

**Eparchy of St. Ephrem Khadki-Pune**  
*St. Mary's Malankara Catholic Cathedral*  
51 Bhau Patil Road, Bopodi, Pune - 411 020



**CIRCULAR**

**NOVEMDIALES—NINE DAYS OF PRAYER FOR POPE FRANCIS**

**Prot. No. CL 03/2025**

**23 April 2025**

**To all the Reverend Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, and Beloved Faithful of the Eparchy of St. Ephrem,**

*Grace and peace be with you in Christ Jesus our Lord!*

Two days have now passed since the passing of Pope Francis, our Supreme Pontiff and the Bishop of Rome. Though words rise easily for daily matters, there are moments in the life of the Church when language itself must bow before silence. This is one such moment. As I write to you in these sacred days before the funeral of the Holy Father, my heart rests somewhere between sorrow and gratitude—a space where the Church often finds herself, held up by grace.

On Monday, 21 April 2025, at 7:35 AM Vatican Time (11:05 AM IST), Pope Francis departed from this world in his residence at Casa Santa Marta. In the quiet of Eastertide, the Holy Father returned to the Father, gently and without fanfare, just as he had lived. The bells of St. Peter's tolled in mourning; and across the continents, including our own, hearts were stirred.

For us in the Eparchy of St. Ephrem, the loss carries particular weight. We were a people whom the Holy Father remembered from afar. He saw us, recognised us, and named us. Through his apostolic authority, he gave us our Eparchy—Sancti Ephraemi Khadkiensis Syro-Malankarensium—and entrusted it to the care of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The Apostolic Exarchate for the Syro-Malankara Catholic faithful was erected on 26 March 2015, through the decree of Pope Francis. This was no mere administrative act—it was an apostolic affirmation that the faithful across Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, and parts of Tamil Nadu were to be gathered under a canonical structure, anchored in the liturgical heritage of the West Syriac tradition.

On 5 August 2017, Pope Francis appointed His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mor Anthonios OIC as the first Apostolic Exarch. In the following year, he elevated the Exarchate to the Eparchy of St. Ephrem, Khadki-Pune, on 23 November 2019. In the unfolding providence of God, the

Holy Father continued to shape this Eparchy by appointing a successor to Mor Anthonios, who was transferred to the Eparchy of St. John Chrysostom, Gurgaon. That successor was the one now humbly addressing you through these words, entrusted with this sacred responsibility on 7 May 2024.

### **A Pope Who Lived What He Preached**

Much has already been said in the press and from the pulpit about Pope Francis' life—from his humble beginnings in Buenos Aires, to his Jesuit formation, to his surprising election as the first Pope from the Americas. But I invite you to consider his life through the lens of the Gospel he lived.

He wore the same shoes until they were worn. He carried a black satchel with his breviary and some fruit. He chose not to live in the grand Apostolic Palace but in a guest house, to remain close to his collaborators. He once said that a shepherd must “smell of the sheep.” I believe that is how we recognised him.

When he kissed the feet of warlords in South Sudan, or embraced prisoners, or washed the feet of refugees, he was showing the world that the Gospel is not a book for the library, but a call to service. When he published *Laudato si'*, or when he convened synods that welcomed discussion and listening, he was leading the Church by example: with courage, humility, and mercy.

For our Church, his warmth was far more than sentiment. It was a decision. A decree. A signature. A bishop appointed. A mission affirmed.

### **What He Meant to Us**

Pope Francis believed that unity did not require uniformity. He stood for a Church that was broad without being diluted, and faithful without being rigid. He opened doors—some literal, some theological.

I recall vividly the expressions of joy among our faithful when our Eparchy was announced. For many, it was the first time their liturgical heritage was affirmed within the administrative structures of the wider Catholic Church. It was Pope Francis who believed in the necessity of our presence, not as an appendage, but as a beating part of the Body.

Through this act, he gave us presence, purpose, and peace. We were no longer communities gathered in borrowed halls. We became a People with a name, with bishops, with identity.

### **Remembering by Living**

In the coming weeks, I ask that we remember Pope Francis by living what he taught, more than by simply recounting what he did. Let us become a Church that reflects the values he espoused:

- A Church that reaches out to the margins.
- A Church that listens.
- A Church that serves.

