lock-

ed by the police following clashes between groups of laity on November 27.

Fr Thaliyan had recently filed a police complaint alleging that the archbishop was creating a volatile situation using police protection as a cover to implement the uniform mass.

The Indian Express, 21/12/22

Uniform Holy Mass: Parishioners block administrator at St Mary's Basilica

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

AFTER remaining closed for nearly a month following a clash between the anti and pro-Uniform Holy Mass faithful, Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral Basilica opened on Tuesday. The day saw dramatic events unfolding in front of the Basilica when the newly-appointed administrator Fr Antony Puthuvelil came to offer Holy Mass as per the instructions of Mar Andrews Thazhath. According to Fr Jose Vailikodath, PRO, Archdiocese Protection

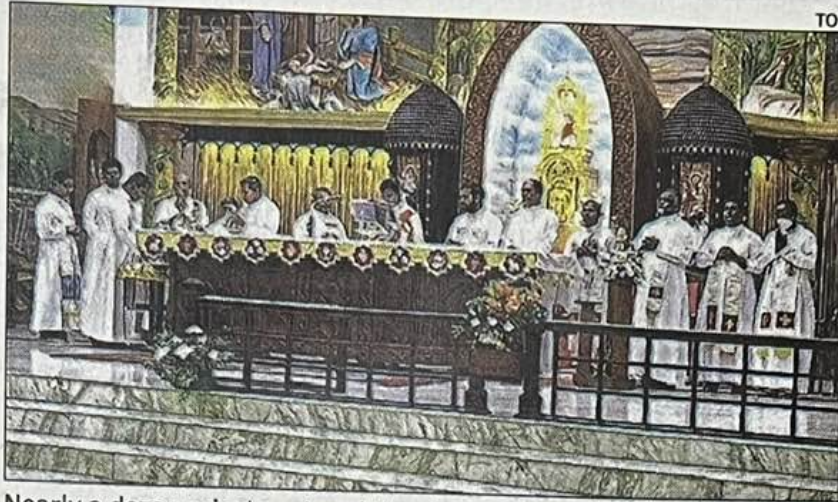
Committee, the parishioners prevented Fr Puthuvelil from entering the Basilica and celebrating the Holy Mass. "The Archbishop had revoked the powers of rector Monsignor Anthony Narikulam without valid reasons. He then appointed his person Fr Puthuvelil as the administrator and gave him the powers of the rector too. As soon as the parishioners heard the news, the Parish Council met and passed a resolution proclaiming that they won't accept the new ad-

ministrator. They decided to prevent him from offering the Unified Holy Mass," said Fr Jose.

Accordingly, when Fr Puthuvelil arrived at 6.30am, the parishioners blocked him. "After he left, the assistant vicar of the Basilica along with other priests offered the Holy Mass by facing the congregation," said Fr Jose. He accused apostolic administrator, Archbishop Mar Thazhath of trying various ways to enforce the senseless decision of the Synod.



Laity prevents unified mass



Nearly a dozen priests entered the altar of St Mary's Cathedral Basilica in Ernakulam and celebrated Holy Mass in the old format on Tuesday

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Dramatic scenes prevailed at Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral Basilica on Tuesday morning as laity activists of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese prevented Fr Antony Puthavelil, the newly-appointed administrator of the cathedral, from conducting mass in the uniform format.

CATHEDRAL BASILICA

The cathedral basilica was locked by the police following clashes between laity groups on November 27. The apostolic administrator of the archdiocese Mar Andrews Thazhath had attempted to conduct mass, leading to the clash between two factions who oppose and support the implementation of a unified mass in the archdiocese.

After being appointed as administrator of the cathedral by Mar Thazhath, Fr Puthavelil took over the keys to the church from the police late on

Monday. He tried to conduct the mass in the unified format on Tuesday morning, only to be blocked by priests and activists. Nearly a dozen priests entered the altar and conducted mass in the old format.

"I was directed to conduct mass in the unified format. However, priests and parish council members blocked me in the morning. Priests then conducted the mass without my assent," said Fr Puthavelil, adding that the church trustees witnessed police handing over the key to him. Legal measures to resolve the issue are being sought, he added.

Meanwhile, priests of the archdiocese, through a statement issued by Fr Jose Vailikodath, said that the parishioners had prevented the priest from conducting the unified mass. The priests said that they are planning to conduct continuous adoration at the cathedral during the Christmas week, and it would continue till a decision favouring the mass in old format is taken.

A tumultuous Christmas awaits Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese

Division over the way Mass is celebrated is widening, giving rise to bitterness between laity and clergy on one side and the hierarchy on the other

K.A. Martin
KOCHI

Every year, Christmas arrives with the promise of peace to men of goodwill. But for the unwavering Catholics in the Syro-Malabar Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, goodwill has vanished. And, there is no question of peace, at least for a while as the division over the way the Mass is celebrated is growing wide each day giving rise to bitterness between a group of laity and clergy on one side and the hierarchy on the other.

The roots of what looks like a crisis now can be traced to the controversial land deals by the archdiocese between 2013 and 2018, in which it sustained financial losses.

Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Major Archbishop and head of the Syro-Malabar Church, came under severe criticism for his alleged role in the deals. The matter has been dragged to a civil court of law even as the Cardinal's critics have called for making good the losses suffered by the archdiocese.

The Mass issue, on the other hand, has caused an explosion of the liturgical kind. Accusations and counter-accusations, police intervention, court cases, protests spilling into the streets, boycotts, a brief closure of the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, the principal church, a bar on protesting clergy and laity entering the archbishop's house, and flagging threats of action from the hierar-



In the eye of the storm: The St. Mary's Basilica Cathedral, the principal church of the Syro-Malabar Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, is at the centre of a dispute over the unified Mass. There are no decorations for Christmas at the church as the controversy deepens. H. VISHU

chy have marked the unfolding drama.

Unified Mass

The present phase of the controversy over Mass celebration had its beginnings in August last year when the Synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church decided to issue a diktat that all dioceses must adopt a system in which the celebrant (priest) faced the congregation (those attending the Mass) during the first part of the ceremonies up to the Credo. During the consecration and the sacramental part, the priest faces the altar and then in the last part, after the Communion, the priest again faces the participants.

Briefly called the 50:50 formula, the unified Mass has not found favour with the vast majority of laity and clergy in the archdiocese, who cite more than

The roots of what looks like a crisis now can be traced to the controversial land deals between 2013 and 2018

half-a-century of tradition of fully congregation-facing Mass.

In other words, those opposed to the synodal decision want to continue with the present practice of the celebrant facing the congregation throughout the Mass. They have continued to do so despite official efforts to bring about liturgical unity across the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Syro-Malabar Church is among more than a score of oriental churches fully in communion with Rome. It is an individual church where the decision by its Synod is final. But those opposed to

only temporary exemption from the Synodal decision. Senior priest and secretary of the council of priests of the archdiocese Father Kuriakose Mundadan said the feelings of the dominant majority of laity and clergy in the archdiocese were in favour of fully congregation facing Mass. They have been conveyed to Rome.

Father Mundadan is among those who have vociferously opposed the Synodal Mass and said that the Mass was not simply about rubrics. It is about the spiritual welfare of the people, he said and wondered why a second thought was not possible. Imposition of the will of the Synod is not the way out, he added.

The controversy over Mass celebration has had its victims too. Bishop Jacob Manathodath of Palakkad had been appointed apostolic administrator of the archdiocese following the land deal controversy. Later, when the row over Mass celebration broke out, Archbishop Antony Kariyil was appointed vicar of the major archbishop, answerable directly to Rome. Later, Archbishop Andrews Thazhath was appointed apostolic administrator. None of them has been able to implement the Synodal decision.

Police intervention

It was most evident on November 27, the first Sunday of 2022 advent, when Mar Thazhath was prevented from celebrating the Synodal Mass at the St. Mary's Cathedral. The dispute al-

most turned into physical confrontation when the police intervened to close the church and hand it over to the civil administration. Since then, the newly appointed administrator of the cathedral basilica, Father Antony Puthaveilil, has also been prevented from celebrating the Synodal Mass.

The chasm between the hierarchy and its opponents is deepening. A unified Mass system looks a distant reality as those in favour of the fully congregation-facing Mass organised the inauguration of the centenary celebrations of the creation of the hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church. On December 21, 1923, it was raised to the status of an individual church. Father Mundadan claimed that the hierarchy had largely ignored the milestone.

None of the bishops, including the Cardinal, is participating in the opening of the centenary celebrations. A member of the Samyukta Almaya Samrakshana Samithi favouring the Synodal Mass said the supporters of the Synod were disappointed that the bishops' council had not acted firmly against the rebels. But those opposed to the Synod have called for a rethink on its decision. Meanwhile, the cathedral basilica and the archbishop's house, which usually are abuzz with Christmas time activities, are quiet. Shorn of lights and decorations, there is a drab look about the cathedral, symbolising a time when there is no peace.

24/12/22



WEATHER

KOCHI

MIN	MAX
23°C	31°C

FORECAST
Generally cloudy

	MIN	MAX
Thrissur	23°C	33°C
Kozhikode	23°C	33°C
Kottayam	22°C	33°C
T'Puram	23°C	33°C

newindianexpress.com

QUICK READ

Unified Holy Mass: Ruckus at St Mary's Cathedral Basilica

Kochi: The St Mary's Cathedral Basilica, which is the headquarters of Major Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly, witnessed a confrontation between two groups over offering Unified Mass. Father Jose Vailikodath, senior priest and public relations officer of Athiroopatha Samrakshana Samiti, said in a statement that when a group of priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church were offering the Mass, Fr Antony Puthovelil, the new administrator of the Basilica, disrupted it. Fr Vaililkodath, on behalf of the samiti, condemned the act of Fr Puthovelil entering the altar. Fr Vaililkodath and other priests who support the Mass facing the congregation, said Fr Puthovelil could disrupt the Mass due to the support of the police.

