

## **Kerala Catholicism in the U.S.: Perspective, Community, and Catholicity**

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In A.D. 52, St. Thomas the Apostle came to the Malabar Coast of India, otherwise known as Kerala and instituted the Syro Malabar Catholic tradition. Today, more than 100,000 St. Thomas Syro Malabar Catholics have immigrated from Kerala to North America. The Syro Malabar faith, its ecclesial identity and spiritual traditions, simultaneously anchors the lives of its members and adds another complex dimension to their identity. This study investigates how a spiritual and liturgical experience of Christian faith permeates both the personal and communal identity of Kerala Catholics in Chicago and the Bronx, New York. There is little scholarly literature concerning the life of the participants in the Syro Malabar liturgical rite in the U.S. This study utilizes an interdisciplinary method to examine the religious and social identity of this group. Through interviews with lay and ordained faithful, information was gathered about the experience of the rite both as it relates to the personal identities of U.S. Kerala Catholics and as it contributes to the global richness of the Catholic Church. As such the study also explores the theological concept of “unity in diversity” from the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council and asks whether and how Syro Malabar Catholics have realized this concept in actual practice.