

Missionaries of Hope: An Eparchy Alive in Faith, Participation and Service

Reflection: Best Practices Session - ACMRO National Conference

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Isho Mishihaykku Sthuthiaayirikatte! Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ!

The story of the Syro-Malabar Eparchy in Australia is a story of hope - hope carried across oceans, nurtured within families and generously shared with the Catholic Church in Australia and the wider Australian community.

Our people did not come to Australia merely seeking a better life. They came carrying a living faith, an ancient liturgical tradition, strong family values, and a culture of service. Today, they are becoming missionaries of hope, not always by preaching from a pulpit, but by praying in their homes, making every effort to transmit faith to children and young people, volunteering in parishes/missions, caring for the vulnerable and participating actively in the life of the Church.

One of the greatest strengths of our Eparchy is its extraordinary culture of volunteering. Almost every area of ministry is sustained by laypeople who generously offer their time, talents and professional expertise. This is especially evident in safeguarding.

Our Professional Standards Division and Safeguarding Department are fully volunteer driven. Every parish is supported by volunteer Parish Safeguarding Officers and Safeguarding Implementation Committees. Approximately 15,000 volunteers have participated in Safer Church training. For us, safeguarding is not simply a policy or compliance requirement; it is a shared ministry of protecting the dignity, rights and wellbeing of every person entrusted to our care. Our volunteers are at the heart of creating communities that are both safe and filled with faith. This commitment reflects Eparchy's vision of a Church that actively prevents harm and fosters a culture of safeguarding.

Participation and shared responsibility are one of our greatest strengths. The Eparchy has the participatory structures envisioned by the Code of Canon Law and affirmed by the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality: parish pastoral councils, finance councils, the eparchial pastoral council, presbyteral council and eparchial assemblies.

Synodality is lived through every aspect of church life and our ancient tradition of the *Pothuyogam* - the parish general assembly. In Australia, every Syro-Malabar parishioner aged eighteen and above can participate. The community gathers to listen, discern, evaluate, and make important decisions concerning its spiritual and temporal life. Parish councils and finance councils provide ongoing oversight, while annual accounts and major decisions are presented transparently to the community at the general body. Participation, transparency, accountability, and regular evaluation help build trust and strengthen communion.

The transmission of faith to the next generation is another defining mission of our community. Sundays are dedicated to Holy Qurbana, catechesis, volunteering and family life. Across 71 catechetical centers, 1,902 lay catechists accompany 13,522 children from Kindergarten to Year 12. These catechists are not simply teaching lessons; they are handing out a lived Faith. Also through Bible Kalolsavam (Bible convention), Faith Fest (Yearly three days intensive catechism with celebrations), the faith is transmitted.

That faith begins in the home. Family prayer, fasting, abstinence and the observance of the different seasons of Lent form children in prayer, discipline, moderation and charity. Recent findings among our young people indicate that 79 per cent pray with their families at least several times a week, while 57 per cent participate in family prayer daily. Most families with children participate in Sunday Eucharistic celebration (Holy Qurbana) regularly. The family remains at our first catechetical center and our first school of discipleship.

Our liturgical celebrations also reveal a Church in which everyone has a place. Children's, youth and senior choirs; lectors; extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion; altar servers and many other volunteers participate actively. For our people, these are not positions of status but opportunities to serve the Lord.

This spirit continues through the Cherupushpa Mission League (CML) (Children's Organisation), Syro-Malabar Teens Ministry (SMTM), Syro-Malabar Youth Movement (SMYM), Syro-Malabar Young Couples Ministry (SMYCM), Mathruvedi (Mothers 'organisation), Pithruvedi (Fathers 'Organization), Catholic Congress (Community empowerment Organisation which includes everyone above 18 women & men), Nurses Ministry, Evangelisation Ministry, intercession groups and family units (BCC), Christmas Carols - visiting every family and share the Christmas

message. Many parishes/ missions celebrate carols as an ecumenical celebration. From childhood to senior adulthood, every person is invited to belong, contribute, and grow.

