
Congregatio
Pro Ecclesiis orientalibus
Prot. N. 85/2001

Instructions

1. This Congregation has been aware for some time of the delicate nature of the position of the Knanaya Community in the United States. A serious dispute in the 1980's prompted the late Archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, to request directives from this congregation concerning the Special Ministry for the Knanaya Catholic Community in the Archdiocese. With Rescript Prot. N. 124/83 of 30 January 1986, this Congregation made clear the position to be taken regarding the endogamous practice of those Knanaya faithful of the Eparchy of Kottayam who had emigrated to the greater Chicago area (Enclosure 1). When Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, the Bishop of Kottayam, requested a review of the policy embodied in the Rescript, this Congregation responded with letter Prot. N. 24/91 of 3 October 1997, upholding the previous decision of the Congregation and informed the present Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, His Eminence Varkey Cardinal Vithaythil, of the decision (Enclosures 2-3). As Your Excellency will not from these letters, this Congregation explained clearly that the practice of endogamy was not acceptable in the United States, or in any jurisdiction outside of the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church. Furthermore, the letter clarified the fact that the Knanaya Catholic Mission was responsible to the local Latin Archbishop and the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam - Angamaly and not the Bishop of Kottayam.

With the erection of the Eparchy of St. Thomas of Chicago and your nomination of the first Bishop, the Holy See foresees the necessity to provide adequate and proper pastoral care to Syro-Malabar faithful of the Eparchy of Kottayam who now reside in the United States. The care of these faithful is to be marked by great sensitivity and patience, based upon an appreciation of the cultural atmosphere from which they have arrived. However, this pastoral care must also recognize the values and societal expectations present in the United States and even more fundamentally, the evangelical values requisite in all pastoral care. Therefore, this Congregation foresees a pastoral care which is sensitive to the Knanaya expectation to be served by Knanaya priests, but does not make any allowance for endogamy to play a role in defining the membership of faithful in any mission or parish established by the Eparchy. The further establishment of missions and even parishes for the Knanaya faithful, as presently practiced in the United States, is understood to be beneficial. However, the Holy See continues to follow the directives outlined in the Rescript Prot. N. 124/83 mentioned above.