Indian Express 30/12/22

Ruckus at church: Faithful divided over setting up of investigation commission

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

THE Almaya Samrakshana Samithi on Thursday lauded the archdiocese officials' decision to constitute an inquiry commission to investigate the untoward incidents that took place at Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral Basilica. They demanded that the commission conduct an impartial inquiry into the matter and take strict action against those who were involved in the ruckus.

Meanwhile, the dissident group opposing the unified Holy Mass shot off a letter to the Pope and the Synod Bishops highlighting their refusal to adhere to the directive issued by the apostolic administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy Mar Andrews Thazhath.



All the desecration acts like the toppling of the altar where Pope John Paul II offered Holy Mass happened right in front of Fr Puthuvellil

Fr Jose Vallikodath

Fr Jose Vallikodath said the people who had actually desecrated the Holy Qurbana and the altar were the ones who supported Apostolic Administrator Mar Thazhath and Fr Antony Puthuvellil. "All the desecration acts like the toppling of the altar where Pope John Paul II offered Holy Mass happened right in front of Fr Puthuvellil," he said.

Hence, the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy outrightly rejects the authority of the inquiry commission set up by Mar Thazhath, he added.

Priests' forum rejects panel formed by apostolic administrator

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Athiroopatha Samrakshana Samithi (council for the protection of the archdiocese), a forum of priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church, has rejected the commission constituted by apostolic administrator Mar Andrews Thazhath to probe the events on December 23 and 24 at the St. Mary's Basilica Cathedral here.

"We, the priests and the faithful of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, are sorry to say that we do not accept this commission," said a letter from the priests' forum to Varghese Pottackal, protosyncellus of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy, on Thursday.

The letter, issued by se-

nior priest Father Sebastian Thalian, convenor of the archdiocese protection council, said that it was through social media that they came to know of the appointment of the commission.

The priests' forum said there were two parties in the picture - the aggrieved party, comprising priests and lay people in the archdiocese, and the hostile party, comprising the so-called Marthoma Nazrani Sangham (council of St. Thomas Christians).

To ensure justice, the commission must have members who are acceptable to both parties.

"Unfortunately, without prejudice, the commission members are aligned with the hostile party, and the aggrieved party was excluded from the outset," the letter said.

Times of India 30/12/22

Will not accept inquiry panel, says priests' forum

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese have written to the Protosyn-cellus of the archdiocese, Fr Varghese Pottackal, that they will not accept the inquiry commission appointed by the

UNIFORM MASS

apostolic administrator to probe into the 'scandalous events' that happened in the Cathedral Basilica of Ernakulam on December 23 and 24, 2022.

In the letter written by the

convener of the archdiocese protection council, Fr Sebastian Thalian, they said that there was no representation for them in the commission and that they will not accept it.

Apostolic administrator mar Andrews Thazhath has constituted the commission with three members and a secretary to study and report the issues related to the implementation of the uniform mode of mass in the archdiocese, especially the 'scandalous events' that happened in the Cathedral Basilica. A doctrinal and canonical appraisal of the continuous celebra-

tion of holy mass by some priests from 5.30pm on December 23 till around 11.30am on December 24, 2022, 'which has seemingly violated the liturgical and sacramental aspects of the sacrament' is also among the terms of reference for the commission.

The priests, however, alleged in the letter that it was the supporters of the administrator who desecrated and committed sacrilege in the Basilica. The priests alleged that the roles of the real culprits were conveniently left out and hence they were sure that the report of the commission would be biased.

The Hindu 01/01/2023

Priests' forum for action against those behind desecration of church

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Athiroopatha Sarakshana Samthi, a forum of priests of the Syro-Malabar Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, has condemned members of Marthoma Nazrani Sangham who, according to the forum, were involved in the alleged desecration of the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, the principal church of the archdiocese, and abuse of sacraments on December 23 and 24.

Samithi spokesperson Father Jose Vailikodath said a resolution was

passed at a meeting of priests at the archbishop's house on Friday. The resolution alleged that Nazrani Sangham members were also involved in the alleged unleashing of violence in the church on November 27.

Despite such developments, Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, allowed them to participate in the midnight Mass and celebrations at the headquarters of the Church at St. Thomas Mount. This set a bad example, and the Major Archbishop must step

down from his position, the resolution said.

The priests also demanded an inquiry into the incidents and action against the guilty as per Canon law.

Protests postponed

Meanwhile, the forum announced that the protest programmes that were being organised at the forane church level had been postponed following the passing of Pope Benedict XVI. The forum also expressed deep sorrow at the death of one of the greatest theologians of the Catholic Church.

Times of India, 04/01/23

Archdiocese protection rally to be held on January 8

Kochi: Protesting against the incidents at Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral that led to a scuffle and desecration of the Holy Mass on Christmas eve, the faithful and the priests opposing the Unified Mass will take out an archdiocese protection rally to Mount St Thomas at Kakkanad, the headquarters of the Syro Malabar Church on January 8. A meeting of the parish representatives held at Kaloor Renewal Centre elected a 251-member committee to coordinate the preparations for the rally. Priest's Council secretary Kuriakose Mundadan, Pastoral Council general secretary P P Gerard, John Kallookaran, Riju Kanjookaran and others spoke at the meeting which elected Shijo Mathew as the convenor of the organising committee.

04/01:23

Laity, priests to take out march to Mount St. Thomas

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

The laity and priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese will take out a rally to the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church at Mount St. Thomas, Kakkannad, on January 8. The rally is to register their protest against what the group called the “desecration” of St. Mary’s cathedral basilica and violence “unleashed inside the basilica under the aegis of apostolic administrator archbishop Andrews Thazhath” on December 23 and 24.

The protest is also against the stand taken by the police and the attitude of the State government, said a communication here. The decision to hold the march was taken after a meeting of lay people and priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese at the Renewal Centre, Kaloore, on Monday.

The rally will be led by a 251-member core team. Secretary of the council of priests and senior priest Fr. Kuriakose Mundadan was among those who participated in Monday’s meeting in Kaloore.

The group reiterated that the desecration of the holy sacraments at the basilica cathedral needed to be condemned. As a result of these developments, the basilica was closed down during Christmas celebrations, the group alleged.

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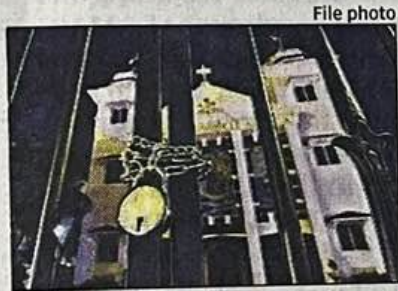
provide an advance salary of collectin g taxes, he said.

suicide. TNN

MLA Uma Thomas lashes out at police in FB post

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: In a development in the Holy Mass row within the Syro Malabar Church, Thrikkakara MLA Uma Thomas on Thursday made a Facebook post criticising the police for the incidents which occurred at Ernakulam St Mary's Cathedral Basilica on December 23 and 24.



File photo

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL ISSUE

the church is shut, without the mass being conducted," she wrote. She said in the post that due to the interference of police, the issue which should have been amicably settled, led to further clashes.

"No one is criticising the police intervening when a law

and order issue happens but the police entering the altar wearing boots, caused a lot of pain in the faithful," the MLA said in the post. "Along with ensuring law and order, police have the duty to protect a person's faith and dignity as well. An inquiry into whether there was a failure in that should be done by the police higher ups," Thomas said.

Women personalities write to bishops on Holy Mass row

With the Sixth Synod of the Syro Malabar Church set to begin on Friday evening at Kakkanad Mount St Thomas, six prominent women personalities from various sectors have written to the bishops of the Syro Malabar Church seeking

to resolve the crisis over the holy mass in the Church through dialogue.

Lida Jacob, a retired IAS officer; Dr Jancy James, former vice chancellor MG University and Central University of Kerala; Prof Monamma Kokkad, former member, Kerala Women's Commission; Dr Mary Matilda, former principal of Maharaja's College, Ernakulam; Dr Neena Joseph, former faculty member IMG, and Beena Sebastian, former secretary of KCBC women's commission are the signatories of the letter dated January 1.

In the letter they expressed their pain on the incidents which their spirituality and faith can never accept. "This is

not an issue of the Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese alone. It is an issue which affects faithful of other dioceses as well as of other Catholic denominations. In a situation where the common people have little knowledge about distinction between rites or dioceses, the incidents which are happening now are affecting the image of the Church," the letter said. It added that there was no doubt that the women and mothers, without the distinction of rites or diocese, condemn and protest the incidents on December 24 and 23.

Forum for Justice and Peace (FORUM), a religious collective, too had shot a letter seeking solution for the crisis.

Priest, laity orgs postpone rally to Mount St Thomas to Jan 15

Kochi: Priest and laity organisations of Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese announced on Saturday that they were postponing the rally announced by them from January 8 to January 15. The rally was announced to Mount St Thomas Kakkanad, where the synod of the Syro Malabar Church takes place.

Organisers said they were postponing the rally considering the recommendations put forward by retired Justice Kurian Joseph and other bishops of the synod.

Syro Malabar Church head Cardinal George Alencherry on Friday issued an exhortation, urging churchgoers to refrain from indulging in protest activities and campaigning through social media when the meeting of the Church synod was progressing.

Laity activists had announced on Friday that they were still going ahead with the march. However, a change of heart seems to have happened on Saturday following interventions of mediators. TNN

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Basilica administrator transferred; Fr. Narikulam to continue as rector

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica administrator and senior priest Father Antony Puthavelil has been transferred to the Muzhikkulam Forane Church as its vicar, while senior priest Father Antony Narikulam will continue as the basilica rector. The transfer has been welcomed by Almaya Munnettam, a combination of lay organisations, supported by the vast majority of priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese.