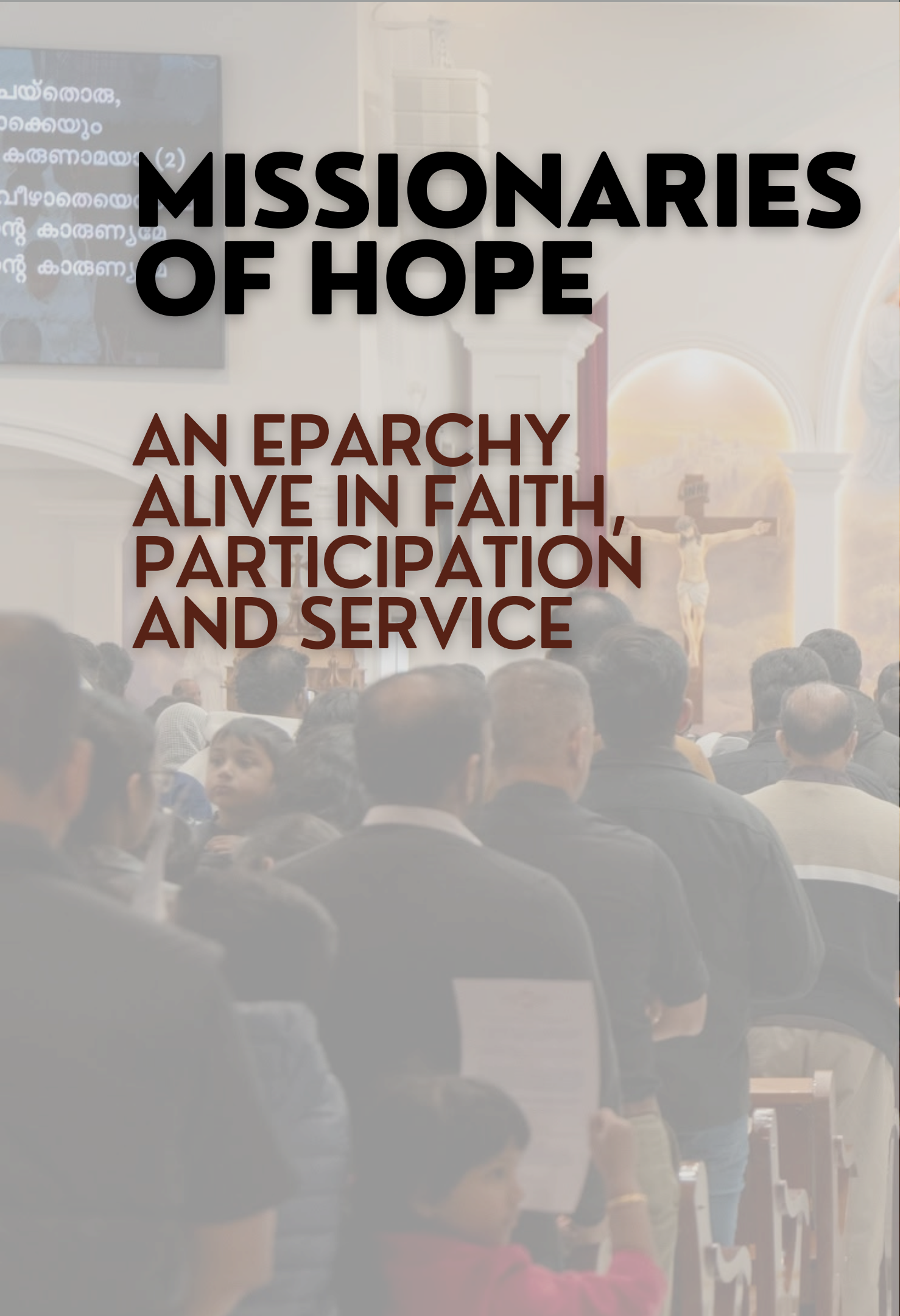
These practices are not presented as achievements for our own praise. They are gifts entrusted to us for the mission of the whole Church. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is deeply grateful to the Latin Catholic Church in Australia for welcoming us and allowing our tradition to flourish using the local Latin Churches. In return, we offer what we have received: a love for the Eucharist, faith lived within the family, joyful volunteering, participatory leadership, rich cultural traditions including, number of Syro-Malabar priests ministering in the Latin church with a missionary spirit.

We are no longer simply a migrant community finding our place in Australia. We are a missionary community accepting our responsibility within Australia.

Our hope is that every Syro-Malabar family will become a domestic church, every parish a school of communion, every volunteer a witness of Christ and every member a missionary of hope, receiving faith gratefully, living it joyfully and sharing it generously with the Church and the wider community.

Let's celebrate Christ and His Church.

Thank you



MISSIONARIES OF HOPE

AN EPARCHY
ALIVE IN FAITH,
PARTICIPATION
AND SERVICE



MSGR. FRANCISE KOLENCHERRY



WE ARE MISSIONARIES OF HOPE

A group of young people, both men and women, are gathered in a church. Some are standing in the front, while others are seated in the pews. They are dressed in formal or semi-formal attire. The church interior features large murals of religious figures and statues. The text "DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF SAFER CHURCH THROUGH VOLUNTEERING" is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters across the lower half of the image.

**DEVELOPING A CULTURE
OF SAFER CHURCH
THROUGH VOLUNTEERING**



SYNODALITY



**HANDING ON THE FAITH
AND FORMING DISCIPLES**



**FAMILY REMAINS
OUR FIRST CATECHETICAL CENTRE**



**FAITH IS STRENGTHENED THROUGH
PIUS ORGANISATIONS AND MINISTRIES**



THANK YOU