- A Church that upholds the dignity of the poor.
- A Church that honours its elders and accompanies its youth.

Let us remember him in every Holy Qurbano. Let every homily and catechesis this week speak of his life and his lessons. Let us help our children learn his name and understand why his legacy matters to them.

### **Joining the Universal Church**

Our Major Archbishop-Catholicos, His Eminent Beatitude Cardinal Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos, has travelled to Rome to represent our Syro-Malankara Church at the funeral rites. His presence at St. Peter's links our Eparchy to the Church universal in prayerful farewell.

Let us join him spiritually, from our churches, our convents, our schools, and our homes. Let the whole Eparchy become one unbroken litany of remembrance.

Let our incense and our silence speak the gratitude that our words cannot fully express.

### **At the Threshold of Memory and Mission**

I am aware that for many of our faithful—particularly our children and youth—this may be the first time they have experienced the passing of a Pope. It is natural to feel uncertain. Let us take this moment to catechise through witness. Let them see in us a faith that mourns without despair, and hopes without haste.

Pope Francis reminded us that holiness often wears the garments of humility. He has now gone to meet the One he followed so closely, and I believe the Risen Christ welcomed him with the words: *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*

### **Guidelines for Observance During the Mourning Period**

As I write, the mortal remains of Pope Francis are lying in state at St. Peter's Basilica. Pilgrims walk past in silence. The funeral Mass is scheduled for Saturday, 26 April, and as per his wish, it shall be simple and centred on the Resurrection. In these days leading up to the funeral, the Novemdiales—nine days of prayer—are being observed around the world.

Following the pastoral exhortation Prot No. CCL/02/2025, dated 21, April 2025 of our Major Archbishop-Catholicos, His Eminent Beatitude Cardinal Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos, I call upon all parishes of our Eparchy to enter into these days with reverence and unity.

- **Novemdiales:** His Eminent Beatitude has declared nine days of mourning, concluding on 29 April 2025. During this time, let us intensify our prayers for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis.
- **Commemorative Services:** All parishes, Ashrams, Convents, and Mission Centers are instructed to celebrate Commemorative Holy Qurbano and dhoopa prarthana on Sunday, 27 April 2025.
- **Public Celebrations:** All public events in parishes—including gatherings, processions, felicitations, and celebratory programs—are to be avoided during this mourning period.

Church blessings and ordinations may be conducted, but in a simple and prayerful manner.

- **JDC Camps:** There shall be no JDC Camps held during this period.
- **Liturgical Instructions During the Vacant See:** With the passing of Pope Francis, the Papal See remains vacant until the election of a new Pope. During the Holy Qurbano and other liturgical prayers, the name of the Pope shall be omitted. Only the names of the Catholicos and the respective Eparchial Bishop shall be mentioned in prayers.

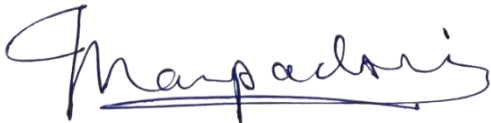
Barekmor, Naalu bhaagangalilumulla Daiva-thinte sabhakale meyichu bharikyunnavaaraaya ella pithakkanmaarkku vendiyum. Prathyekichu namme paripaalichu porunna Nammude sabhayude thalavanum pithavu-maya Moran Mor Baselios (...) Katholika Bavakku vendiyum, Nammude Melpattakkaran Aboon Mor (....) Methrappolithaykku vendiyum, sathyavishvaasikalaya olla Episcopamaarkku vendiyum kashee shanmar, shemmashanmar, dayarayakkaar muthalayavarkku vendiyum Kristheeya sabha muzhuvan vendiyum Karthavinodu naam praarthikyanam.

Let our prayers rise as incense, offered as an expression of true communion. Let the Eastern Churches, whom he loved and honoured, rise together in remembrance. Let us remain united in faith, prayer, and mission.

May the soul of our Holy Father Pope Francis, Servant of the Servants of God, find eternal rest in the embrace of the Risen Christ.

In Christ's Love and Service,

With paternal blessing,



✠ **Mathews Mar Pachomios OIC**  
*Bishop of St Ephrem, Khadki-Pune*