There has been a vociferous demand from lay people and priests for the removal of the administrator. They alleged that Father Puthavelil, along with archdiocesan administrator Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, had worked in the background to stage un-

pleasant incidents at the cathedral on December 23 and 24 last year.

Those incidents, involving disruption of the ongoing Mass and desecration of sacraments, are under investigation by a team appointed by the archdiocesan administrator.

Father Kuriakose Mundadan, who is currently the director of a public school under the archdiocese, has been transferred as vicar of the Kuzhuppilly Forane Church. Father Mundadan is a prominent member of the group supporting a fully congregation facing Mass and part of the council of priests of the archdiocese. The **Samyukta Sabha Samrakshana Samithi** has demanded that the transfer list, which appeared to favour the group backing the fully congregation facing Mass, be withdrawn.

Call for Alencherry's resignation

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Almaya Munnettam, an organisation of lay people in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church, has demanded the resignation of Cardinal George Alencherry in the wake of the Supreme Court's dismissal of his plea to quash criminal cases against him over the alleged irregularities in the sale of properties belonging to the archdiocese.

It will be a blot to believers, if the Cardinal continued in the position while facing trial. Hence, he should relinquish all his duties and co-operate with the probe, said Jemy Augustine, convener of the forum, in a release.

The Vatican and the Syro-Malabar Church Synod should expel him, if he refused to relinquish his responsibilities, he said. Money given by the faithful as offerings was spent for meeting legal expenses in cases against the Cardinal, according to the forum.

Priests meet Vatican envoy in Delhi

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A four-member team from the presbyteral council of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church met Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, head of the Vatican diplomatic mission in India, on Thursday in New Delhi.

A statement issued by senior priest Father Jose Vailkodath here said the meeting was immediately necessitated by reports of a possible bifurcation of the archdiocese even as issues related to a liturgical dispute and controversial land deals remained unresolved.

The meeting was held after a request from presbyteral council secretary Father Kuriakose Mundadan to meet the apostolic nuncio.

The meeting at the nunciature was held between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Thursday.

The team from Ernakulam comprised Father Antony Narikulam, Father Jose Edassery, Father Kuriakose Mundadan, and Father Biju Perumayan. The statement from Father Vailkodath said the meet-

ing was held in a friendly atmosphere. The priests' representatives provided an account of the problems besetting the archdiocese and their background. A letter signed by 456 priests requesting that the archdiocese should not be bifurcated was handed over to the apostolic nuncio. The letters had earlier been sent to the Dicastery of Eastern Churches and the Secretary of State in the Vatican.

The statement also claimed that problems related to pastoral care after Archbishop Andrews Thazhath took charge as apostolic administrator of the archdiocese were conveyed to the apostolic nuncio, who was also informed of the urgent need to reopen the St. Mary's Basilica, which remains shut since late December last year.

The Delhi visit of the priests assumes significance amid speculations that they will get a clear answer on the long-drawn liturgical dispute in the archdiocese as well as on the controversial land deals by Cardinal George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.

she stresses.

INDIAN EXPRESS DAILY 12-05-23

Priests' Delhi visit elicits contradictory response

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

THE trip undertaken by a team of four dissident priests of Syro-Malabar Church to Delhi has elicited contradictory statements. While the dissidents maintain that the team visited the Apostolic Nuncio after the latter gave his nod to a request seeking an audience with him, those supporting the official faction point out that the four were summoned to Delhi.

According to Fr Jose Vailikodath, Monsignor Anthony Narikulam, Fr Jose Edassery, Fr Kuriakose Mundadan and Fr Biju Perumayan met with the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopold Girelli in Delhi. "Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese Vaidika Samithi secretary Fr Mundadan had sent a request seeking an audience with the Apostolic Nuncio. During the discussion, which took

place in a good-natured and friendly manner, the priests acquainted the Nuncio with the problems afflicting the Archdiocese," said Fr Vailikodath.

"The urgent meeting was sought after rumours began doing the rounds that the Permanent Synod is now planning to divide the Archdiocese.

The original of the resolution, signed by 456 priests and sent to the Vatican's Secretary of State and the Office for the Eastern Churches was handed over to the Apostolic Nuncio," he said.

"The priests requested the reopening of the Ernakulam Saint Mary's Basilica Cathedral which remains closed for the past five months. The priests told the Nuncio that if the solution proposed by Rome in the land transaction case is not implemented, it will tarnish the image of the Church," he added.



The Hindu, 13/6/2023

Priests, laity reiterate demand to continue people-facing Mass as Synod begins

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Groups of lay people and priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church, opposed to the unified Mass, have declared that there will be no compromise with the Synod on the demand to continue the fully congregation-facing Mass in the archdiocese.

The groups have dug

their heels in as an emergency Synod of bishops of the Church began here at the Church headquarters at St. Thomas Mount on Monday to find a solution to the long-drawn dispute over liturgy.

Representatives of the St. Mary's cathedral parish of the archdiocese, Jomon Chathoth and Tomy Puthussery, began a hunger strike in front of the cathedral demanding reopening

of the church. The members of the parish will also begin a relay prayer session in front of the cathedral for the next four days during which the Synod meets.

Secretary of the archdiocesan presbyteral council Father Kuriakose Mundayan wrote to the bishops that if the Synod took a decision unacceptable to the faithful depending solely on a synodal majority vote,



A fully congregation-facing Mass has been the tradition here for over the past 60 years

FATHER JOSE VAILIKODATH
Senior priest

“such a decision will be vehemently opposed and rejected by the archeparchy”. The letter also

warned that if the St. Mary's Cathedral, the principal church of the archdiocese, was not reopened, “there will be a wider commotion among the laity”. The basilica was closed by the civil authorities on December 23, 2022, following unsavoury incidents inside the church.

Meanwhile, the Athirupatha Samrakshana Samithy comprising priests of the archdiocese reiterat-

ed that there would be no compromise with the Synod. A statement from senior priest Jose Vailikodath said any attempt to impose a Synodal decision would be resisted. The Synod should imbibe the spirit of Synodality or walking together as appealed to bishops by Pope Francis, Father Vailikodath said.

“A fully congregation-facing Mass has been the tradition here for over the

past 60 years, and the Synod violated the procedures in 2021 to ban the fully congregation-facing Mass,” said Father Vailikodath.

Emergency Synod

An emergency Synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church began at Mount St. Thomas here on Monday. The meeting began with a meditation preached by Thamarassery bishop Remigiose In-

chananiyil. The Cardinal led a concelebrated Mass.

The Synod expressed anguish over the government's alleged failure to take action against those behind the violence in Manipur. The bishops also appealed to the State government to protect farmers from wild animal attacks.

An official communication said the Synod was being held to discuss the issue of Mass celebration.

Decision to reopen basilica triggers protest

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A section of the faithful protested on Friday in front of St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, which has remained closed for 202 days following clashes between two factions over the way the Mass should be conducted, after the Church authorities announced the decision to reopen the basilica.

A press note by the Syro-Malabar Church said that the decision to reopen the basilica, the principal church of its Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese,



A section of the laity protesting in front of St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, Kochi, on Friday against the decision to reopen it without reaching a consensus on the way to celebrate Mass. R.K. NITHIN

was taken following a discussion between the archbishops delegated by the synod and the representa-

tives of the basilica on June 14. However, no Holy Mass would be celebrated till the time the unified mass en-

dorsed by the synod can be held. The note also added that the vicar of the cathedral, Antony Narikulam, had promised that congregation-facing Mass demanded by a section of the laity would not be held against the decree of the synod.

But soon after the announcement, the vicar, along with the trustees of the cathedral Babu Pullat and M.A. Joseph Manavalan, released a letter announcing their departure from the agreement made on June 14 on the ground that the parish council on June 15 had stuck to its ori-

ginal decision to only allow congregation-facing Mass.

Almaya Munnettam, a group of lay people, slammed the synod for not taking into confidence the priests and the laity and said that the cathedral should not be opened in the hope of conducting unified Mass. The protesters who gathered in front of the cathedral vowed not to allow synod-approved Mass.

Meanwhile, Major Archbishop Cardinal Mar George Alencherry said there would be no compromise on the unified observance of the Holy Mass.

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Special Synod's conditions to open St Mary's Basilica irk parishioners

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@Kochi

FRIDAY was an eventful day for the Ernakulam Angamaly Archdiocese. First, the Special Synod gave its conditional approval for opening the St Mary's Cathedral Basilica, which had been lying closed for months. The move followed the assurance provided by the basilica's representatives that only Unified Holy Mass will be celebrated there.

However, a few hours later, vicar of the Fr Antony Narikulam and the trustees went back on the agreement. The parishioners, miffed by the alleged high handedness of the bishops - whom they accused of ignoring the parish council's decision - held a protest in front of the basilica later in the day.

The basilica has been lying closed for the past six months following skirmishes between pro and anti-Unified Holy Mass supporters. The decision to reopen it was taken in Wednesday's meeting between the Syro Malabar Synod-appointed Bishops' Committee and representatives of the basilica, including the vicar and the trustees.

"At the meeting, Fr Antony Narikulam, the vicar, had assured the Bishops' Committee that once the basilica is reopened, only Unified Holy Mass will be celebrated," said Syro Malabar Church spokesperson Fr Antony Vadakekkara. It was decided that if there is any deviation from the assurance will result in the church's closure, he said.

It should be noted that the Synod had urged all parties concerned to ensure the basilica is opened for worship. Fr Vadakekkara said the Synod allowed conduct of all sacraments, except the Holy Qur-bana, in the church post its opening. "For this, the Synod directed the basilica administrator to hand over the keys to the vicar," Fr Vadakekkara said.

