



CONGREGATIO
PRO ECCLESIIS ORIENTALIBUS

Prot. N. 248/2004

Your Beatitude,

This Congregation has begun studying the Malayalam *Raza Qurbana Taksa*, which was accompanied by your esteemed letter Prot. No. 0798/2020 dated 10 July. Despite a positive preliminary assessment, the Dicastery can only contemplate granting the definitive *recognitio* after receiving and studying the English translation in completion of the Liturgical Commission norms (cf. points 8 and 9 of the *Linee Guide* transmitted with letter Prot. N. 152/2015 dated 20 July 2016). Apart from this minor omission and the resulting delay, I commend the Syro-Malabar Commission for Sacred Liturgy on its compliance with the canonical procedure and its excellent report. In the meanwhile, let me take this opportunity to provide two points for reflection by Your Beatitude and the other Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, in anticipation of what will be the definitive *editio typica* for the Divine Liturgy of your Rite.

The first theme concerns the discrepancies in the orientation of different moments during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a longstanding and grievous division exacerbated due to the broadcasting and livestreaming during the present pandemic. This situation demands the promulgation of unmistakably explicit rubrics, with each Bishop assuming full pastoral responsibility for the faithful and correct implementation of this norm, as this Congregation had previously indicated upon notification of the authoritative decision of the 1999 Synod. Allow me to emphasize that clear rubrical instructions should certainly be included in the new liturgical book, but will not be enough on their own; a cohesive commitment is required on the part of the Synod, both collegially and from every Bishop individually. Indeed, the Holy See rejoices in the signs of such concord and harmony. As my late predecessor Cardinal Achille Silvestrini had written to the newly elevated Major Archbishop Mar Varkey Vithayathil following an Audience with Pope John Paul II on 18 December 1999, “first steps towards ever-increasing stability and ecclesial communion ... include the special effort which has been made towards a **unanimous agreement** on the mode of celebrating the Holy Qurbana. I have great confidence that this continued development will bear great spiritual fruit for all the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church as we begin this great Jubilee Year” (Prot. N. 140/99 dated 24 December 1999). Unfortunately, that joyful hope was soon marred by open defiance, creating an explosive pastoral situation with grave spiritual harm to the faithful. Given this sad history of nonobservance on the part of some clergy, the Bishops must take charge, gently but firmly, of catechizing and correcting those culpable, as a requirement for safeguarding the unity and common witness of the Synod and the whole Church *sui iuris*.

J.

His Beatitude
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In this regard, precision is necessary on the question of dispensations: as the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* clearly says, these must be given in a "special case" (can. 1538 §1) for the spiritual good of the faithful. By their very nature, they should not come to appear as general permission for something that cannot legitimately be authorized in opposition to the common norms. Therefore, Bishops should have recourse of dispensations only for well-defined times and for specific reasons. (For instance: restoring or reordering the sanctuary platform in front of the Altar, allowing time for adequate preparatory liturgical formation so that a given congregation comes to understand the meaning of the priest leading the people in prayer while facing the same direction as they themselves are facing during the Anaphora, etc.) By way of assistance in the endeavor of mystagogical catechesis, I attach some relevant pages on the Instruction "*Il Padre Incomprensibile*" published by this Dicastery in 1996 (enclosure). Despite the twenty-five years that have since passed, this Instruction remains a useful help for the implementation of the provisions of Vatican II.

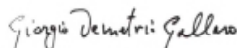
The second topic of consideration, which also relates to the authority of Bishops as first liturgists in their Eparchies, is necessary in light of the recent consensus decision to render facultative certain parts of the Anaphora, indicating in square brackets selected sections with condensed versions. Eparchial Bishops should take these optional abbreviations into account in their liturgical statutes and instruction, leaving adequate room for prudent judgment by the local clergy in this choice. Similar subsidiarity should apply in availing, for pastoral reasons, of the various solemn and simple forms of the Sacred Liturgy as a whole. If some difficulty arises regarding a priest or his congregation, hierarchical recourse will be possible to resolve it, but Bishops in supporting their sanctifying mission with teaching and lawgiving should not presume to reserve for themselves by Eparchial statutes those decisions that can best be made at the local level, just as they cannot indefinitely dispense from the Synod's decisions.

Thanking Your Beatitude for your kind attention, I entrust the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy and entire Church to the intercession of St. Thomas the Apostle and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Mater Ecclesiae*, with prayerful good wishes and fraternal regards.

Sincerely in Christ,



✠ Leonardo Card. Sandri
Prefect



✠ Giorgio Demetrio Gallaro
Archbishop Secretary