



CONGREGATIO
PRO ECCLESIIS ORIENTALIBUS

Prot. N. 203/2012

00193 Roma November 15, 2017
Via della Conciliazione, 34
Indirizzo postale: 00120 Città del Vaticano

Your Grace,

I write in reference to your Letter of 29 August 2017 (Prot. No. Abp 118/2017) regarding the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Kottayam, which is currently limited to the *territorium proprium*. Let me first observe that your Letter did not reach this Dicastery until mid-October, yet a reply could in any case only be appropriately made after the Plenary Session of the Congregation (9-12 October 2017), as the Knanaya community was a theme.

As Your Grace knows, this Dicastery has been studying the situation of the Knanaya community for some time, especially thanks to the work of the Delegate *ad referendum*, H.E. Msgr. Michael Mulhall, Bishop of Pembroke (Canada), who dedicated much time to the question from November 2015 until March 2017. One of the elements underlined by Bishop Mulhall, which I thoroughly endorse, is that your leadership is deserving of praise. You have striven zealously to preserve the community's inner cohesion and vitality, communal memory, and proper traditions within the ecclesiastical framework, a task made especially difficult in times of increased migration. Moreover, you have generously provided an ecclesial home for some members of the Syro-Malankara Knanaya community. Thank you, Your Grace.

While the study of Bishop Mulhall offered hopeful avenues to explore in the years ahead, the basic position of this Congregation remains unchanged. Specifically, while the link, which has developed between the practice of endogamy and ecclesial life, has been tolerated *de facto* in the *territorium proprium*, it is not to be permitted elsewhere. Within India, as Your Grace

J.

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knows, the Holy Father has opened the way to the full restoration of the authority of the Major Archbishop and the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church over the entire country. In this new context, it would be appropriate that the Synod discuss the question of the Knanaya community in India, in view of the request presented by Your Grace, so as to submit an eventual proposal to this Dicastery.

Certainly, this Dicastery understands that the Knanaya community spread throughout the world wishes to find a point of unity in one figure, the Archbishop of Kottayam. Nonetheless, these are members of the Syro-Malabar or Syro-Malankara Catholic Churches before all else, and they must look to their local Bishops for unity in matters of faith and morals. Other means must be sought to help Knanaya persons living far from home to retain, where possible, their cultural ties; this can certainly include visits or letters from the Archbishop of Kottayam or his Auxiliary, with the prior accord of the local bishop, provided that any confusion regarding jurisdiction is avoided.

Once again, Your Grace, I thank you for your excellent work and sincere desire to do what is best in difficult circumstances. A copy of this letter has been sent to the Major Archbishops.

With cordial and fraternal best regards, I am

Sincerely,

Leonardo Card. Sandri

Leonardo Card. Sandri
Prefect

Cyril Vasil, S.I.
* Cyril Vasil, S.I.
Archbishop Secretary