He said an understanding was also reached in Wednesday's meeting on the administrator's continuance. "Since the matter is sub-judice, it was



Let's work for a unified Church: Catholic Congress

Welcoming the Special Synod's decision, the Catholic Congress urged all to work together for a unified Church. "All misunderstandings and apprehensions need to be solved through dialogues. The Synod's decision shows the Church in Kerala is uniting. We have high hopes that the Church will forge ahead united in these troubled times," said Catholic Congress president Biju Parayannilam.



The Synod's move to make the reopening conditional shows the high-handedness of Bishops. They want to drive home the point that they are our masters

Shyju Antony, a parishioner

decided that the administrator will continue in the post," Fr Vadakekkara said. He said it was decided that on the day of the reopening, Vicar-General Fr Varghese Pottaykkal will conduct a blessing ritual in the church and its premises. The Synod directed the vicar to convey these decisions to the laity and get them to cooperate. "It should be noted that implementing the decision taken during the meeting does not require the parish council's approval," he said.

The Synod officially approved the decisions taken during Wednesday's meeting on Thursday and also directed the apostolic administrator to

take action as per canon laws should any priest, monastic or laity deviates from the conditions, Fr Vadakekkara said.

The parishioners, though happy with the Synod's decision to open the basilica, are peeved at its conditions. "The Synod's move to make the reopening conditional shows the high-handedness of Bishops. They want to drive home the point that they are our masters," said Shyju Antony, a parishioner.

He said the parish council conveyed its decisions to the Synod. "In reply, the Synod in its official statement included a line saying the parish council didn't have authority in matters of the church," he said, adding, "But the church belongs to the parish council." Shyju said the parishioners will protest any move to celebrate Unified Holy Mass in the basilica.

'Special Synod cheats archdiocese again'

The Athirooptha Samrakshana Samithi termed the Special Synod's decision worthless. "The Special Synod, instructed by the Vatican to take a final decision on the problems plaguing the archdiocese, has cheated the archdiocese yet again," alleged Fr Sebastian Thalian, the convener of the samithi.

He said the decision taken by the Synod to open the basilica without seeking the opinion of the priests and the laity was not compatible with Christian values or democratic dignity. "The vicar and trustees of the basilica were called to a secret meeting and after signing a few agreements, they were asked to consult with the parish council and open the basilica as soon as possible. However, 38 of the 40 people present at the parish council meeting passed a resolution saying only public-facing mass can be offered in the church," Fr Thalian said.

He said the Synod was destroying the image of the Catholic Church by giving scant regard to the words of Pope Francis, who has repeatedly asked bishops to walk with people.

No move to divide archdiocese or redraw boundaries: Alencherry

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

There will be no compromise on the unified observance of holy mass in parishes under the Syro-Malabar Church, Major Archbishop Cardinal Mar George Alencherry has said in a communication issued to bishops, priests, and laity on Friday, after the culmination of the Syro-Malabar Synod here.

Any diversion in any archdiocese would lead to anarchy in the church, he said, without specifically referring to the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, where many believers and priests have been reiterating that they prefer the mode of worship where the priest faces members of the congregation. Difference of opinions must be solved through discussions, he said.

The Pope has agreed to look into the Synod's request to post a papal delegate for the archdiocese to help solve the prevailing crises.

Stating that there was no move to divide the archdiocese or to redraw its boundaries, the Cardinal termed as contrary to facts the reports going around. Bishops are keen to appoint an archbishop having independent powers for the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese.

Expressing concern over the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica remaining closed for the past many months following clashes between groups for and against unified mass, he said it creat-

Closure of St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica a permanent blot on the public image of the church, says Major Archbishop

ed a permanent blot on the public image of the church. In this context, it has been decided to reopen the basilica for devotees, except to hold holy mass, on the condition that only unified mode of mass will be adhered to. Canon laws would be invoked against those who contravened that, he said.

The Synod expressed concern over "authorities not making efforts" to de-escalate the stand-off between rival groups in Manipur, despite widespread communal violence and rioting for many weeks. The government there has not deplored the violence and the attacks on around 300 churches. It is sad that rules are being framed to curtail freedom to practise any religion of one's choice and to trample upon minority rights. Minority educational institutions in Kerala too are bearing the brunt of communal hatred. All that went against the democratic spirit of the Indian Constitution, he said.

The Central and State governments must pay heed to the concerns of farmers on matters such as buffer zones and human-animal conflicts. The assurance of support price for agricultural produce must not be limited to the election manifesto, said the Cardinal.

Vicar, trustees back down from agreement with synod

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: The crisis in the Syro-Malabar Church over the unification of holy mass continues to remain an intractable problem as the vicar and trustees of the St Mary's Basilica Cathedral on Friday decided to back down from an agreement reached in a discussion initiated by the synod.

The Church, through an official statement on Friday, said that they have arrived at a decision on reopening the basilica which has been remaining shut since Christmas. The Church said in the statement that the decision was taken in a meeting held on June 14 between a committee appointed by the synod and the representatives of the basilica parish.

As per the agreement, there would not be any mass at the basilica until the synod-approved mass can be conducted there. However, the basilica can be reopened to conduct sacraments and sacramentals other than holy mass, the Church said in the state-



REOPENING OF BASILICA

ment.

The statement also said that basilica vicar Fr Antony Narikulam has given assurance to the synod that the 'mass facing the people' will not be celebrated at the basilica.

However, a letter was written to the bishops by the basilica vicar and trustees Babu Pullatt and MA Joseph Manavalan on Friday informing them of their decision to go back from the agreement.

The letter said that a parish council meeting was held after the agreement on Friday and a decision was taken that if the church is

opened, only 'mass facing the people' can be celebrated there. The letter said that since the council's decision remains unchanged, they were forced to go back from the agreement.

We signed the agreement with the faith that it will not be used for court procedures and that they were only suggestions to be put before the parish council to find a solution to the issue, the letter said.

As per the Church's statement, it was also decided to hand over the basilica's key which is with its administrator, to the vicar. The statement also said that the parish council can be called to urge cooperation for implementing the decisions, but their approval was not needed to do so.

The synod meeting on Friday approved the agreement and directed the apostolic administrator to take action against those who violate it under the canon law. If something contrary to the agreement happens, then it will lead to the basilica again getting shut, the statement said.

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Priests express solidarity with Fr. Narikkulam

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A section of priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese on Wednesday met Father Antony Narikkulam at the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, the principal church of the archdiocese, after apostolic administrator Archbishop Andrews Thazhath turned down his request to be retained as parish priest at the basilica. The priests expressed their solidarity with Father Narikkulam.

Responding to Father Narikkulam's letter, the archbishop asked him to abide by the decree, which would require him to join St. Mary's Forane Church at Moozhikkulam as vicar. The priests who met Father Narikkulam found fault with archbishop Thazhath for allegedly trying to foment further trouble, according to Athiroopatha Samrakshana Samiti comprising members of the community of priests of the archdiocese.

The Hindu, 8/8/23

Papal delegate begins discussions, meets priests

Papal delegate to Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese Archbishop Cyril Vasil has begun meeting priests and delegates in Kochi on Monday as part of efforts to peacefully implement a decision by the Synod of Syro-Malabar Church to follow a uniform system of mass celebration. The papal delegate, who called for cooperation and prayers for an amicable settlement ahead of beginning his mission, met a group of five priests who were part of the delegation that met the synod members in January this year on the issue of liturgy. One of the team members said after the two-and-half-hour meeting that the papal delegate was in Kochi to implement the synod's decision to follow a uniform mass system, contrary to an earlier impression that he would hear both sides before reaching a decision on the liturgical issue. The papal delegate later met members of the consultative forum of the archdiocese and former curia members.

'Recognize our Mass or accept us as distinct entity'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: In a major development, the priests of Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese on Tuesday handed over a letter to the Pontifical Delegate for the archdiocese Archbishop Cyril Vasil, urging him to study the possibility of accepting the Arch-



Sources said the letter handed over to Archbishop Cyril Vasil contained "the reflections and requests" made by the priests of the archeparchy of Ernakulam Angamaly who met on August 8 at Renewal Centre in Kaloor

SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

diocese by the Holy Father as a distinct Oriental Catholic Church alongside the Syro-Malabar Church if it was not possible to recognise the Mass facing the people as a variant in the archdiocese.

Although chances are slim, this could be an indication of a possible future split in the Syro-Malabar Church. Sources said the letter contained "the reflections and requ-

ests" made by the priests of the archeparchy of Ernakulam Angamaly who met on August 8, 2023 at Renewal Centre, Kaloor. It also said the decisions were taken and signed by 237 priests gathered at a short notice.

"Since the Synod is not prepared to accept us as long as we celebrate the Mass facing the people and we are convinced of the spiritual fruits of the Mass facing the people and are not prepared to change the way the

Mass is celebrated, we ask you to request the Holy Father to recognise the Mass facing the people as a 'variant' in the Archdiocese, applying the provision of 'ius speciale'. If this is not viable, we request you to study the possibility of accepting our Archdiocese by the Holy Father as a distinct Oriental Catholic Church alongside the Syro-Malabar Church," stated a draft of a letter handed over to the Pontifical Delegate by a group of Forane vicars.

According to the letter, the priests had stated that from the recent letter of the delegate and conversations held with a group of priests, it was clear that the delegate did not come to study the ground reality in the Archdiocese and propose a solution taking into account the good of the Archdiocese rather to impose the 50:50 formula even if it leads to pastoral problems and law and order issues in the Archdiocese as is the case at present in the Cathedral Basilica.

"...In this case, we have no other option than informing you that none of the groups of priests mentioned in the letter given to you on August 7, 2023 will meet you until the scope of dialogue and reporting to the Holy Father is included in your mandate rather than implementing the synodal decision," the letter said.

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Four priests stage hunger strike at Syro-Malabar HQ

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

DRAMATIC events unfolded at Mount St Thomas in Kakkanad, the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church, on Tuesday when four priests opposing the Unified Holy Mass tried to stage a sit-in and hunger strike. They were removed with the help of the police.

Fr Antony Vadakekkara, the Syro-Malabar PRO and secretary of the media commission, said Archbishop Mar Cyril Vasil, the papal delegate for Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy, had invited Fr Kuriakose Mundadan and Fr Sebastian Thalian to Mount St Thomas for a meeting. "They were accompanied by Fr Rajan Punnackal and Fr Sajo Padayati," he said.

However, after the meeting, the priests allegedly refused to leave the premises and decided to launch an impromptu agitation. "After meeting the papal delegate, the priests stayed back in the parlour and refused to leave. They then announced the launch of a hunger strike on social media platforms. Fol-



Fr Kuriakose Mundadan and Fr Sebastian Thalian staging a hunger strike in the parlour of Mount St Thomas in Kakkanad on Tuesday

lowing this, the Church officials contacted the police," Fr Antony said. He said the police removed the priests from the premises. "The priests were told that they couldn't be allowed to stage a hunger strike as it will disturb the peaceful functioning of the curia and the Synod," he said.

Hearing about the priests' detainment, several priests and members of the laity marched

to the Thrikkakara Minor Seminary. The group forced Fr Paul Madden, the rector of the seminary, to come out of the institution and accused him of being a crony of Apostolic Administrator Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath.

Fr Jose Vailikodath, PRO of the Athiroopatha Samrakshana Samithi, the actions of the archbishop were a direct challenge to the court which is con-

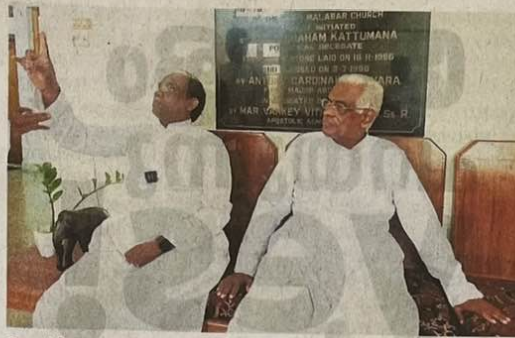
sidering a petition filed against the authority of the papal delegate. "The matter is sub-judice," he said. The group then arrived at the archbishop's House and forced the members of the Curia to resign, alleging were mere puppets in the hands of the apostolic administrator.

Seeking justice for young priests, says Fr Mundadan

In a statement, Fr Kuriakose Mundadan said they decided to launch the agitation seeking justice for the four young priests against whom the Apostolic Administrator Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath has initiated action.

He said the four young priests of Thrikkakara Minor Seminary of the Archeparchy faced the wrath of the archbishop for refusing to stick to the papal delegate's letter that directed them to implement the Unified Holy Mass. "The action against them needs to be withdrawn. It can be considered as against the entire Archeparchy where public-facing Holy Mass is celebrated predominantly," he said.

Priests hold protest at Syro Malabar Church headquarters



Speaking out: Father Kuriakose Mundadan and Father Sebastian Thalian on strike at St. Thomas Mount, the headquarters of the Syro Malabar Church, in Kochi on Tuesday.

The Hindu Bureau KOCHI

Tension prevailed in the Syro Malabar Church headquarters at St. Thomas Mount here on Tuesday where a synod of bishops of the Church was on, as two priests who had gone there to meet the papal delegate Archbishop Cyril Vasil reportedly decided to embark on a "hunger strike" on the premises, following which the police removed them from there on a complaint by the church authorities.

Intervention by police

A press release issued by the church said the archbishop had invited two priests - Fr. Kuriakose Mundadan and Fr. Sebastian Thalian to St. Thomas Mount for discussions. They were accompanied by Fr. Rajan Punnakkal and Fr. Sajo Padayatti, who announced on social media that they would go on strike, after having met the archbishop. The police intervened and removed Fr. Mundadan and Fr. Thalian to ensure "smooth progress" of the synod, it said.

Four priests removed

Meanwhile, Fr. Mundadan and Fr. Thalian said the strike was in protest against the removal of four young priests from the minor seminary by Archbishop Andrews Thazath. They were told to go to the 'priests' home' after they

refused to offer unified mass. The action was unethical, unjust, and against the wishes of 5.50 lakh devotees. The strike would continue until they were reinstated, they said.

They added that the threat to suspend priests who offered holy mass in 450 parishes on Sunday while facing the congregation too was condemnable.

Tension continues

The synod had begun on Monday, amidst simmering tension between the church authorities and the Archdiocesan Movement for Transparency (AMT) - a combine of priests, religious and lay people, on the issue of offering unified mass in churches under the Ernakulam archdiocese. A vast majority of parishes in the archdiocese did not celebrate the unified mass that the Synod had directed on Sunday, a deadline that had been fixed by the papal delegate.

Finding solution

The AMT said in a release issued on Tuesday evening that no outside interference would be allowed in the functioning of the Ernakulam archdiocese. No bishop would be permitted to enter any church in the archdiocese if the ongoing synod failed to find a solution to problems in the archdiocese, said AMT spokesperson Riju Kanjookaran.

The Hindu, 07/11/2023

Priests reiterate rejection of Archbishop Thazhath's stand on liturgy issue

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church have reiterated their repudiation of the stand taken by apostolic administrator Archbishop Andrews Thazhath on Mass celebration.

The apostolic administrator had not fulfilled his moral responsibility to convey to the Pope demand by lay people and priests of the archdiocese for a fully people-facing Mass, said a statement issued by the priests after a meeting in Kochi on Tuesday.

"Archbishop Thazhath's way of functioning damages the very image of the



A spokesman of a group of priests from the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church addresses the media at the archbishop's house in Kochi on Tuesday. H. VIBHU

Pope, who insists that the Church is not only the Pope and bishops but also the people of God. Synodality as advocated by the Church means that everyone must be heard," the priests said in their statement.

Archbishop Thazhath, instead of conveying to the Pope that there is an impasse in the archdiocese regarding the way the Mass is celebrated, has created a wrong impression that a few priests and the faithful are objecting to the synod's

decision on unified Mass. "The apostolic administrator's ego does not allow him to admit the problems he has created on his own," the priests alleged. Instead of solving the problem, the archbishop closed down the St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica and the archdiocesan minor seminary, they said.

The priests also blamed the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome for not listening to their demand for removing the apostolic administrator. The synodal decision on Mass celebration, taken in contravention of the laid down procedures, would not be accepted by the archdiocese, the priests said.

The Hindu 20/11/2023

Centenary celebrations of Syro-Malabar hierarchy

A 501-member committee was constituted to oversee the conclusion of the 100th year celebrations of the raising of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See on December 21, 1923, by Pope Pius XI. The concluding celebrations will be organised between November 30 and December 10. Senior priest Jose Edassery has been elected the general convenor and Shijo Mathew the convenor of the committee, says a communication here. The concluding programmes will begin on November 30 with a Mass for the deceased at the Angamaly Kidangoor church. Special prayers will be held on December 1 at Paravur Kottakkavu church. The celebrations will conclude with a solemn concelebrated mass after 3.30 p. m. at Mar Augustine Kandathil Nagar, Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, on December 10. Around 400 priests are expected to participate in the fully congregation-facing mass.

100th anniversary celebrations of raising Syro-Malabar Hierarchy conclude

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Around 400 priests joined and hundreds of lay people and religious participated in a concelebrated Mass at the Mar Augustine Kandathil Nagar (Bharata Mata College grounds, Kakkanad) on Sunday to mark the conclusion of the year-long centenary celebrations of the raising of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy with Ernakulam as the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church.

A public meeting, inaugurated by former Supreme Court judge Kurien Joseph followed the Mass during which the celebrants faced the congregation throughout. It was led by senior priest Jose Edassery. Former chancellor of the archdiocese Biju Perumayan delivered the homily. Se-



A milestone: Around 400 priests joined a concelebrated Mass on Sunday to mark the conclusion of the centenary celebrations of the raising of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy with Ernakulam as the headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nior priest Antony Narikulam presided over the public meeting, said a communication from Father Edassery and Father Mathew Kilukkan.

Prior to the meeting, several processions carrying torches and cross from

important historical churches in the archdiocese reached the venue of the concelebrated Mass. The churches from where the processions reached Kakkanad included Kokkamangalam, Pallippuram, Chembu, St. Mary's Basili-

ca in Ernakulam, Kottakkavu, Angamaly, and Malayattoor.

People-facing Mass

The organisers said this was the first time in the history of the Church that such a large number of priests had participated in a full people-facing Mass.

The centenary celebrations come close on the heels of a warning from Pope Francis on Thursday that either the priests, religious, and faithful in the archdiocese of Ernakulam follow the synod order on Mass celebration or stand to excommunicate themselves from the Catholic fold.

The synod has ordered a format in which the priest faced the congregation for the first and last parts of the Mass while turning to the altar during

the consecration.

The Pope, in a video released to the faithful in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, said that he was pained that several efforts at reconciliation had failed. He reminded the priests to fulfill their vows at their ordination and the lay people to obey the hierarchy.

However, the group opposed to the synod Mass, as represented at the centenary celebrations on Sunday, maintained that the Pope may have been misled as there were factual errors reflected in his recent address.

They also said that any way forward would involve honouring an agreement between the lobby for full congregation-facing Mass and the sub-committee of the synod of bishops earlier this year.



l Vasil being received by
ese apostolic administrator Bishop
ort on Wednesday. H. VIBHU

i cuffs, creating much public
- embarrassment.

) The papal delegate is ex-
pected to meet members
of the hierarchy and
priests on Wednesday, but
Church circles have re-
mained tight-lipped on the
day's developments. No
schedule of his pro-
gramme in Kochi has been
made public.

Priests' meeting

Meanwhile, a meeting of
the priests of the archdio-
cese on Wednesday ended
with a demand for a com-
prehensive enquiry into
how 'factual errors' crept

into the Pope's recent ad-
dress to the archdiocesan
members.

The priests' meeting de-
manded former apostolic
administrator Thazhath to
desist from interfering in
the affairs of the archdio-
cese. The statement issued
by Father Jose Vailikodath
representing the archdio-
cesan protection forum,
Athiroopatha Samraksha-
na Samithi, said the arch-
diocesan members would
cooperate with the visiting
papal delegate if he fol-
lowed the path of negotia-
tions and discussions.

The meeting of priests
alleged that the Pope's ad-
dress contained factual er-
rors and lacked clarity.

The language used by
the Pope in his address to
the archdiocese did not re-
flect a Pontiff who repeat-
edly spoke about synodali-
ty. Of the 464 priests in the
archdiocese, around 450
are in favour of a full con-
gregation-facing mass. The
Pope had not been in-
formed that even if the
priests tried to offer the
synod Mass, it would be
prevented by the faithful,
the priests said.

test organised by the School of

ian and V J Laly - to study the lapses in the organisation of

magisterial inquiry in addition to the police investigation. The report is yet to be submitted,"

INDIAN EXPRESS 14-12-23

Priests opposing Unified Mass demand investigation into Pope's video message

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

A meeting of the priests belonging to the section opposing Unified Holy Mass which was held at the Renewal Center at Kaloor on Wednesday decided that a thorough investigation should be conducted into the content of the Pope's video message. The priests numbering 300 demanded that Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, who was removed by the Vatican from the post of administrator, no longer interfere in the affairs of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese.

Fr Jose Edassery said the priests are ready to cooperate with Archbishop Cyril Vasil if he takes the path of dialogues and discussions as he had recently told the media. At the meeting, it was pointed out that Archbishop Andrews Thazhath was the source of the message which is full of factual errors



Other than 10-12 priests, all 450 priests are for the public-facing Holy Mass. No one has informed the Pope that there is a pastoral situation where the faithful will prevent priests from saying the Unified Holy Mass. No priest can mislead the laity here — Fr Jose Vaillikodath

and ambiguities. "It is easy to understand if you read the Syro-Malabar Synod reports of the past 10 years. The statement that the Synod formulated the formula is not true," said Fr Jose Vaillikodath.

"Other than 10-12 priests, all 450 priests are for the public-facing Holy Mass. No one has informed the Pope that there is a pastoral situation where the faithful will prevent priests from saying the Unified Holy Mass. No priest can mislead the laity here," he said. "The Pope is infallible at the level of faith and morals. The Pope is infallible when it comes to a liturgical manner in the Eucharistic celebration of any individual congregation. Those with influence

in Rome did not inform the Pope of the correct facts or circumstances," said the meet.

The meeting also assessed that Archbishop Bosco Puthur, as Apostolic Administrator, should make an effort to inform Pope Francis of the pastoral truth here. "Through social media, many posts are being spread by vested interests with the connivance of the Church authorities. And they mislead the common believers." But the priests said they were sure that the enlightened faithful of the Archdiocese would reject it. "On December 10, many false campaigns were made to discourage believers from attending the centenary celebrations," said Fr Joseph Parakattil.

DECORATIONS TO TREASURE: A volunteer readies large orbs to be hung as baubles on the giant palm tree at Veli Ground in Fort Kochi on Sunday. The decked up tree is one of Fort Kochi's main Christmas attractions.

years.

Papal delegate holds talks with priests

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Priests of the Ernakulam Angamaly archdiocese on Sunday said in a statement that the holy mass row cannot be resolved by forced implementation. The priests said that the pontifical delegate archbishop Cyril Vasil has started a dialogue with the priests and has so far met with priests from 12 of the 16 parishes in the archdiocese.

"Archbishop Vasil visited the archdiocese for the first time in August. Back then, he looked to forcefully implement the mass in the new for-

mat approved by the synod. He had then clearly told the priests that he didn't come for dialogue. However, this time his approach has been soft and hence, the priests received the invitation for dialogue from the archbishop

UNIFORM MASS

with happiness," said a statement issued by Fr Jose Vailikodath, PRO of Athiroopatha Samrakshana Samithi.

The statement further said that he met with the advisory committee of the archdiocese on Friday and it informed him that the liturgi-

cal crisis was a pastoral issue and that it can be resolved only through discussions.

He has so far met with priests of Vaikom, Angamaly, Mookkannoor, Karukutty, Cherthala, Koratty, Vallam, Manjappra, Kaanjoor, Ernakulam, Edapally, and Pallippuram parishes. The delegate is planning to meet more representatives in the coming days.

The statement also said that if the delegate tries to forcefully implement the mass in the new format approved by the synod despite listening to the priests, it will

lead to unpredictable outcomes and could spark law and order issues in parishes.

Vasil had arrived in Kochi on Wednesday morning. Soon after his arrival, a meeting of around 300 priests of the archdiocese was held at Kaloor Renewal Centre. The meeting of the priests demanded a comprehensive inquiry alleging that incorrect matters crept into the Pope's video message.

According to the priests, out of 464 priests in the archdiocese, apart from 10 or 12 priests, the rest want to offer the mass facing the people.

Priests' forum says synod Mass will be offered on Christmas day

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A forum of priests opposed to the synod Mass, comprising the vast majority of clerics in the archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly of the Syro-Malabar Church, has said that Mass will be offered in the synod-prescribed format on Christmas day in all parishes of the archdiocese.

Senior priest Father Jose Vailikodath, spokesman for the Athiroopatha Samrakshana Samithy (forum for protection of the archdiocese comprising

priests), said the full congregation-facing Mass would continue in future.

'Avoiding an impasse'

Fr. Vailikodath said in his statement on Saturday that the need of the hour was to avoid an impasse in the parishes.

The way forward to accept Pope's appeal was to reach an agreement between the ad hoc committee of priests and the apostolic administrator of the archdiocese Bishop Bosco Puthur through an initiative of papal delegate Archbishop Cyril Vasil.

The agreement was that congregation-facing Mass would continue until a situation arose in which it would be possible to celebrate the synod Mass without disrupting pastoral care, the forum said.

Though the agreement was not signed, there was a "deal" now, said the priests. "Archbishop Vasil has issued instructions to submit the agreement at the next meeting of the synod of bishops. It is clear now that the understanding has to be carried forward through the synod," Fr. Vailikodath added.

Christmas-eve mass disrupted at Chittoor church

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Thousands of Christians of various denominations joined their counterparts across the world to celebrate Christmas with midnight prayers and mass.

The dispute in the Syro-Malabar archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly over the style of mass celebration seeped into the Christmas-eve mass, as a small group of people tried to disrupt the full congregation facing mass at St. Thomas' Church, Chittoor. Those who tried to disrupt

the mass were later removed by the police as the priest continued the mass celebration at the church.

The dispute also saw St. Mary's Basilica, seat of the archdiocese, remaining closed for the second year in a row as the vicar and administrator of the basilica said in a circular that there was no peaceful and conducive atmosphere to celebrate mass at the basilica. The group opposed to the uniform mass claimed that the Christmas-eve mass was celebrated in the traditional full congregation-facing style in 290 of

the 328 churches in the archdiocese.

Archbishop Joseph Kalathiparambil led the mass and ceremonies at the St. Francis Assisi cathedral, the seat of the Latin archdiocese of Varapuzha. Archbishop Sebastian Vaniapurakkal, apostolic administrator of the Syro-Malabar church, offered mass at the St. Thomas Mount headquarters of the Syrian church in the early hours of Monday. Mass and prayers marked celebrations at the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church headquarters in Puthenkurish.

The Hindu 9/01/24

Ideal if major archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church also heads archdiocese: priests

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A forum of priests of the archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, representing the vast majority of the clerics, has said it will be an "ideal solution" to the vexatious issue of Mass liturgy if the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church also heads the archdiocese.

The informal body of priests – Archdiocesan Protection Forum – said in a letter to the ongoing synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church: "The most ideal solution shall be the new major archbishop remains the archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly" and he celebrates both forms of Mass in the arche-

parchy – the synodal Mass for occasions befitting the entire Syro-Malabar Church and people-facing Mass for occasions for the archeparchy.

The priests also warned against any move to delink archeparchy and create a new See for the new major archbishop. Delinking implies the acceptance that the major archbishop does not want to celebrate Mass facing the people on any occasion or the fact that celebrating the synodal Mass in any of the churches of the archeparchy has been made impossible, including in the cathedral.

Accepting these two situations imply creating a new See for the new major archbishop and recognising the mode of Mass that

is practised in the archeparchy as an alternative mode of celebration. If delinking is tied to the acceptance of people facing a licit alternative it will help resolve the issue and it can be done only with the "magnanimity" of the synod. "History will term it a moment of grace in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church and only in such a situation, delinking will make sense to the faithful and larger society," the priests added.

They also said that according to the Pope's message almost all the parishes had a Christmas Mass in the synodal form. But the next day Mass was celebrated facing the people for "pastoral and reasons of conscience".

Anti-synod group calls for resignation of bishop Puthur

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The anti-synod group, led by lay from Almaya Munnettam and a vast majority of priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar

Church, has demanded that bishop Bosco Puthur step down if he could not independently make decisions as authorised by his position in the hierarchy.

Bishop Puthur is also under fire from the pro-synod groups demanding

implementation of the synod decision for 50:50 mass from Easter Sunday. Bishop Puthur, apostolic administrator of the archdiocese, continues to be surrounded by lobbies deeply divided on the mass liturgy.

The pro-synod group laid siege to the archbishop's house in the city on Monday, but called off the blockade after the police intervened and promised to address its seven-point charter of demands supporting the synod mass

within a fortnight. The forum of priests, mostly comprising opponents of the synod mass, had said on Wednesday that bishop Puthur had been consulting Rome on every issue. If he had no power, he must quit, the priests added.

The Hindu 23/02/2024

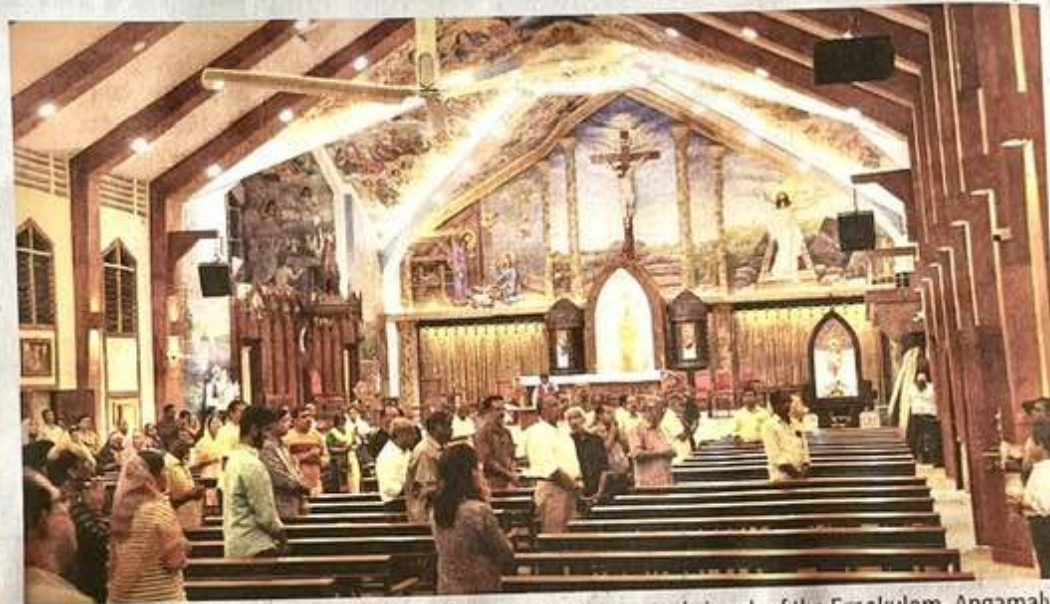
St. Mary's Basilica reopens after 486 days

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The St. Mary's Basilica here reopened after a 486-day gap on Tuesday evening, based on an order issued by the Additional Munsiff Court, Ernakulam.

While permitting the faithful to visit the church and pray, the order bars the holding of Holy mass at the church (where rival factions of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese are on different pages regarding the mode of worship). Based on the order, the basilica was reopened by Father Varghese Manavalan, the administrative rector. Two assistant vicars too were present, according to a release.

They joined in prayers with a few members of the congregation. People who wish to confess can visit the basilica on Wednesday. This will be followed by



Caught in a row: Believers pray at St. Mary's Basilica, the principal church of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, on Tuesday. The church had remained closed for 486 days following a dispute between two sections over the way the mass should be conducted. It was reopened on Tuesday following an order issued by the Additional Munsiff Court, Ernakulam. R.K. NITHIN

prayers in the evening. Prayers will be offered at the church from morning on Maundy Thursday and will conclude with the holy communion.

Expressing happiness at

the reopening, members of the basilica's parish council demanded that the mode of worship where priests faced the congregation be held there.

It had been reported a

few days ago that the basilica would remain open for the holy week, without mass celebration. Apostolic administrator Bishop Bosco Puthur consented to the decision of the parish

While permitting the faithful to visit the church and pray, the order bars the holding of Holy mass at the church

council, claimed a spokesman of Almaya Munnetam, a group of lay people in the archdiocese who are opposed to the synodal diktat for unified mass.

The archdiocese is sharply divided over the mass liturgy. Those opposed to the synod fought to keep the tradition of full congregation-facing mass alive, while the synod has prescribed a unified mass for the entire Syro-Malabar church in which the celebrant faced the congregation for the introductory part and blessings while turning away from the congregation for the consecration of the Eucharist.

Church officials, priests to discuss Mass at crucial meet

The Hindu, 18/4/24

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A crucial meeting of the assembly of priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church on Friday has raised the prospects of reconciliation on the issue of Mass liturgy in the archdiocese at the earliest.

The day-long meeting of priests of the archdiocese with apostolic administrator Bosco Puthur and others of the Syro-Malabar Church will be held at the pastoral centre, Niveditha, at Chunangamveli.

Archbishop Puthur will preside over the meeting, according to a notice issued by Father Varghese Pottakkal, protosyncellus of the archdiocese.

'Final chance'

Though the notice convening the assembly of priests has not specified the topics to be discussed, a group supporting the official

Church hierarchy on the issue of Mass liturgy claimed that it was the final chance for the group of priests opposed to the synod Mass to come to terms with the official stand of the Church for a unified system.

Group's stance

However, a spokesman for Almaya Munnettam, which is opposed to the synod decision in favour of unified Mass, said the group stood firm on its demand for a Mass in which the priest faced the congregation for the entire duration of Mass as against the 50:50 Mass prescribed by the synod of bishops.

Sources in Samyukta Sabha Samrakshana Samithi, in favour of the synod decision on Mass, claimed that the archdiocesan authorities had already met vicars of foranes on the issue, and that Friday's meeting was expected to bring about a final settlement.

The Hindu 01/05/2024

Call for liturgical variant status for Mass

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A meeting of Church representatives in the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese has demanded that full people-facing Mass be recognised as a liturgical variant in the Syro-Malabar Church.

A communication from Almaya Munnettam, the lay people's forum in the archdiocese, said representatives of 328 parishes who met in Kochi on Tuesday reiterated the demand by the vast majority of archdiocesan priests at a recent presbyteral council meeting.

The parish delegates also accused Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil of a conspiracy to wreck the archdiocese.

The official name of the Syro-Malabar Church in the Vatican records is Ernakulam-Angamaly Archiepiscopal Church. The Syro-Malabar Church no longer uses this official name now. If the Syro-Malabar Church had any difficulty in recognising the liturgical variant, the group of priests and lay people in favour of the full people-facing Mass should be allowed to exist as the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archiepiscopal Church, the communication added.

Kerala delegation holds talks with Pope on Mass liturgy issue

the Hindu 12/05/2024

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Lay group Almaya Munnettam claimed here on Saturday that a team of leading Catholics from Kerala led by former Supreme Court judge Kurian Joseph met Pope Francis in Rome to discuss the deep divide in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly over the adoption of the Mass liturgy prescribed by the synod of the Syro-Malabar Church.

A communication from Almaya Munnettam, which has stood stridently for a full people-facing Mass as opposed to the synod Mass, said the four-member team included former Indian Ambassador to Rome K.P. Fabian, former Women's Commission Chairperson Monamma Kokkad, and former Director of Public Education Lida Jacob. They were given an audience by the Pope on May 6 at 11.30 a.m. Indian time, claimed a communication from the lay group.

The delegation laid be-

fore the Pope, the stand taken by the archdiocesan authorities and presented before him suggestions on resolving the differences. A memorandum explaining the mistakes leading to the crucial synod decision was also submitted to the Pope.

The team visited the Pope ahead of the members of the permanent synod led by Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil. "This is a matter of great hope," said Almaya Munnettam convenor Shaiju Antony and spokesman Riju Kanjookkaran. The lay group is hopeful, they said, of finding a solution acceptable to and inclusive of all.

Permanent synod

Meanwhile, the permanent synod members are expected to reach Rome ahead of a meeting with senior officials of the Vatican on Monday. Much is being read into the Vatican meeting as both those demanding the implementation of the synod Mass and those opposing it are hopeful that a solution will be found in Rome.

Rebel group burns copies of circular on unified Mass

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Almaya Munnettam (Lay People to the Fore), group in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church opposed to the synod-recommended Mass, rejected a circular issued by Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil and apostolic administrator Bosco Puthur on June 9 to implement the unified Mass in the archdiocese from July 3.

The circular warned priests who did not follow the diktat to consider themselves being out of the Catholic communion.

The group also said it would prevent the circular from being read in parishes as scheduled for June

16. On the day, the circular would be set to fire outside the parishes, where they were to be read out during the Sunday Mass.

"We reject the circular issued by Mar Thattil and Puthur, threatening to oust all priests from the archdiocese," said a statement issued by Almaya Munnettam spokesman Riju Kanjookaran here on Monday, hours after the official circular warning the priests was made public. No attempt to impose a decision on the Mass issue will be accepted as the archdiocesan synod is slated to meet here on June 14 to discuss it, the rebel statement said.

The rebel group also said its leaders and leaders

of parishes would meet to suggest ways to resist any decision by the Church hierarchy to impose the unified Mass decision.

'Only Pope's name'

One of the immediate decisions is to mention only the Pope's name in prayers during the Mass after July 3 if the synod insists on implementing the unified Mass. It is a practice to mention the names of the bishops during the Mass. Members of the rebel group burnt copies of the circular in front of the bishop's house after an emergency meeting on Monday, the spokesman added.

SEE ALSO

» PAGE 4

the Hindu 11/06/2024

Foranes to initiate legal action against archbishop Thazhath

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Sixteen forane churches under the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese will initiate legal action against Andrews Thazhath, former apostolic administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church, for his alleged efforts to portray priests and the lay community as joining hands with "extremist fascist" forces.

A person each from all parishes in the 16 foranes will initiate legal action against Thazhath, said Almaya Munnettam, a lay people's group opposed to the decision of the synod of bishops to impose the unified Mass from July 3.

The decision to initiate legal action was taken at a meeting of Edappally and Kanjoor forane delegates on Tuesday. The lay group reiterated that the synod Mass would not be imple-

mented in the archdiocese as priests and the lay community had decided to stick to the full people-facing Mass.

Almaya Munnettam expressed optimism at what it claimed was several bishops expressing dissent at the recent online synod meeting during which the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese came under criticism. The rebels also claimed that the official Church hierarchy was trying to impose its diktat on the unified Mass in "unethical ways". Those behind it – archbishop Thazhath and apostolic administrator Bosco Puthur – must step down from their positions.

Father Joy Ainiyadan, former vicar general of the archdiocese, inaugurated the summit of forane churches. Almaya Munnettam convenor Shaiju Antony presented the theme.

Mass row: priests' council for intervention of CBCI, KCBC

Father Kuriakose Mundadan reminds bishops' groups of deadline of July 3 set in a joint circular issued on June 9 for finally switching to the unified synod Mass

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Priests' council secretary of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese Father Kuriakose Mundadan has appealed to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) to intervene in the raging row in the archdiocese over the Mass liturgy which, he said, threatened to turn into a scandal engulfing the entire Catholic Church.

The Syro-Malabar Church is a sui iuris Church, as Pope Francis has said. And, as such, both the CBCI and the KCBC will not be willing to encroach upon the internal matters of the Church. "Nevertheless, when the



When the chain of events in the Church becomes as scandalous as it can, you have to rethink about the image of the Catholic Church, your responsibility towards the Church

FATHER KURIAKOSE MUNDADAN
Priests' council secretary of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese

chain of events in the Church becomes as scandalous as it can, you have to rethink about the image of the Catholic Church, your responsibility towards the Church," said Father Mundadan in his letters to the bishops' groups on Tuesday.

Father Mundadan re-

minded the bishops' groups of the deadline of July 3 set in a joint circular issued on June 9 for finally switching to the unified synod Mass. But he recalled Pope Francis' words that liturgical decisions in a sui iuris Church were to be taken by the synod. The bishops' synod, however, is not the permanent synod or a caucus in the synod.

Though an online synod was officially announced for June 14, the joint circular, which should have contained the decisions of the synod, was issued even before the synod discussions, claimed Father Mundadan in his letter.

After objections were raised, the online synod was extended to continue on June 19.

Father Mundadan's let-

ter accused former apostolic administrator Andrews Thazhath of "misusing power" and misguiding and misinforming the Pope on liturgical issues of the archdiocese. His unethical acts and reports have helped sink the situation further into controversies, whereas the issue was of simple rubrics (of Mass celebrant facing people or facing away from people) into a major dispute over ecclesiastical communion, it said.

"This is, to say the least, utterly unchristian and against the basic gospel principles. The acts of archbishop Andrews Thazhath, the former apostolic administrator, Archbishop of Thrissur, and president of the CBCI are really abominable," Father Mundadan's letter said.

es. It was concealed inside each core of the speaker. TNN

cal body's standing committee chairman for health. TNN

ing this, lifeguards immediately launched a search.

The Times of India, 19/06/2024

Priests write to Catholic bishops, seek intervention

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese have begun filing appeals against a recent church circular that warns them of excommunication if they conduct any mass other than the uniform mass mandated by the Syro Malabar synod after July 3.

"All our priests are filing review petitions as per canon law which allows us the right to review a direction that is issued violating the norms. If it is rejected, we will file an appeal with Rome. Then it would be stayed," said a senior priest with the archdiocese.

He claimed that the direction was invalid as there was no provision for such an automatic excommunication in the Syro Malabar Church.

Meanwhile, Fr. Kuria-kose Mundadan, secretary of the presbyteral council of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, has written to all Catholic archbishops and bishops seeking their intervention. "It would seem right

to regard Syro-Malabar Church as a "Sui iuris" Church and would not interfere in the internal matters of that church. Nevertheless, when the chain of events in that church becomes as scandalous as it can, you have to rethink the image of the Catholic Church," the letter said.

ROW OVER HOLY MASS

He wrote that on June 14, a case was filed against archbishop Andrews Thazhath to the superior tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church, substantiated by the report presented by Thazhath to Pope Francis on October 9, 2023.

He said it was evident that Thazhath misused his power as the apostolic administrator and misguided and misinformed Pope Francis on the liturgical issues of the archdiocese.

His unethical acts and reports have snowballed for the worse, which significantly is a minor issue of a rubric (versus populum and versus

altar) to a serious issue of ecclesial communion, Mundadan said in the letter.

The synod of the Syro Malabar Church, reconvening on Wednesday, is faced with a difficult decision as priests have openly expressed their wish to continue as a separate church if their concerns are ignored.

"How did the Malankara Church come into being, how did the Syro Malabar Church itself come into being? In all these cases, priests and laity came out seeing injustice and dishonest ways... If the synod is showing injustice towards us, we don't expect anything good from them. For such goodness to happen, the synod should take positive steps. If they are not doing that, we are thinking of the possibility of an independent Catholic church," Fr Mundadan told the media. He said they are not against the Pope or the Catholic church and if the Syro Malabar Church cannot include around 6 lakh laity and 450 priests they were left with no other option.

The Hindu 21/06/2024

Bishops slam excommunication threat, call it Middle Ages culture

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Five bishops have joined the growing chorus against a threat to excommunicate priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church who do not heed a synod diktat on unified Mass from July 3.

A dissent note sent to Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil by the bishops said the recent circular issued by the Major Archbishop and Apostolic Administrator Bosco Puthur smacked of "the Middle Ages culture of the Church. Excommunication is a term unheard of after the second Vatican Council. The oriental code of canon law does not envisage automatic excommunication".

The bishops' stand has deepened the divide over Mass in the Oriental Church with over 4.25 million followers across the globe. The archdiocese is the largest administrative

unit with about five lakh members. The divide is over whether the priest should face people for the entire duration of the Mass or, as the synod has decided, turn to the people for liturgy of the Word and turn to the altar for the liturgy of consecration.

The bishops expressed surprise that the higher authorities of the Vatican and "our Permanent Synod" allowed sending out a joint circular that has "long-term negative consequences in our Church. And in conscience we find it very difficult to endorse this judgment".

The dissenters

Bishops Ephrem Nariculam of Chanda; Jose Chittooparambil of Rajkot; Jose Puthenveetil, auxiliary of Faridabad; Kuriakose Bharanikulangara of Faridabad; and Sebastian Adayanthrath of Mandya said in their note that they held the synod decision on unified Mass and the Holy

Father's wishes close to their heart and in respective jurisdictions "we follow the uniform mode of celebration".

The circular would plunge the archdiocese into turmoil, the bishops said, as they reminded Raphael Thattil and Bosco Puthur that the Holy Father insisted on obedience but stressed dialogue. The priests in the archdiocese follow the approved Mass text and the question now revolved around rubrics.

The bishops pointed out that the Pope wanted the problem to be solved by the Church itself but the joint circular was issued without consultations or seeking the opinion of the scheduled online synod.

The bishops also said there was no justification in handing out the highest punishment as ecclesiastical sanctions should be proportionate to the violation. "Where is the place for the benevolence we preach," they asked.

The Hindu 23/06/2024

Priests' group defies synod order, to continue people-facing Mass

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

A vast section of priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church have rejected a circular by Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil and apostolic administrator Bosco Puthur on June 21 ordering them to celebrate at least one Mass in the synod-prescribed format in all churches on Sundays and days of obli-

gation from July 3.

The circular is seen as a climbdown for the synod and a bid to calm agitated priests after they were threatened on June 9 with excommunication if they do not switch fully to synod Mass from July 3. The circular triggered open criticism from among synod members and groups of priests in other dioceses.

Instead of solving the dispute, they brought out a note that will light the fire

of strife and deepen the division, says senior priest Fr. Jose Vailikodath, spokesman for priests' forum Athirupatha Samrakshan Samiti or group for protection of the archdiocese.

While the synod stands for the unified mode of Mass in which the priest faced people for the liturgy of the word and turned to the altar for the liturgy of the sacrament, the opposing priests insist on full people-facing Mass.

Syro-Malabar Church ordains eight deacons as priests; protesters meet bishop with demands

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Eight deacons were ordained as priests of the Syro-Malabar Church here on Monday.

After the event, representatives of the rebel forum Almaya Munnettam met apostolic administrator Mar Bosco Puthur and demanded the withdrawal of his circular which, among other directives, insisted that the priests implement the uniform mode of Mass celebration.

They waited till the end of the ordination at the mi-



New role: The deacons who were ordained as priests on Monday.

nor seminary of the archdiocese in Thrikkakara and met the bishop to register their protest against the

circular dated October 30 that had asked the priests and the laity to not associate with organisations

that criticise the official stance of the Church or demean its leadership on social media.

They also demanded the removal of police personnel from the archbishop's residence. The members of the group said they would boycott the apostolic administrator at all public venues as they did not approve of the appointment of the new curia members. The circular was publicly burnt by the faithful after the Sunday Mass on November 3.

The Athirupatha Samrakshana Samithi, a forum

of priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese, said they had boycotted the Mass led by Mar Puthur after the ordination as a mark of protest against his directive on the uniform Mass.

The ordination, originally scheduled in December 2023, was postponed following the liturgy dispute in the Church. Their ordination was confirmed after they submitted an affidavit agreeing to celebrate the uniform Mass, said Fr. Antony Vadakkekara, official spokesman of the Church.